

§ 143-717. Commission.

(a) Creation. – The Tobacco Trust Fund Commission is created. The Commission shall be administratively located within the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services but shall exercise its powers independently of the Commissioner of Agriculture and the Department. All administrative expenses of the Commission shall be paid from the Fund.

(b) Membership. – The Commission shall consist of 18 members. The Commission shall be appointed as follows: six members by the Governor, six members by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, and six members by the Speaker of the House of Representatives. The members shall be appointed as follows:

- (1) The Governor shall make the following appointments:
 - a. A flue-cured tobacco farmer.
 - b. A flue-cured tobacco farmer.
 - c. A person in or displaced from tobacco-related employment.
 - d. An at-large appointee.
 - e. An at-large appointee.
 - f. An at-large appointee.
- (2) The President Pro Tempore of the Senate shall make the following appointments:
 - a. A flue-cured tobacco farmer.
 - b. A flue-cured tobacco farmer.
 - c. A burley tobacco farmer.
 - d. An at-large appointee.
 - e. An at-large appointee.
 - f. An at-large appointee.
- (3) The Speaker of the House of Representatives shall make the following appointments:
 - a. A flue-cured tobacco farmer.
 - b. A former flue-cured allotment holder who is not also a flue-cured tobacco farmer.
 - c. A burley tobacco farmer.
 - d. An at-large appointee.
 - e. An at-large appointee.
 - f. An at-large appointee.

It is the intent of the General Assembly that the appointing authorities, in appointing members, shall appoint members who represent the geographic, political, gender, and racial diversity of the State. It is the intent of the General Assembly that at least one-half of the members of the Commission be tobacco farmers.

Except as provided for the initial members under subsection (c) of this section, members shall serve four-year terms beginning July 1. No member may serve more than two full consecutive terms. Members may continue to serve beyond their terms until their successors are duly appointed, but any holdover shall not affect the expiration date of the succeeding term. Vacancies shall be filled by the designated appointing authority for the remainder of the unexpired term. A member may be removed from office for cause by the authority that appointed that member.

(c) Initial Membership; Staggering. – To provide for a staggered membership, the members initially appointed to the Commission shall be appointed to staggered terms. Of the initial appointments to the Commission, the members initially appointed pursuant to sub-subdivisions (b)(1)a., (1)b., (2)d., and (3)d. of this section shall serve one-year terms ending on June 30, 2001. The members initially appointed pursuant to sub-subdivisions (b)(2)c., (2)e., (3)a., and (3)e. shall serve two-year terms ending on June 30, 2002. The members initially appointed pursuant to sub-subdivisions (b)(1)c., (1)d., (1)e., (2)b., and (3)c. of this section shall

serve three-year terms ending June 30, 2003. The remaining members initially appointed pursuant to subsection (b) of this section shall serve four-year terms ending June 30, 2004.

(d) Officers. – The Commission shall elect from its membership a chair, vice-chair, and other officers as necessary for two-year terms beginning July 1 at the first meeting of the Commission held on or after July 1 of every even-numbered year. The vice-chair may act for the chair in the absence of the chair as authorized by the Commission.

(e) Frequency of Meetings. – The Commission shall meet at least quarterly each year and may hold special meetings at the call of the chair or a majority of members. The Governor shall call the initial meeting of the Commission.

(f) Quorum; Majority. – Ten members shall constitute a quorum of the Commission. The Commission may act upon a majority vote of the members of the Commission on matters involving the disbursement of funds and personnel matters properly before the Commission. On all other matters, the Commission may act by majority vote of the members of the Commission at a meeting at which a quorum is present.

(g) Per Diem and Expenses. – The members of the Commission shall receive per diem and necessary travel and subsistence expenses in accordance with the provisions of G.S. 138-5. Per diem, subsistence, and travel expenses of the members shall be paid from the Fund.

(h) Conflict of Interest. – Members of the Commission shall comply with the provisions of G.S. 14-234 prohibiting conflicts of interest, except that G.S. 14-234(a) shall not apply to an application for or the receipt of a grant or other financial assistance award by a member of the Commission from the Fund created under this Article, or an entity in which a member of the Commission has an interest, if both of the following conditions are met:

- (1) A member does not vote on, participate in the deliberation of, or otherwise attempt through his or her official capacity to influence the vote on, a grant or other financial assistance award by the Commission to the member.
- (2) The Commissioner of Agriculture determines that any award to a member is in accordance with general criteria adopted by the Commission for the distribution of funds from the Fund.

(i) Limit on Operating and Administrative Expenses. – All administrative expenses of the Commission shall be paid from the Fund. No more than three hundred seventy-five thousand dollars (\$375,000) may be used each fiscal year for administrative and operating expenses of the Commission and its staff, provided that the Commission may annually adjust the administrative expense cap imposed by this subsection, so long as that any cap increase does not exceed the amount necessary to provide for statewide salary and benefit adjustments enacted by the General Assembly. (2000-147, s. 3; 2006-264, s. 68; 2015-241, s. 13.12; 2021-78, s. 9.)