

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SESSION 2003**

**SESSION LAW 2004-128  
SENATE BILL 577**

AN ACT TO RAISE THE JURISDICTIONAL AMOUNT FOR SMALL CLAIMS ACTIONS TO FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS, TO CLARIFY JURISDICTION FOR REVOCATION OF PROBATION WHEN PLEAS WERE ENTERED IN DISTRICT COURT, TO DEFINE DRUG TREATMENT COURT AS AN INTERMEDIATE PUNISHMENT, TO REQUIRE THE COURT TO GIVE NOTICE OF RIGHTS TO CONTEST MECHANICS' LIEN STORAGE CHARGES OF VEHICLES SEIZED UNDER THE DWI FORFEITURE LAWS, TO PERMIT CLERKS OF COURT TO GRANT DIVORCES IN UNCONTESTED ABSOLUTE DIVORCE ACTIONS, TO TERMINATE AS A MATTER OF LAW CERTAIN PARENTAL RIGHTS OF A PERSON CONVICTED OF CERTAIN CRIMES THAT RESULT IN THE VICTIM BECOMING PREGNANT, AND TO AMEND THE CONSTITUTION OF NORTH CAROLINA TO CHANGE THE TERM OF OFFICE OF MAGISTRATES FOR AN INITIAL TERM OF TWO YEARS AND SUBSEQUENT TERMS OF FOUR YEARS.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

**SECTION 1.** G.S. 7A-210 reads as rewritten:

**"§ 7A-210. Small claim action defined.**

For purposes of this Article a small claim action is a civil action wherein:

- (1) The amount in controversy, computed in accordance with G.S. 7A-243, does not exceed ~~four thousand dollars (\$4,000);~~ five thousand dollars (\$5,000); and
- (2) The only principal relief prayed is monetary, or the recovery of specific personal property, or summary ejectment, or any combination of the foregoing in properly joined claims; and
- (3) The plaintiff has requested assignment to a magistrate in the manner provided in this Article.

The seeking of the ancillary remedy of claim and delivery or an order from the clerk of superior court for the relinquishment of property subject to a lien pursuant to G.S. 44A-4(a) does not prevent an action otherwise qualifying as a small claim under this Article from so qualifying."

**SECTION 2.** G.S. 7A-271 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

"(e) The superior court has exclusive jurisdiction over all hearings held pursuant to G.S. 15A-1345(e) where the district court had accepted a defendant's plea of guilty or no contest to a felony under the provisions of G.S. 7A-272(c), except that the district court shall have jurisdiction to hear these matters with the consent of the State and the defendant."

**SECTION 3.** G.S. 15A-1340.11 reads as rewritten:

**"§ 15A-1340.11. Definitions.**

The following definitions apply in this Article:

- (1) Active punishment. – A sentence in a criminal case that requires an offender to serve a sentence of imprisonment and is not suspended. Special probation, as defined in G.S. 15A-1351, is not an active punishment.

- (2) Community punishment. – A sentence in a criminal case that does not include an active punishment, an intermediate punishment, or any of the conditions of probation listed in subdivision (6) of this section.
- (3) Day-reporting center. – A facility to which offenders are required, as a condition of probation, to report on a daily or other regular basis at specified times for a specified length of time to participate in activities such as counseling, treatment, social skills training, or employment training.
- (3a) Drug treatment court program. – Program to which offenders are required, as a condition of probation, to comply with the rules adopted for the program as provided for in Article 62 of Chapter 7A of the General Statutes and to report on a regular basis for a specified time to participate in:
  - a. Court supervision.
  - b. Drug screening or testing.
  - c. Drug or alcohol treatment programs.
- (4) Repealed by Session Laws 1997-57, s. 2.
- (4a) House arrest with electronic monitoring. – Probation in which the offender is required to remain at his or her residence unless the court or the probation officer authorizes the offender to leave for the purpose of employment, counseling, a course of study, or vocational training. The offender shall be required to wear a device which permits the supervising agency to monitor the offender's compliance with the condition electronically.
- (5) Intensive probation. – Probation that requires the offender to submit to supervision by officers assigned to the Intensive Supervision Program established pursuant to G.S. 143B-262(c), and to comply with the rules adopted for that Program. Unless otherwise ordered by the court, intensive supervision also requires multiple contacts by a probation officer per week, a specific period each day during which the offender must be at his or her residence, and that the offender remain gainfully and suitably employed or faithfully pursue a course of study or of vocational training that will equip the offender for suitable employment.
- (6) Intermediate punishment. – A sentence in a criminal case that places an offender on supervised probation and includes at least one of the following conditions:
  - a. Special probation as defined in G.S. 15A-1351(a).
  - b. Assignment to a residential program.
  - c. House arrest with electronic monitoring.
  - d. Intensive probation.
  - e. Assignment to a day-reporting center.
  - f. Assignment to a drug treatment court program.
- (7) Prior conviction. – A person has a prior conviction when, on the date a criminal judgment is entered, the person being sentenced has been previously convicted of a crime:
  - a. In the district court, and the person has not given notice of appeal and the time for appeal has expired; or
  - b. In the superior court, regardless of whether the conviction is on appeal to the appellate division; or
  - c. In the courts of the United States, another state, the armed services of the United States, or another country, regardless of whether the offense would be a crime if it occurred in North Carolina,

regardless of whether the crime was committed before or after the effective date of this Article.

- (8) Residential program. – A program in which the offender, as a condition of probation, is required to reside in a facility for a specified period and to participate in activities such as counseling, treatment, social skills training, or employment training, conducted at the residential facility or at other specified locations."

**SECTION 4.** G.S. 20-28.4 reads as rewritten:

**"§ 20-28.4. Release of impounded motor vehicles by judge.**

(a) Release Upon Conclusion of Trial. – If the driver of a motor vehicle seized pursuant to G.S. 20-28.3:

- (1) Is subsequently not convicted of an offense involving impaired driving due to dismissal or a finding of not guilty; or
- (2) The judge at a forfeiture hearing conducted pursuant to G.S. 20-28.2(d) fails to find that the drivers license was revoked as a result of a prior impaired driving license revocation as defined in G.S. 20-28.2; and
- (3) The vehicle has not previously been released to a lienholder pursuant to G.S. 20-28.3(e3),

the seized motor vehicle or insurance proceeds held by the clerk of court pursuant to G.S. 20-28.2(c1) or G.S. 20-28.3(h) shall be released to the motor vehicle owner conditioned upon payment of towing and storage costs. The court shall not waive the payment of towing and storage costs. The court shall include in its order notice to the owner of the seized motor vehicle still being held, that within 30 days of the date of the court's order, the owner must make payment of the outstanding towing and storage costs for the motor vehicle and retrieve the motor vehicle, or give notice to Division of Motor Vehicles requesting a judicial hearing on the validity of any mechanics' lien on the motor vehicle for towing and storage costs.

(b) Notwithstanding G.S. 44A-2(d), if the owner of the seized motor vehicle does not obtain release of the vehicle within 30 days from the date of the court's order, the possessor of the seized motor vehicle has a mechanics' lien on the seized motor vehicle for the full amount of the towing and storage charges incurred since the motor vehicle was seized and may dispose of the seized motor vehicle pursuant to Article 1 of Chapter 44A of the General Statutes. Notice of the right to a judicial hearing on the validity of the mechanics' lien given to the owner of the motor vehicle in open court in accordance with subsection (a) of this section or delivery to the owner of the vehicle of a copy of the court's order entered in accordance with subsection (a) of this section shall satisfy the notice requirement of G.S. 44A-4(b)."

**SECTION 5.** G.S. 44A-4(b) reads as rewritten:

"(b) Notice and Hearings. –

- (1) If the property upon which the lien is claimed is a motor vehicle that is required to be registered, the lienor following the expiration of the relevant time period provided by subsection (a) shall give notice to the Division of Motor Vehicles that a lien is asserted and sale is proposed and shall remit to the Division a fee of ten dollars (\$10.00). The Division of Motor Vehicles shall issue notice by registered or certified mail, return receipt requested, to the person having legal title to the property, if reasonably ascertainable, to the person with whom the lienor dealt if different, and to each secured party and other person claiming an interest in the property who is actually known to the Division or who can be reasonably ascertained. The notice shall state that a lien has been asserted against specific property and shall identify the lienor, the date that the lien arose, the general nature of the services performed and materials used or sold for which the lien is asserted, the amount of the lien, and that the lienor intends to sell the property in

satisfaction of the lien. The notice shall inform the recipient that the recipient has the right to a judicial hearing at which time a determination will be made as to the validity of the lien prior to a sale taking place. The notice shall further state that the recipient has a period of 10 days from the date of receipt in which to notify the Division by registered or certified mail, return receipt requested, that a hearing is desired and that if the recipient wishes to contest the sale of his property pursuant to such lien, the recipient should notify the Division that a hearing is desired. The notice shall state the required information in simplified terms and shall contain a form whereby the recipient may notify the Division that a hearing is desired by the return of such form to the Division. The Division shall notify the lienor whether such notice is timely received by the Division. In lieu of the notice by the lienor to the Division and the notices issued by the Division described above, the lienor may issue notice on a form approved by the Division pursuant to the notice requirements above. If notice is issued by the lienor, the recipient shall return the form requesting a hearing to the lienor, and not the Division, within 10 days from the date the recipient receives the notice if a judicial hearing is requested. If the registered or certified mail notice has been returned as undeliverable and the notice of a right to a judicial hearing has been given to the owner of the motor vehicle in accordance with G.S. 20-28.4, no further notice is required. Failure of the recipient to notify the Division or lienor, as specified in the notice, within 10 days of the receipt of such notice that a hearing is desired shall be deemed a waiver of the right to a hearing prior to the sale of the property against which the lien is asserted, and the lienor may proceed to enforce the lien by public or private sale as provided in this section and the Division shall transfer title to the property pursuant to such sale. If the Division or lienor, as specified in the notice, is notified within the 10-day period provided above that a hearing is desired prior to sale, the lien may be enforced by sale as provided in this section and the Division will transfer title only pursuant to the order of a court of competent jurisdiction.

If the registered or certified mail notice has been returned as undeliverable, or if the name of the person having legal title to the vehicle cannot reasonably be ascertained and the fair market value of the vehicle is less than eight hundred dollars (\$800.00), the lienor may institute a special proceeding in the county where the vehicle is being held, for authorization to sell that vehicle. Market value shall be determined by the schedule of values adopted by the Commissioner under G.S. 105-187.3.

In such a proceeding a lienor may include more than one vehicle, but the proceeds of the sale of each shall be subject only to valid claims against that vehicle, and any excess proceeds of the sale shall be paid immediately to the Treasurer for disposition pursuant to Chapter 116B of the General Statutes.

The application to the clerk in such a special proceeding shall contain the notice of sale information set out in subsection (f) hereof. If the application is in proper form the clerk shall enter an order authorizing the sale on a date not less than 14 days therefrom, and the lienor shall cause the application and order to be sent immediately by first-class mail pursuant to G.S. 1A-1, Rule 5, to each person to whom notice was mailed pursuant to this subsection. Following the authorized sale the lienor shall file with the clerk a report in the form

of an affidavit, stating that the lienor has complied with the public or private sale provisions of G.S. 44A-4, the name, address, and bid of the high bidder or person buying at a private sale, and a statement of the disposition of the sale proceeds. The clerk then shall enter an order directing the Division to transfer title accordingly.

If prior to the sale the owner or legal possessor contests the sale or lien in a writing filed with the clerk, the proceeding shall be handled in accordance with G.S. 1-301.2.

.....  
" SECTION 6. G.S. 50-10 reads as rewritten:

**"§ 50-10. Material facts found by judge or jury in divorce or annulment proceedings; when notice of trial not required; procedure same as ordinary civil actions.**

(a) The Except as provided for in subsection (e) of this section, the material facts in every complaint asking for a divorce or for an annulment shall be deemed to be denied by the defendant, whether the same shall be actually denied by pleading or not, and no judgment shall be given in favor of the plaintiff in any such complaint until such facts have been found by a judge or jury.

(b) Nothing herein shall require notice of trial to be given to a defendant who has not made an appearance in the action.

(c) The determination of whether there is to be a jury trial or a trial before the judge without a jury shall be made in accordance with G.S. 1A-1, Rules 38 and 39.

(d) The provisions of G.S. 1A-1, Rule 56, shall be applicable to actions for absolute divorce pursuant to G.S. 50-6, for the purpose of determining whether any genuine issue of material fact remains for trial by jury, but in the event the court determines that no genuine issue of material fact remains for trial by jury, the court must find the facts as provided herein. The court may enter a judgment of absolute divorce pursuant to the procedures set forth in G.S. 1A-1, Rule 56, finding all requisite facts from nontestimonial evidence presented by affidavit, verified motion or other verified pleading.

(e) The clerk of superior court, upon request of the plaintiff, may enter judgment in cases in which the plaintiff's only claim against the defendant is for absolute divorce, or absolute divorce and the resumption of a former name, and the defendant has been defaulted for failure to appear, the defendant has answered admitting the allegations of the complaint, or the defendant has filed a waiver of the right to answer, and the defendant is not an infant or incompetent person."

SECTION 7. G.S. 14-27.2 reads as rewritten:

**"§ 14-27.2. First-degree rape.**

(a) A person is guilty of rape in the first degree if the person engages in vaginal intercourse:

(1) With a victim who is a child under the age of 13 years and the defendant is at least 12 years old and is at least four years older than the victim; or

(2) With another person by force and against the will of the other person, and:

a. Employs or displays a dangerous or deadly weapon or an article which the other person reasonably believes to be a dangerous or deadly weapon; or

b. Inflicts serious personal injury upon the victim or another person; or

c. The person commits the offense aided and abetted by one or more other persons.

(b) Any person who commits an offense defined in this section is guilty of a Class B1 felony.

(c) Upon conviction, a person convicted under this section has no rights to custody of or rights of inheritance from any child born as a result of the commission of the rape, nor shall the person have any rights related to the child under Chapter 48 or Subchapter 1 of Chapter 7B of the General Statutes."

**SECTION 8.** G.S. 14-27.3 reads as rewritten:

**"§ 14-27.3. Second-degree rape.**

(a) A person is guilty of rape in the second degree if the person engages in vaginal intercourse with another person:

- (1) By force and against the will of the other person; or
- (2) Who is mentally disabled, mentally incapacitated, or physically helpless, and the person performing the act knows or should reasonably know the other person is mentally disabled, mentally incapacitated, or physically helpless.

(b) Any person who commits the offense defined in this section is guilty of a Class C felony.

(c) Upon conviction, a person convicted under this section has no rights to custody of or rights of inheritance from any child conceived during the commission of the rape, nor shall the person have any rights related to the child under Chapter 48 or Subchapter 1 of Chapter 7B of the General Statutes."

**SECTION 9.** G.S. 48-3-603(a) reads as rewritten:

"(a) Consent to an adoption of a minor is not required of a person or entity whose consent is not required under G.S. 48-3-601, or:

- (1) An individual whose parental rights and duties have been terminated under Article 11 of Chapter 7B of the General Statutes or by a court of competent jurisdiction in another state;
- (2) A man described in G.S. 48-3-601(2), other than an adoptive father, if (i) the man has been judicially determined not to be the father of the minor to be adopted, or (ii) another man has been judicially determined to be the father of the minor to be adopted;
- (3) Repealed by Session Laws 1997-215, s. 11(a).
- (4) An individual who has relinquished parental rights or guardianship powers, including the right to consent to adoption, to an agency pursuant to Part 7 of this Article;
- (5) A man who is not married to the minor's birth mother and who, after the conception of the minor, has executed a notarized statement denying paternity or disclaiming any interest in the minor;
- (6) A deceased parent or the personal representative of a deceased parent's estate; or
- (7) An individual listed in G.S. 48-3-601 who has not executed a consent or a relinquishment and who fails to respond to a notice of the adoption proceeding within 30 days after the service of the notice.
- (8) An individual notified under G.S. 48-2-206 who does not respond in a timely manner or whose consent is not required as determined by the court.
- (9) An individual whose actions resulted in a conviction under G.S. 14-27.2 or G.S. 14-27.3 and the conception of the minor to be adopted."

**SECTION 10.** G.S. 50-13.1(a) reads as rewritten:

"(a) Any parent, relative, or other person, agency, organization or institution claiming the right to custody of a minor child may institute an action or proceeding for the custody of such child, as hereinafter provided. Any person whose actions resulted in a conviction under G.S. 14-27.2 or G.S. 14-27.3 and the conception of the minor child may not claim the right to custody of that minor child. Unless a contrary intent is clear, the word "custody" shall be deemed to include custody or visitation or both."

**SECTION 11.** G.S. 7B-402 reads as rewritten:

**"§ 7B-402. Petition.**

The petition shall contain the name, date of birth, address of the juvenile, the name and last known address of the juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian and shall allege the facts which invoke jurisdiction over the juvenile. A person whose actions resulted in a conviction under G.S. 14-27.2 or G.S. 14-27.3 and the conception of the juvenile need not be named in the petition. The petition may contain information on more than one juvenile when the juveniles are from the same home and are before the court for the same reason.

Sufficient copies of the petition shall be prepared so that copies will be available for each parent if living separate and apart, the guardian, custodian, or caretaker, the guardian ad litem, the social worker, and any person determined by the court to be a necessary party."

**SECTION 12.** G.S. 7B-406(a) reads as rewritten:

"(a) Immediately after a petition has been filed alleging that a juvenile is abused, neglected, or dependent, the clerk shall issue a summons to the parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker requiring them to appear for a hearing at the time and place stated in the summons. No summons is required for any person whose actions resulted in a conviction under G.S. 14-27.2 or G.S. 14-27.3 and the conception of the juvenile. A copy of the petition shall be attached to each summons. Service of the summons shall be completed as provided in G.S. 7B-407, but the parent of the juvenile shall not be deemed to be under a disability even though the parent is a minor."

**SECTION 13.** G.S. 7B-1103 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

"(c) No person whose actions resulted in a conviction under G.S. 14-27.2 or G.S. 14-27.3 and the conception of the juvenile may file a petition to terminate the parental rights of another with respect to that juvenile."

**SECTION 14.** G.S. 7B-1104 reads as rewritten:

**"§ 7B-1104. Petition or motion.**

The petition, or motion pursuant to G.S. 7B-1102, shall be verified by the petitioner or movant and shall be entitled "In Re (last name of juvenile), a minor juvenile"; and shall set forth such of the following facts as are known; and with respect to the facts which are unknown the petitioner or movant shall so state:

- (1) The name of the juvenile as it appears on the juvenile's birth certificate, the date and place of birth, and the county where the juvenile is presently residing.
- (2) The name and address of the petitioner or movant and facts sufficient to identify the petitioner or movant as one authorized by G.S. 7B-1103 to file a petition or motion.
- (3) The name and address of the parents of the juvenile. If the name or address of one or both parents is unknown to the petitioner or movant, the petitioner or movant shall set forth with particularity the petitioner's or movant's efforts to ascertain the identity or whereabouts of the parent or parents. The information may be contained in an affidavit attached to the petition or motion and incorporated therein by reference. A person whose actions resulted in a conviction under G.S. 14-27.2 or G.S. 14-27.3 and the conception of the juvenile need not be named in the petition.
- (4) The name and address of any person who has been judicially appointed as guardian of the person of the juvenile.
- (5) The name and address of any person or agency to whom custody of the juvenile has been given by a court of this or any other state; and a copy of the custody order shall be attached to the petition or motion.
- (6) Facts that are sufficient to warrant a determination that one or more of the grounds for terminating parental rights exist.

- (7) That the petition or motion has not been filed to circumvent the provisions of Article 2 of Chapter 50A of the General Statutes, the Uniform Child-Custody Jurisdiction and Enforcement Act."

**SECTION 15.** G.S. 14-226 reads as rewritten:

**"§ 14-226. Intimidating or interfering with witnesses.**

(a) If any person shall by threats, menaces or in any other manner intimidate or attempt to intimidate any person who is summoned or acting as a witness in any of the courts of this State, or prevent or deter, or attempt to prevent or deter any person summoned or acting as such witness from attendance upon such court, he shall be guilty of a Class H felony.

(b) A defendant in a criminal proceeding who threatens a witness in the defendant's case with the assertion or denial of parental rights shall be a violation of this section."

**SECTION 16.** Section 10 of Article IV of the North Carolina Constitution reads as rewritten:

**"Sec. 10. District Courts.**

The General Assembly shall, from time to time, divide the State into a convenient number of local court districts and shall prescribe where the District Courts shall sit, but a District Court must sit in at least one place in each county. District Judges shall be elected for each district for a term of four years, in a manner prescribed by law. When more than one District Judge is authorized and elected for a district, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court shall designate one of the judges as Chief District Judge. Every District Judge shall reside in the district for which he is elected. For each county, the senior regular resident Judge of the Superior Court serving the county shall appoint ~~for a term of two years,~~ from nominations submitted by the Clerk of the Superior Court of the county, one or more Magistrates who shall be officers of the District Court. The initial term of appointment for a magistrate shall be for two years and subsequent terms shall be for four years. The number of District Judges and Magistrates shall, from time to time, be determined by the General Assembly. Vacancies in the office of District Judge shall be filled for the unexpired term in a manner prescribed by law. Vacancies in the office of Magistrate shall be filled for the unexpired term in the manner provided for original appointment to the ~~office-office,~~ unless otherwise provided by the General Assembly."

**SECTION 17.** The amendment set out in Section 16 of this act shall be submitted to the qualified voters of the State at the general election in November 2004, which election shall be conducted under the laws then governing elections in the State. Ballots, voting systems, or both may be used in accordance with Chapter 163 of the General Statutes. The question to be used in the voting systems and ballots shall be:

"[ ] FOR [ ] AGAINST

Constitutional amendment to provide for the first term of office for magistrates of the General Court of Justice to be two years and for subsequent terms to be four years."

**SECTION 18.** If a majority of the votes cast on the question are in favor of the amendment set out in Section 16 of this act, the State Board of Elections shall certify the amendment to the Secretary of State, who shall enroll the amendment so certified among the permanent records of that office. The amendment becomes effective January 1, 2005.

**SECTION 19.** G.S. 7A-171 reads as rewritten:

**"§ 7A-171. Numbers; appointment and terms; vacancies.**

(a) The General Assembly shall establish a minimum and a maximum quota of magistrates for each county. In no county shall the minimum quota be less than one. The number of magistrates in a county, within the quota set by the General Assembly, is determined by the Administrative Office of the Courts after consultation with the chief district court judge for the district in which the county is located.



(a1) The initial term of appointment for a magistrate is two years and subsequent terms shall be for a period of four years. The term of office begins on the first day of January of the odd-numbered year after appointment. The service of an individual as a magistrate filling a vacancy as provided in subsection (d) of this section does not constitute an initial term. For purposes of this section, any term of office for a magistrate who has served a two-year term is for four years even if the two-year term of appointment was before the effective date of this section, the term is after a break in service, or the term is for appointment in a different county from the county where the two-year term of office was served.

(b) Not earlier than the Tuesday after the first Monday nor later than the third Monday in December of each even-numbered year, the clerk of the superior court shall submit to the senior regular resident superior court judge of the district or set of districts as defined in G.S. 7A-41.1(a) in which ~~his~~the clerk's county is located the names of two (or more, if requested by the judge) nominees for each magisterial office ~~in the minimum quota established for the county~~county for which the term of office of the magistrate holding that position shall expire on December 31 of that year. Not later than the fourth Monday in December, the senior regular resident superior court judge shall, from the nominations submitted by the clerk of the superior court, appoint magistrates to fill the ~~minimum quota established~~positions for each county of ~~his~~the judge's district or set of districts. ~~The term of a magistrate so appointed shall be two years, commencing on the first day in January of the calendar year next ensuing the calendar year of appointment.~~

~~(c) After the biennial appointment of the minimum quota of magistrates, additional magistrates in a number not to exceed, in total, the maximum quota established for each county may be appointed in the following manner. The chief district judge for the district court district in which the county is located, with the approval of the Administrative Officer of the Courts, may certify to the clerk of superior court that the minimum quota is insufficient for the efficient administration of justice and that a specified additional number, not to exceed the maximum quota established for the county, is required. Within 15 days after the receipt of this certification the clerk of superior court shall submit to the senior regular resident superior court judge of the district or set of districts as defined in G.S. 7A-41.1(a) in which his county is located the names of two (or more, if requested by the judge) nominees for each additional magisterial office. Within 15 days after receipt of the nominations the senior regular resident superior court judge shall from the nominations submitted appoint magistrates in the number specified in the certification. A magistrate so appointed shall serve a term commencing immediately and expiring on the same day as the terms of office of magistrates appointed to fill the minimum quota for the county. If an additional magisterial office for a county is approved to commence on January 1 of an odd-numbered year, the new position shall be filled as provided in subsection (b) of this section. If the additional position takes effect at any other time, it is to be filled as provided in subsection (d) of this section.~~

(d) Within 30 days after a vacancy in the office of magistrate occurs the clerk of superior court shall submit to the senior regular resident superior court judge the names of two (or more, if so requested by the judge) nominees for the office vacated. Within 15 days after receipt of the nominations the senior regular resident superior court judge shall appoint from the nominations received a magistrate who shall take office immediately and shall serve ~~for the remainder of the unexpired term until December 31 of the even-numbered year, and thereafter the position shall be filled as provided in subsection (b) of this section.~~"

**SECTION 20.** Sections 1 and 6 of this act become effective October 1, 2004, and apply to actions filed on or after that date. Sections 7 through 15 of this act become effective December 1, 2004, and apply to offenses committed on or after that date. Sections 2, 3, 16, 17, 18, and 20 of this act are effective when they become law. Sections 4 and 5 of this act become effective October 1, 2004, and apply to orders entered on or after that date. Section 19 of this act becomes effective only upon approval by the voters of the constitutional amendment proposed in Section 16 of this act. If the constitutional amendment proposed in Section 16 is approved by the voters, Section 19 of this act becomes effective January 1, 2005, and applies to appointments that take effect after that date.

In the General Assembly read three times and ratified this the 17<sup>th</sup> day of July, 2004.

s/ Marc Basnight  
President Pro Tempore of the Senate

s/ James B. Black  
Speaker of the House of Representatives

s/ Michael F. Easley  
Governor

Approved 1:16 p.m. this 26<sup>th</sup> day of July, 2004