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RALEIGH

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## **Governor Vetoes Senate Bill 416**

### **Senate Bill 416, “An Act To Amend Death Penalty Procedures”**

“As long as I am Governor, I will fight to make sure the death penalty stays on the books in North Carolina. But it has to be carried out fairly – free of prejudice.

Three years ago, North Carolina took steps to achieve this result by passing the Racial Justice Act. In response to the enactment of this historic law, our State has rightfully received national acclaim for taking a positive and long overdue step to make sure racism does not infect the way the death penalty is administered.

Last year, Republicans in the General Assembly tried -- and failed -- to take North Carolina backwards by passing a bill that would have undone the Racial Justice Act. This year’s Senate Bill 416 is not a “compromise bill”; it guts the Racial Justice Act and renders it meaningless.

Several months ago, a North Carolina superior court judge ruling on a claim brought under the Racial Justice Act determined that racial discrimination occurred in death penalty trials across the State over a multi-year period. The judge’s findings should trouble everyone who is committed to a justice system based on fairness, integrity, and equal protection under the law. Faced with these findings, the Republican majority in the General Assembly could have tried to strengthen our efforts to fix the flaws in our system. Instead, they chose to turn a blind eye to the problem and eviscerate the Racial Justice Act. Willfully ignoring the pernicious effects of discrimination will not make those problems go away.

It is simply unacceptable for racial prejudice to play a role in the imposition of the death penalty in North Carolina.”