

# [***North Carolina redistricting attorney who fell short in federal confirmation fight dies at 69***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BPG-WDP1-JC5B-G2B8-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Byline:** GARY D. ROBERTSON, Associated Press

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**Body**

RALEIGH, N.C. — Thomas Farr, a longtime North Carolina redistricting and election law attorney who regularly defended Republican interests but whose 2018 [*federal judgeship nomination was scuttled*](https://apnews.com/united-states-congress-013cd18175284824b8391768e4c4f20c) by two GOP senators, has died, a legal colleague said Tuesday. He was 69.

Farr died on Monday following a series of heart problems, according to Phil Strach, a fellow election law attorney who said he had spoken to Farr's family about his death. Strach declined to say where Farr died.

“He should be remembered as what I would describe as a legal titan, certainly in North Carolina and, in many respects, nationwide,” Strach said. “You don’t get nominated a federal judge without ... a record of legal accomplishments.”

Farr, an Ohio native who attended law schools at Emory University and Georgetown University, arrived in North Carolina in the 1980s, according to Strach.

Although a specialist in employment law, Farr became known for his work in redistricting litigation. He participated in oral arguments before the U.S. Supreme Court in the 1990s for a court case in which voters argued successfully that an unconventional majority-Black congressional district drawn by North Carolina Democrats violated the Voting Rights Act.

Farr participated in voting and redistricting cases into the 2000s and then the 2010s, when Republicans took over the state legislature and their laws and redistricting lines were being challenged. Farr was formally nominated to a U.S. District Court judgeship in eastern North Carolina four times — two each by President George W. Bush and President Donald Trump — but was never confirmed.

During his final nomination, civil rights groups and Democrats criticized Farr for defending North Carolina voting and redistricting laws that judges had declared racially discriminatory. [*That included a 2013 law*](https://apnews.com/article/-----c86d6402d33e4813a90e111297207f10) whose provisions requiring photo identification to vote and reducing the number of early voting days were struck down.

The critics also focused on Farr's time serving as a lawyer for the reelection campaign of Republican Sen. Jesse Helms in 1990. The U.S. Justice Department alleged that postcards sent by the campaign mostly to Black voters were intended to intimidate them from voting.

Farr told the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee that he wasn't consulted about the postcards, did not have any role in drafting or sending them and was appalled by the language on them.

South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott sealed Farr's confirmation failure by announcing in November 2018 that he wouldn't vote for him, joining GOP Sen. Jeff Flake of Arizona and 49 Democratic lawmakers. Scott, the lone Black Republican in the chamber, said he decided to vote against Farr after a 1991 Justice Department memo on the postcard matter “shed new light on Mr. Farr’s activities.”

Strach, who worked with Farr for 25 years, most recently as a fellow law partner at the Nelson Mullins firm, called Farr's defeat the result of ***politics*** that blew allegations out of proportion. Farr was “confused and perplexed by the negative blowback” that he received, given that he believed his redistricting work in the 1990s plowed new ground to protect Black voting rights, Strach said. Strach called Farr a compassionate person who helped the next generation of lawyers.

Farr's “contributions to the legal field, his tireless advocacy for justice, and his commitment to the U.S. Constitution and the founding principles of our country will continue to inspire those who knew him for many years to come,” North Carolina Republican House Speaker Tim Moore said in a news release.

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