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CHAPTER 7.

CREATION OF NEW COUNTIES AND CONSOLIDATION OF COUNTIES

**SECTION 4‑7‑10.** Certain shaped counties shall not be established.

The General Assembly shall not establish any new county the greatest length of which shall be more than four times as long as the least central width thereof or which will leave the county or counties from which the territory is taken of a length more than four times as long as the least central width thereof. And the Governor shall not order an election upon a petition for the formation of a new county when the result of the establishment of a county pursuant to such election would be to create a new county of or reduce an old county to such an area.

The term “central width” shall be construed to mean any width not entirely within eight miles of one of the ends of the greatest length of the county.

**SECTION 4‑7‑20.** Petition for formation of new counties.

Whenever two or more sections of an old county or counties desire to be incorporated into a new county there shall be filed with the Governor a petition signed by one third of the qualified electors residing within the area of each section of the old county or counties proposed to be cut off to form a new county, setting forth the boundaries of the proposed new county, the proposed name, the number of inhabitants, the area and the taxable property as shown by the last tax returns and that the proposed lines for the new county do not run nearer to any courthouse building then established than eight miles therefrom.

**SECTION 4‑7‑30.** Procedures where there is no voting place in area affected.

When there is no established polling place or voting place in a section proposed to be incorporated in a new county the petitioners shall name a voting place or places in their petition, and the Governor shall in his order of election designate such place or places as the voting place or places, and managers of election shall be appointed therefor, and all electors otherwise qualified shall be allowed to vote at such voting place or places so named as may be most convenient, as legally as if their registration certificates called for that place by name.

**SECTION 4‑7‑40.** Petitioners shall deposit money to cover costs.

Whenever a petition is filed for the formation of a new county the petitioners shall deposit with the clerk of court of any county affected thereby an amount of money sufficient to cover expenses of survey and plats, of the commissioners and of the election to be held to determine whether the proposed new county shall be formed. In case the result of the election be unfavorable to such formation, the deposit so required and designated shall become a part of the funds of the county or counties from which such new county was proposed to be formed.

**SECTION 4‑7‑50.** Appointment of commission.

Whenever a petition is presented to and filed with the Governor for the creation of any new county he shall before ordering any election thereon refer the petition to a commission which he shall appoint, as provided in Section 4‑7‑60, for investigation by the Commission as to whether the requirements of the Constitution as to area, distance, wealth, population, etc., have been complied with.

**SECTION 4‑7‑60.** Composition of commission.

The commission shall consist of one person of discretion from each of the old counties, who is opposed to the new county, if there be any opposition, and an equal number of citizens who favor the formation of the new county, to be taken from within the territory of the proposed new county. The representation of the proposed new county and the old county or counties from which the new county is proposed to be formed must be equal in number on the commission.

**SECTION 4‑7‑70.** Appointment and duties of surveyors.

Upon receiving such petition and any annexed exhibits the commission shall appoint and contract with two competent surveyors, who shall not be residents of any county to be cut by the lines of the proposed new county, and these two surveyors shall name and call in a third similarly qualified to settle any points of difference between them. These surveyors shall ascertain and settle all necessary questions as to area, both of the proposed new county and of the old counties after being diminished by the new, and as to the distances of the lines of the proposed new county from any existing courthouse. They shall also make a survey of the proposed new lines and plainly mark the same, so as to clearly define the population and wealth taken and left and so as to provide a guide as to who can vote by reason of residence, if the election be finally ordered. They shall make full return and report of their finding, with plats of their work, to the commission, who shall annex the same to the petition. The surveyors shall be paid by warrant of the commission on the treasurer of each old county involved for the prorata cost of the survey made within the territory of each and to this end the surveyors shall render an itemized bill of their work for each county to be cut by the new lines.

**SECTION 4‑7‑80.** Commission shall investigate and report facts.

The commission, after the return by the surveyors has been filed with it, shall thoroughly investigate as to the population and wealth proposed to be taken and left by the new county and to that end may send for persons, papers and books giving statistics and may administer oaths, take testimony and employ a stenographer, if deemed by it necessary. It shall make a full report to the Governor of its finding as to the wealth and population embraced within the limits of the proposed new county and as to the wealth and population to be left in each old county to be cut by the new and shall annex to the petition its report with proper exhibits and with any evidence on which the report is based. Forthwith upon the completion of its investigation and report it shall return the petition and such finding and showing as is hereinbefore provided for to the Governor for his information.

**SECTION 4‑7‑90.** Election for new county; time and place.

Within twenty days after receipt of the report of the commission the Governor shall order an election in the territory proposed to be cut off for the new county to be held within sixty days from the date of the order. At such election the electors shall vote “yes” or “no” upon the question of creating and upon the name and county seat of such proposed new county.

**SECTION 4‑7‑100.** Conduct of election; appointment of managers.

For the purpose of such election the commissioners of election for each old county proposed to be cut shall appoint three managers for each voting place in the area of the old county proposed to be cut off, not more than two of whom shall be in favor of the proposed new county or against it, and shall deliver to them the books of registration for those voting places which the registration officers shall turn over to the commissioners on demand. Such election shall be conducted in the same manner as general elections in this State and all persons entitled to vote under the Constitution and laws of this State at general elections shall be entitled to vote at such election.

**SECTION 4‑7‑110.** Canvassing election returns and certifying results.

The commissioners of election for each old county proposed to be cut shall canvass the returns of the managers of each precinct in their county at which such election has been held, as such returns in general elections in this State are canvassed, and shall certify the result thereof in a tabulated statement of the vote at each precinct to the Secretary of State who shall transmit a tabulated statement of the vote at each precinct of an old county proposed to be cut off to both branches of the General Assembly at its next session.

**SECTION 4‑7‑120.** Election protests or contests.

The commissioners of election, respectively, shall, as judicial officers, decide all cases of protest or contest that may arise, subject to appeal to the Board of State Canvassers. The decision of the commissioners of election shall be final and conclusive evidence of the result of the election, unless appealed from within five days, in which case a decision of the Board of State Canvassers shall be final and conclusive evidence of the election on all questions of fact.

**SECTION 4‑7‑130.** General Assembly shall create new county if certain conditions are met.

The General Assembly at its next session shall create the new county if two thirds of the qualified electors voting at such election shall vote in favor of the establishment of such new county and if all the constitutional requirements for the formation of new counties have been complied with, of all of which the General Assembly must judge.

**SECTION 4‑7‑140.** Payment of costs by new county; tax.

In case such new county is formed the county so newly created shall pay all the costs and expenses of its creation, and in no wise shall any county which has been cut for the formation of a new county be liable for any of the cost or expenses incurred in cutting the same or in the formation thereof. The auditor of the newly created county, after such county has been organized and its officers elected, shall levy a tax upon all the taxable property in his county sufficient to cover the costs and expenses of its creation.

**SECTION 4‑7‑150.** Time between elections for new counties.

No election shall be ordered for the creation or establishment of any new county which shall embrace one half or more of the area of any proposed new county in which an election for its creation was defeated within four years preceding the date of the filing of the petition for such new county.

**SECTION 4‑7‑160.** Procedures when citizens desire two or more counties to consolidate.

Whenever the citizens of two or more counties desire to consolidate them into one they shall file a petition with the Governor to that effect, signed by one third of the qualified electors residing in the counties, and upon the filing of such petition the same proceedings shall be had as in the formation of new counties provided for in this chapter. At the election ordered upon such petition the electors shall vote for or against consolidation, the name of the new county and the location of the county seat.