

A district split proposed by Senator Joe Sam Queen has hit a snag.

The split, proposed earlier this year, would divide the five county district in half, Watauga and Avery on one end and Yancey, Mitchell and Madison on the other. The proposal met harsh opposition from District Attorney Gerry Wilson, as well as the district bar, all of whom resented both the fact that they were not consulted and the expense of the measure. Avery County Board of Commissioners even passed a resolution in opposition to the split. Queen claimed the measure would bring the judicial system closer to the people at the southern end of the district.

Arguments may be moot for the time being.

Queen planned to put the proposal into the state budget for this term, but it has been tabled. The proposal was amended to ask the administrative office of the court to study the issue and report back. A study would meet the approval of District Attorney Gerry Wilson, who says that's what he's wanted all along. Wilson claims lack of study and thought is his main concern with the bill.

Queen hopes a study will clear things up about why a split is necessary.

Does he still expect the split to happen?

"I expect something to happen," he says. The administrative office may come up with alternatives to parts of Queen's bill, he says.

Some of those alternatives, he says, may include different locations for the split. By amending the bill, he said, the bill keeps moving forward.

"It's not over 'till it's over," he said.

If the study finds a genuine need for a split, Wilson says he will be a supporter.