

WHAT IS THE N.C. SUPREME COURT & WHAT DOES IT DO?

The state Supreme Court is North Carolina's highest court. It only hears appeals*, so it holds no trials and has no jury. Its primary purpose is to consider whether errors occurred in lower courts or in how judges interpreted our laws.

*Appeal: A challenge to a previous legal decision

The N.C. Supreme Court can determine rights for things such as abortion, state maps, gun control, and other issues that affect us.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

HOW DO JUSTICES GET THE JOB?

Justices are elected to 8-year terms by voters like you.

Voting Rights

In May 2022, the N.C. Supreme Court protected voting rights for people with previous felony charges – expanding voting rights to tens of thousands of voters.

Immigration

The N.C. Supreme Court determines how federal immigration law and legislation should be applied within state. For example, a 2016 case led to a requirement that defendants in state court must be informed of the immigration consequences of taking a plea deal (State v. Nkiam, SC declined action after hearing oral arguments, which upheld appeals court decision).

Cases involving state laws are tried in State Trial Courts

Defendant loses and appeals

Intermediate Appellate Courts

Further appeal

N.C. Supreme Court

Decisions can be appealed if they raise a constitutional question

U.S. Supreme Court

WHO IS ON THE N.C. SUPREME COURT?

1 chief justice
6 associate justices

Ethnic studies in schools

N.C. Supreme court decisions can affect funding for N.C. public schools, which can determine access to adequate resources and teachers for students.

Redistricting

In February 2022, the State Supreme Court struck down unfair district maps and ordered them to be redrawn by the state legislature.

VOTE for your Supreme Court Justices!

The N.C. Supreme Court is an important part of checks and balances in our judicial system, and voters have the power to choose who's in it.