Redistricting brief 021116

By Barry Smith

RALEIGH – While North Carolina waits on the U.S. Supreme Court to rule on congressional redistricting, the N.C. Supreme Court has closed its books on legislative and congressional redistricting.

According to North Carolina’s legislative Republican leaders, the N.C. Supreme Court denied a motion by plaintiffs to rehear the case. In December, the state’s highest court ruled that congressional and legislative districts met constitutional muster.

The chairmen of the state Senate and state House redistricting committees issued a joint statement on the N.C. court’s ruling.

“We appreciate the North Carolina Supreme Court’s decision, which means this case is closed at the state level,” Rep. David Lewis, R-Harnett, and Sen. Bob Rucho, R-Mecklenburg, said Thursday. “Today’s ruling makes our track record even more clear – five out of six times that North Carolina’s redistricting plans have been reviewed, they have been validated as fair, legal and constitutional. We hope the U.S. Supreme Court will recognize this, allow our state time to appeal the one and only conflicting opinion, and allow our current election to move forward.”

Last week, in a split decision, a three-judge federal panel ruled that the states 1st and 12th congressional districts were unconstitutional, and ordered the General Assembly to remedy the problem, putting North Carolina’s March 15 primary date in doubt.

The state has appealed that ruling to the U.S. Supreme Court, asking the nation’s highest court to delay the effect of last week’s ruling until the appeal can be heard.

At press time, it was unclear if the plaintiffs, including former state Rep. Margaret Dickson, D-Cumberland, would appeal the decision to the U.S. Supreme Court.