



HOUSE BILL 116: Local Bd. of Ed. Election Changes.

2025-2026 General Assembly

Committee: Senate Rules and Operations of the Senate	Date: May 21, 2025
Introduced by: Rep. B. Jones	Prepared by: Hillary Woodard
Analysis of: Third Edition	Staff Attorney

OVERVIEW: *House Bill 116 would change the election method for the Columbus County Board of Education, the Gaston County Board of Education, and Johnston County Board of Education from nonpartisan to partisan and alter the process for filling vacancies on the boards, beginning in 2026.*

CURRENT LAW:

Columbus County Board of Education

The Columbus County Board of Education consists of five members, each representing a single-member residency district. The member filling the seat must reside in the district, but elections for all five seats are conducted county-wide. Columbus County Board of Education members are elected in even-numbered years at the time of the general election to serve staggered four-year terms. Elections are conducted using the nonpartisan plurality method.

Vacancies are filled by the remaining members of the Columbus County Board of Education by appointment of a person to serve the remainder of the unexpired term. The vacancy must be filled by an individual residing in the residency district of the vacating member.

Gaston County Board of Education

The Gaston County Board of Education consists of nine members. Two members are elected from the county at large. Seven members are elected from six residency districts, with two members elected from the Gastonia Township district, and one member elected from each of the other districts. The residency districts used are the same residency districts used for the Gaston County Board of Commissioners. For the residency districts, the member filling the seat must reside in the district, but elections for the seats are conducted county-wide. Gaston County Board of Education members are elected in even-numbered years at the time of the general election to serve staggered four-year terms. Elections are conducted using the nonpartisan plurality method.

Vacancies are filled by the remaining members of the Gaston County Board of Education by the appointment of a person to serve until the next election of members to the Board, at which time the remaining unexpired term of the vacating member is filled by election. If a replacement is not chosen within 90 days after the vacancy occurs, then the vacancy is filled by the Gaston County Board of Commissioners. If a vacancy occurs in one of the residency districts, then the vacancy must be filled by an individual residing in the residency district of the vacating member.

Johnston County Board of Education

The Johnston County Board of Education consists of seven members, each representing a single-member residency district. The member filling the seat must reside in the district, but elections for all seven seats are conducted county-wide. Johnston County Board of Education members are elected in even-numbered

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years at the time of the general election to serve staggered four-year terms. Elections are conducted using the nonpartisan primary and election method. If three or more candidates qualify to run for each district in any election year, a primary is held. The two candidates receiving the highest number of votes in that primary for each district are nominated for the general election. No second primary is allowed. If less than three candidates qualify to run for each district in any election year, no primary is held.

Vacancies are filled by the remaining members of the Johnston County Board of Education by appointment of a person to serve the remainder of the unexpired term. The vacancy must be filled by an individual residing in the residency district of the vacating member.

BILL ANALYSIS: House Bill 116 would change the method of election for members of the Columbus County Board of Education, the Gaston County Board of Education, and the Johnston County Board of Education from nonpartisan to partisan, beginning in 2026. Beginning in 2026, to fill a vacancy on each of these Boards, the remaining members of the respective Board would appoint a qualified person to fill the vacancy. However, if the vacating member was a nominee of a political party, the respective Board would be required to appoint the nominee of that political party's executive committee if the nomination is made within 30 days of the vacancy occurring.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Effective the first Monday in December 2026, and elections in 2026 and thereafter conducted accordingly.