

Highlands Council Membership:
A Note from John Weingart

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There has been understandable recent interest in the membership of the Highlands Council. The following description of the current situation may be helpful to followers of the Council but it is not the official record and may be subject to minor error. If you are interested in recommending candidates, including yourself, for membership to the Council, I suggest you contact the Governor's Appointments Office or the transition office of Governor-elect Christie.

The Council has 15 seats which are subject to unusually complex, interlocking membership requirements. (See excerpt from the Highlands Act below.) Several facts to bear in mind follow.

The Process for Council Membership

- (1) A council member appointed to a particular seat can complete his or her term, even if his or her status changes to no longer meet the initial requirement. Thus, an appointee to a seat that must be held by an elected official remains on the Council even if he or she leaves the elected position.
- (2) When a Council member's term expires, he or she remains a full voting member until someone is sworn in as successor. If a member chooses to resign earlier than that, his or her seat is considered "Vacant" rather than "Expired" on the list below.
- (3) The appointment process begins with nomination by the Governor and is completed with a vote of confirmation by the State Senate and being sworn in. The confirmation process can be lengthy because the Senate Judiciary Committee, which must first approve each nominee, will not schedule a vote until each State Senator representing a part of the county in which the nominee lives agrees to let the candidate be considered. This review, referred to as "Senatorial courtesy," is an unwritten custom.
- (4) The Governor nominates candidates for all 15 seats but must accept recommendations from the Senate President and Assembly Speaker for two of them.
- (5) The Governor selects the Chair of the Council from among the confirmed members.

[The Current Status of Council Membership \(unofficial\)](#)