

**§ 7A-171. Numbers; appointment and terms; vacancies.**

(a) The General Assembly shall establish a minimum quota of magistrates for each county. In no county shall the minimum quota be less than one. The number of magistrates in a county, above the minimum quota set by the General Assembly, is determined by the Administrative Office of the Courts after consultation with the chief district court judge for the district in which the county is located.

(a1) The initial term of appointment for a magistrate is two years and subsequent terms shall be for a period of four years. The term of office begins on the first day of January of the odd-numbered year after appointment. The service of an individual as a magistrate filling a vacancy as provided in subsection (d) of this section does not constitute an initial term. For purposes of this section, any term of office for a magistrate who has served a two-year term is for four years even if the two-year term of appointment was before the effective date of this section, the term is after a break in service, or the term is for appointment in a different county from the county where the two-year term of office was served.

(b) Not earlier than the Tuesday after the first Monday nor later than the third Monday in December of each even-numbered year, the clerk of the superior court shall submit to the senior regular resident superior court judge of the district or set of districts as defined in G.S. 7A-41.1(a) in which the clerk's county is located the names of two (or more, if requested by the judge) nominees for each magisterial office for the county for which the term of office of the magistrate holding that position shall expire on December 31 of that year. Not later than the fourth Monday in December, the senior regular resident superior court judge shall, from the nominations submitted by the clerk of the superior court, appoint magistrates to fill the positions for each county of the judge's district or set of districts.

(c) If an additional magisterial office for a county is approved to commence on January 1 of an odd-numbered year, the new position shall be filled as provided in subsection (b) of this section. If the additional position takes effect at any other time, it is to be filled as provided in subsection (d) of this section.

(d) Within 30 days after a vacancy in the office of magistrate occurs the clerk of superior court shall submit to the senior regular resident superior court judge the names of two (or more, if so requested by the judge) nominees for the office vacated. Within 15 days after receipt of the nominations the senior regular resident superior court judge shall appoint from the nominations received a magistrate who shall take office immediately and shall serve until December 31 of the even-numbered year, and thereafter the position shall be filled as provided in subsection (b) of this section. (1965, c. 310, s. 1; 1967, c. 691, s. 15; 1971, s. 84, s. 1; 1973, c. 503, s. 2; 1977, c. 945, ss. 3, 4; 1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1037, s. 17; 2004-128, s. 19; 2006-187, s. 7(c).)