

North Carolina Supreme Court

CANDIDATES

**ANITA
EARLS**

DEMOCRAT · INCUMBENT



**SARAH
STEVENS**

REPUBLICAN

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Why your November 3 vote matters

The election on November 3 will decide a seat on the North Carolina Supreme Court. The candidates are running for an 8-year term. The Democratic nominee is incumbent Anita Earls and the Republican nominee is Sarah Stevens, who recently resigned from her position as member of the North Carolina House of Representatives. Republican justices currently have a [5-2 majority](#) on the North Carolina Supreme Court.

The North Carolina Supreme Court decides important questions of state law

In recent years, the Court has ruled on important issues. This year, in the *Leandro* group of cases challenging the constitutionality of the state's school financing system, the [Court reversed its 2022 decision](#) that required the state to provide schools with additional funding to provide an adequate education, altering the fate of the case on procedural grounds. In doing so, the Court ended three decades of litigation over public school funding.

In 2023 the Court also [reversed itself](#) in two voters' rights cases, holding that the state constitution did not permit the courts to play a role in policing partisan gerrymandering, and upholding a voter ID law that had been previously struck down.

This year the Court [will hear](#) two major separation-of-powers lawsuits with the Governor against top legislative leaders. The Governor challenges a series of laws modifying the membership structure and stripping the Governor's appointment authority for seven prominent state boards and commissions, along with a law limiting his choices when filling statewide judicial vacancies.

These cases are a few examples of the impact the Court has on North Carolinians' lives. The winner of this election will be a part of eight years of future rulings, affecting the everyday rights of North Carolina residents and businesses.

To help you decide

Here's background on the candidates' positions, relevant rulings, experience, and publicized endorsements. Follow our links to get further information.

ANITA EARLS

earls4justice.com

- **On abortion**, Earls [opposes](#) the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*. She said that "the Constitution's protections for privacy encompassed a woman's right to privacy and her own body."
- **On education**, before joining the Court, she [represented students](#) in school desegregation and education civil rights cases. As a justice, she [dissented](#) from a decision that dismissed a case seeking equitable school funding. She argued that North Carolina was failing to meet its constitutional educational obligations.

SARAH STEVENS

sarahstevensnc.com

- **On abortion**, Stevens, as a North Carolina House representative, [supported](#) a bill banning abortions after 12 weeks, calling the bill a "mainstream approach" to abortion restrictions. She [said](#), "The unborn will be recognized as having a fundamental right to be born."
- **On education**, she [voted](#) in the House to opt North Carolina into a [program](#) providing [federal](#) tax credits for donations that can go towards private schools. She [voted](#) for a bipartisan measure supporting [veterans](#) in higher education.

ANITA EARLS

- **On the environment**, Earls [says](#) that protecting a clean environment is among the rights that North Carolinians should enjoy under the law. She sees [connection](#) between implicit racial bias in the law and the quest for environmental justice.
- **On healthcare**, she calls access to [healthcare](#) a right enshrined in the North Carolina Constitution. She describes her [endorsement](#) by Planned Parenthood as being partially about the freedom to make healthcare decisions.
- **On immigration**, Earls [criticized](#) federal immigration enforcement actions that she said were causing fear among lawful residents and immigrants with no criminal records. She argued that the constitutional rights of North Carolinians must be protected.
- **On LGBTQ+ rights**, she has [thanked](#) transgender people “for the contributions you make to all our lives.”
- **On marijuana**, Earls [supported](#) recommendations to decriminalize simple possession, citing available data indicating that marijuana arrests in North Carolina [disproportionately](#) affect Black residents despite similar use rates across racial groups.
- **On voting rules**, she has [advocated](#) for broad voting rights protections and fair representation in the redistricting process. She previously litigated voting rights cases and worked on [redistricting issues](#) as a practicing attorney. As a justice, she [dissented](#) when the North Carolina Supreme Court overturned recent voting-rights and redistricting precedents, holding that the state constitution does not prohibit partisan gerrymandering.

Anita Earls is [currently](#) a justice on the North Carolina Supreme Court. She was [previously](#) a civil rights attorney with a focus on the right to vote. She has worked at a private civil rights firm and the U.S. Department of Justice’s Civil Rights Division. She founded and was executive director of the Southern Coalition for Social Justice. She is a graduate of Williams College and Yale Law School, and she has [taught](#) at Duke University, UNC Chapel Hill, and the University of Maryland.

Earls’s [endorsements include](#): former Governor Roy Cooper; North Carolina Association of Educators; [Eric H. Holder, Jr.](#), former U.S. Attorney General; North Carolina AFL-CIO; Planned Parenthood Votes South Atlantic; Durham Legislative Delegation; EMILY’s List; Sierra Club North Carolina; and the [North Carolina League of Conservation Voters](#), among others.

SARAH STEVENS

- **On the environment**, Stevens [voted](#) for a bipartisan [bill](#) reducing and managing the disposal of single-use waste. She [voted](#) to override the governor’s [veto](#) of a [bill](#) that [shifted](#) control of environmental appointments from the governor to the legislature.
- **On healthcare**, she [voted](#) against [expanding](#) Medicaid eligibility in 2013.
- **On immigration**, Stevens [voted](#) for a [bill](#) that [expanded requirements](#) for local law enforcement to cooperate with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).
- **On LGBTQ+ rights**, she [voted](#) for [legislation](#) prohibiting transgender students from participating in girls’ school sports, as well as [legislation](#) that would shield parents from abuse or neglect charges from not supporting their child’s transgender identity or transition.
- **On marijuana**, in 2021 Stevens [opposed](#) efforts to legalize marijuana in North Carolina, but while being open to some degree of decriminalization. She [voted against](#) permanently legalizing hemp and CBD products in North Carolina in 2022.
- **On voting rules**, Stevens [introduced](#) House Bill 958, which among other provisions [reduced](#) early voting days for primaries and post-election contests.

Sarah Stevens is [currently](#) focusing on her election for North Carolina Supreme Court Justice. Prior to that, she [served](#) as a member of the North Carolina House of Representatives. During her time in the House, she served as both the Republican Leader and the Former Speaker Pro Tempore. She also maintained a private law practice for over 30 years. She is a graduate of UNC Greensboro and Campbell University School of Law.

Stevens’s [endorsements include](#): [North Carolina Republican Party](#); [North Carolina Fraternal Order of Police](#); and [North Carolina Values Coalition](#), among others.

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