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North Carolina General Assembly Update | February 18, 2022

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Below is an update on the activity at the NC General Assembly this week. Please feel free to contact a member of the team with any questions or visit ktsstrategies.com to learn more about our services.

Legislature Submits Revised Maps

This week, the legislature returned to pass remedial state legislative and congressional maps. On February 4, the State Supreme Court ruled the first maps the legislature submitted unconstitutional. The revised NC House map received bi-partisan support with a vote of 115-5 and 41-3 in the House and Senate respectively. The NC Senate map passed along party lines with Senate Democrats stating the revised maps do not solve the underlying partisan gerrymander. The Congressional map also passed along party lines, with the exception of two House Republicans voting in opposition.

The legislature had to submit revised maps to a three-judge panel by noon today (February 18). The court has appointed three "special masters" in the case to help review the maps submitted by the legislature. Compliant maps must be approved or adopted by the court by noon on February 23. The candidate filing period is scheduled to resume February 24. The primary election will be held on May 17.

Mask Requirements

On Thursday, Governor Cooper held a press conference encouraging schools and local governments to end their mask mandates. NCDHHS Secretary Kody Kinsley encouraged schools to move to voluntary masking beginning March 7. A summary of changes to the StrongSchoolsNC Toolkit can be found here. Masks will still be required in certain places such as health care settings, long-term care facilities and public transportation in compliance with federal regulations.

The House and Senate passed a bill on Thursday that would allow parents to decide whether or not their children wear a mask in schools. S173, Free the Smiles Act, would repeal the requirement for monthly votes on face covering policies, allow parents to opt their child out of face covering requirements in schools, and limit the liability for public school units when allowing parental opt-out of face covering requirements. The bill passed the House with a vote of 76-42 and the Senate 28-17.