

Bill's Seat – A Report from the North Carolina Legislature – July 31, 2011

By Representative Bill Faison

The Legislature resumed Session July 13 to deal with redistricting and vetoes. Although this had been the official plan since mid June as set out in an Adjournment Resolution, the Republican Leadership in the House and Senate were not organized and ready to go. When the Legislature convened the Speaker announced there would be no votes until July 25. Part of the reason for the delay was continued manipulation of the maps for Congress, and the N.C. Senate and House.

Our District: The map of our District is partially as anticipated but in other very meaningful ways it is significantly different than what the Chair of the Committee said it would be. For example Caswell County is still being realigned with a large section of Rockingham County while Whitecross and a large portion of northern and eastern Durham County are added into our District. The big differences are that Hillsborough, West Hillsborough, Cameron Park, Grady Brown, Cole Store and Hogan Farms precincts are added to the Chapel Hill/Carrboro District. At the same time Patterson, Weaver Dairy, Cedar Falls and Eastside are moved into our District. The switch of precincts in Orange County only makes a 607 vote change. In other words, they shifted precincts in the county but the reasons for the shift are not clear since the numbers stayed almost the same. Removing Hillsborough and the precincts around Hillsborough from the rest of Northern Orange County and putting them in with Chapel Hill/Carrboro does not make any sense. The Republicans have the majority and did not need any Democratic help to pass their maps. Still a few Democrats went over and voted with them.

Congressional Districts: Caswell County and the Orange County (and some of the Durham County) portion of our new House District will be in the new 6th Congressional District. The precincts that have been moved from our District to Chapel/Carrboro will remain in Representative David Price's 4th Congressional District.

Legal Challenges to the Maps: The new NC House and Senate Districts split almost 400 precincts. Moreover, minorities are concentrated into fewer Districts diluting the impact of the minority vote. Many believe these changes were solely intended to shift the likelihood of political control to the Republicans. One analysis of the NC House I have seen projects 61

seats for Republicans, 39 for Democrats and 20 in play. 61 are needed for control. The Democrats will mount a legal challenge. There are many who predict that the 2012 elections will be conducted under the maps that existed before these changes. We will have to watch what happens over the next year.

Veto Overrides: The Governor vetoed 15 bills. Several of these were brought up for an override vote and overridden. Others were not overridden. I will tell you more about the bills next week.

Contact Me: I would really like to know what you think. Please contact me at Bill.Faison@ncleg.net to share your thoughts.