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## **Court Partially Halts North Carolina Legislature's Power Grab**

**Chapel Hill, N.C.** – The Southern Environmental Law Center, North Carolina NAACP, Clean Air Carolina, and Forward Justice released the following statements after the Wake County Superior Court issued an injunction to stop the North Carolina legislature's efforts to place two constitutional amendments on the ballot this fall relating to judicial vacancies, state boards and commissions, while denying SELC's petition to halt two additional misleading amendments relating to voter ID requirements and income tax rates.

"We're grateful the court has stopped the legislature's unprecedented attacks on the separation of our state powers, but its efforts to implement a harmful voter ID law and radical income tax limit must still be addressed," said **Kym Hunter, Senior Attorney at the Southern Environmental Law Center, which represents the citizen groups before the court.** "The democratic power of the people cannot be stolen through gerrymandered districts and misleading ballot language as legislative leaders are attempting to do. We will be appealing today's decision to the North Carolina Supreme Court and will continue fighting to ensure all North Carolinians are properly represented."

"While we are pleased this court has prohibited the North Carolina legislature's plans to drastically restructure our state government, we are disappointed that the decision didn't stop their efforts to erect new barriers to voting, which could ultimately disenfranchise thousands of North Carolinians, particularly people of color," said **NC NAACP President Rev. Dr. T. Anthony Spearman.** "This effort by the legislature comes straight out of the playbook from our state's shameful past of institutional racism, and we must stop it in its tracks."

"We are grateful for the court's decision on two of the amendments but frustrated with their failure to see the injustice in the legislature's efforts to limit voting rights and play politics with the state's budget and vigorously contest our interest in these matters," said **June Blotnick, Executive Director of Clean Air Carolina.** "The legislature's unprecedented power grab will silence the voice of voters who are demanding action on a variety of environmental issues. We will continue to press forward on this issue until North Carolinians can rest assured that their state legislature will honor their need for clean air and water."

The suit challenges four specific proposed amendments, relating to judicial vacancies, state boards and commissions, voter ID requirements, and income tax rates. If ratified, these proposed constitutional amendments would: (1) alter the separation of powers clause of the constitution to shift the Governor's right to appoint and determine the responsibilities and terms of office for all executive boards and commissions to the legislature and, thus the legislature would control them; (2) shift all meaningful power to fill judicial vacancies between elections from the Governor to the legislature; (3) limit future, legitimately-elected legislatures' power to set state income tax rates higher than seven-percent, which could limit funding for programs in support of those living in poverty, civil rights, and environmental protection programs; and (4) require individuals voting in person to present as yet unspecified photographic identification before voting that once again – without justification – threaten to target the ability of low-income voters, people of color, women, and college students to cast a ballot.

In practice, this shift of power would limit the impact of North Carolinians on state policy – especially on urgent civil rights and environmental issues. Since establishing a supermajority via racially gerrymandered districts, North Carolina lawmakers have sadly sought to entrench their power through pursuing disenfranchisement of voters, a program of

gutting support for people of color, workers and those living in poverty. At the same time, this legislature has dismantled longstanding clean air and water safeguards and gutted funding for state environmental programs and agencies – despite growing voter demands on issues ranging from opposing offshore drilling to cleaning up coal ash and GenX pollution. Now, as the state is poised to have representation that more accurately reflects the needs of voters, the legislature is trying to thwart the will of voters and the courts to consolidate power.

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*For more than 30 years, the Southern Environmental Law Center has used the power of the law to champion the environment of the Southeast. With more than 80 attorneys and nine offices across the region, SELC is widely recognized as the Southeast's foremost environmental organization and regional leader. SELC works on a full range of environmental issues to protect our natural resources and the health and well-being of all the people in our region. [www.SouthernEnvironment.org](http://www.SouthernEnvironment.org)*

*Founded in 1939, the NC NAACP is part of the nation's oldest and largest civil rights organization. Its branches throughout North Carolina are premier advocates for civil rights in their communities, conducting voter mobilization and monitoring equal opportunity in the public and private sectors. The mission of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People is to ensure the political, educational, social and economic equality of rights of all persons and to eliminate racial hatred and discrimination. [www.naacpnc.org](http://www.naacpnc.org)*

*Forward Justice is a nonpartisan law, policy and strategy center dedicated to advancing racial, social, and economic justice in the U.S. South. Our work catalyzes success for social movements and expands opportunities for people affected by injustice. [www.ForwardJustice.org](http://www.ForwardJustice.org)*

*Clean Air Carolina is a statewide nonprofit organization whose mission is to ensure cleaner air quality for all North Carolinians through education and advocacy and by working with our partners to reduce sources of pollution. [www.cleanaircarolina.org](http://www.cleanaircarolina.org)*