



NORTH CAROLINA

STATE BOARD OF ELECTIONS

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Regulation of Signs

§ 136-32. Regulation of signs

(a) Commercial Signs. – No unauthorized person shall erect or maintain upon any highway any warning or direction sign, marker, signal or light or imitation of any official sign, marker, signal or light erected under the provisions of G.S. 136-30, except in cases of emergency. No person shall erect or maintain upon any highway any traffic or highway sign or signal bearing thereon any commercial or political advertising, except as provided in subsections (b) through (e) of this section: Provided, nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit the erection or maintenance of signs, markers, or signals bearing thereon the name of an organization authorized to erect the same by the Department of Transportation or by any local authority referred to in G.S. 136-31. Any person who shall violate any of the provisions of this section shall be guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor. The Department of Transportation may remove any signs erected without authority or allowed to remain beyond the deadline established in subsection (b) of this section.

(b) Compliant Political Signs Permitted. – During the period beginning on the 30th day before the beginning date of "one-stop" early voting under G.S. 163A-1300 and ending on the 10th day after the primary or election day, persons may place political signs in the right-of-way of the State highway system as provided in this section. Signs must be placed in compliance with subsection (d) of this section and must be removed by the end of the period prescribed in this subsection.

(c) Definition. – For purposes of this section, "political sign" means any sign that advocates for political action. The term does not include a commercial sign.

(d) Sign Placement. – The permittee must obtain the permission of any property owner of a residence, business, or religious institution fronting the right-of-way where a sign would be erected. Signs must be placed in accordance with the following:

- (1) No sign shall be permitted in the right-of-way of a fully controlled access highway.
- (2) No sign shall be closer than three feet from the edge of the pavement of the road.
- (3) No sign shall obscure motorist visibility at an intersection.
- (4) No sign shall be higher than 42 inches above the edge of the pavement of the road.
- (5) No sign shall be larger than 864 square inches.
- (6) No sign shall obscure or replace another sign.

(e) Penalties for Unlawful Removal of Signs. – It is a Class 3 misdemeanor for a person to steal, deface, vandalize, or unlawfully remove a political sign that is lawfully placed under this section.

(f) Application Within Municipalities. – Pursuant to Article 8 of Chapter 160A of the General Statutes, a city may by ordinance prohibit or regulate the placement of political signs on rights-of-way of streets located within the corporate limits of a municipality and maintained by the municipality. In the absence of an ordinance prohibiting or regulating the placement of political signs on the rights-of-way of streets located within a

municipality and maintained by the municipality, the provisions of subsections (b) through (e) of this section shall apply.

(1921, c. 2, s. 9(b); C.S., s. 3846(r); 1927, c. 148, ss. 56, 58; 1933, c. 172, s. 17; 1957, c. 65, s. 11; 1973, c. 507, s. 5; 1977, c. 464, s. 7.1; 1991 (Reg. Sess., 1992), c. 1030, s. 39; 1993, c. 539, s. 981; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 24, s. 14(c); 2011-408, s. 1; 2017-6, s. 3.)

PLEASE NOTE effective December 1, 2019 any political sign remaining in the right-of-way of the State highway system more than 40 days after the primary or election day is deemed unlawfully placed abandoned property, and a person may remove and dispose of such political sign without penalty.

2019 N.C. Sess. Laws 119, Sec. 1 (amending G.S. § 136-32(b)).

Local ordinances regulating the placement of political signs must also provide that any political sign that remains in a right-of-way of streets located within the corporate limits of a municipality and maintained by the municipality more than 30 days after the end of the period prescribed in the ordinance is deemed unlawfully placed and abandoned property, and a person may remove and dispose of such political sign without penalty.

2019 N.C. Sess. Laws 119, Sec. 1 (amending G.S. § 136-32(f)).

PLEASE ALSO NOTE effective December 1, 2019 the county board of elections shall ensure that each precinct voting place permits candidates to place and retrieve political advertising at least 36 hours prior to the opening of the voting place and at least 36 hours after the close of the voting place, as provided in G.S. 163-166.01. Any political advertising placed outside the times specified may be removed by the property owner.

2019 N.C. Sess. Laws 119, Sec. 1.5.(a) (amending G.S. § 163-129)).

**Injuring
Electric
Fixtures**

§ 14-156. Injuring fixtures and other property of electric-power companies.

It shall be unlawful for any person willfully and wantonly, and without the consent of the owner, to take down, remove, injure, obstruct, displace or destroy any line erected or constructed for the transmission of electrical current, or any poles, towers, wires, conduits, cables, insulators or any support upon which wires or cables may be suspended, or any part of any such line or appurtenances or apparatus connected therewith, or to sever any wire or cable thereof, or in any manner to interrupt the transmission of electrical current over and along any such line, or to take down, remove, injure or destroy any house, shop, building or other structure or machinery connected with or necessary to the use of any line erected or constructed for the transmission of electrical current, or to wantonly or willfully cause injury to any of the property mentioned in this section by means of fire. Any person violating any of the provisions of this section shall be guilty of a Class 2 misdemeanor.

(1907, c. 919; C.S., s. 4328; 1993, c. 539, s. 94; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 24, s. 14(c).)

**Signs Within
Right of Way**

19A NCAC 02E .0415 Advertising Signs Within Right of Way

It shall be unlawful for any person, firm, or corporation to erect, place, or allow any advertising, or other sign, except regulation traffic and warning signs approved by the Department, on any highway or the right-of-way thereof, or so as to overhang the right-of-way, or to permit the erection or placing of any advertising or other sign, as herein prohibited, on any highway right-of-way which is situated over any land owned, rented, leased, or claimed by such person, firm, or corporation.

History Note: Authority G.S. 136-18(10); 136-30; Eff. July 1, 1978.