



A Neutral, Fact-Finding State Agency

Charged with Investigating Post-Conviction Claims of Innocence



THE NORTH CAROLINA
INNOCENCE
INQUIRY COMMISSION

Welcome back to our newsletter!

Welcome to the [North Carolina Innocence Inquiry Commission's](#) quarterly newsletter! The Commission is an independent, neutral state agency charged with investigating and evaluating claims of innocence by individuals who have been convicted of certain crimes in North Carolina. It is currently the only state agency of its kind in the entire country. Last year the Commission celebrated 15 years of operation. This edition of our newsletter provides a recap the of celebratory events that occurred in 2022.

Since its creation in 2006, the Commission has received over 3,300 claims of factual innocence. In 2022, the Commission received 223 claims of factual innocence. All claims go through an investigative process that determines whether the claim meets the Commission's statutory requirements and whether there is new, credible, and verifiable evidence of innocence.

15-year Anniversary Celebration

Last year the Commission celebrated its 15-Year Anniversary!^[1] The Commission is incredibly proud of all it has accomplished in its first 15 years as the only state agency of its kind in the nation. The Commission held several events throughout the week of October 24, 2022, to mark the occasion, including a 15-Year Anniversary Celebration and our first CLE to educate the legal community about the Commission process.



^[1] Although the Commission's 15-Year Anniversary was in 2021, global events prevented the Commission from properly celebrating until 2022!

Innocence Inquiry Commission Week

The Commission was honored to receive recognition from both the Chief Justice and the Governor for its impact on the criminal justice system in North Carolina.

[Chief Justice Paul Newby](#) declared the week of October 24, 2022, to be [Innocence Inquiry Commission week for the North Carolina Judicial Branch](#).

Governor Roy Cooper declared the week of October 24, 2022, to be Innocence Inquiry Commission week for the state of North Carolina [by a proclamation](#).



15-Year Anniversary Celebration

On October 26, 2022, the Commission held its 15-Year Anniversary Celebration at the Dorothy and Roy Park Alumni Center at N.C. State University in Raleigh. We welcomed current and former Commissioners, former staff members, members of the General Assembly, and various stakeholders and partners across the criminal justice system. We had an amazing turnout and are thankful to those in attendance for their continued support of the Commission.

During the celebration, Executive Director Lindsey Guice Smith welcomed guests and highlighted the Commission's accomplishments in its first 15 years. Lindsey also honored the 15 individuals who have been exonerated as part of the Commission's process. In total, these exonerations represent 296 years spent in prison for crimes they did not commit.

After pre-recorded comments from Chief Justice Paul Newby, the Commission's current Chair, Senior Resident Superior Court Judge Thomas Lock, and Representative Jamie Boles both spoke about the Commission's impact on them personally and on the criminal justice system in North Carolina. Finally, the Commission presented its first Criminal Justice Partner Award to Chief David L. Hess of the Roxboro Police Department in recognition of someone who has worked alongside the Commission to support its mission to ensure the innocent as well as the guilty receive justice.

WATCH: [Watch videos from the celebration.](#)

VIEW: [View more photos from the celebration.](#)

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