

NORTH CAROLINA GENERAL STATUTES EXCERPTS
2012

Requests for Opinions and Interpretations

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NORTH CAROLINA GENERAL STATUTES

Excerpted from the North Carolina General Statutes as amended, 2012.

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Chapter 93 - Certified Public Accountants

§ 93-1. Definitions; practice of law.

- (a) Definitions. – As used in this Chapter certain terms are defined as follows:
- (1) An "accountant" is a person engaged in the public practice of accountancy who is not a certified public accountant as defined in this Chapter.
 - (2) "Board" means the Board of Certified Public Accountant Examiners as provided in this Chapter.
 - (3) A "certified public accountant" is a person who holds a certificate as a certified public accountant issued under the provisions of this Chapter.
 - (5) A person is engaged in the "public practice of accountancy" who holds himself out to the public as a certified public accountant or an accountant and in consideration of compensation received or to be received offers to perform or does perform, for other persons, services which involve the auditing or verification of financial transactions, books, accounts, or records, or the preparation, verification or certification of financial, accounting and related statements intended for publication or renders professional services or assistance in or about any and all matters of principle or detail relating to accounting procedure and systems, or the recording, presentation or certification and the interpretation of such service through statements and reports.
- (b) Practice of Law. – Nothing in this Chapter shall be construed as authorizing certified public accountants or accountants to engage in the practice of law, and such person shall not engage in the practice of law unless duly licensed so to do.

§ 93-2. Qualifications.

Any person who is a citizen of the United States, has declared the intention of becoming a citizen, is a resident alien, or is a citizen of a foreign jurisdiction which extends to citizens of this State like or similar privileges to be examined or certified, and who is over 18 years of age and of good moral character, and who has received from the State Board of Certified Public Accountant Examiners a certificate of qualification to practice as a certified public accountant shall be licensed to practice and be styled and known as a certified public accountant.

§ 93-3. Unlawful use of title "certified public accountant" by individual.

It shall be unlawful for any person who has not received a certificate of qualification or not been granted a practice privilege under GS 93-10 admitting the person to practice as a certified public accountant to assume or use such a title, or to use any words, letters, abbreviations, symbols or other means of identification to indicate that the person using same has been admitted to practice as a certified public accountant.

§ 93-4. Use of title by firm.

It shall be unlawful for any firm, copartnership, or association to assume or use the title of certified public accountant, or to use any words, letters, abbreviations, symbols or other means of identification to indicate that the members of such firm, copartnership or association have been admitted to practice as certified public accountants, unless each of the members of such firm, copartnership or association first shall have received a certificate of qualification from the State Board of Certified Public Accountant Examiners or been granted a practice privilege admitting each member of the firm, copartnership, or association to practice as a certified public accountant; provided, however, that the Board may exempt those persons who do not actually practice in or reside in the State of North Carolina from registering and receiving a certificate of qualification under this section.

§ 93-5. Use of title by corporation.

It shall be unlawful for any corporation to assume or use the title of certified public accountant, or to use any words, letters, abbreviations, symbols or other means of identification to indicate that such corporation has received a certificate of qualification from the State Board of Certified Public Accountant Examiners admitting it to practice as a certified public accountant.

§ 93-6. Practice as accountants permitted; use of misleading titles prohibited.

It shall be unlawful for any person to engage in the public practice of accountancy in this State who is not a holder of a certificate as a certified public accountant issued by the Board, unless such person uses the term "accountant" and only the term "accountant" in connection with his name on all reports, letters of transmittal, or advice, and on all stationery and documents used in connection with his services as an accountant, and refrains from the use in any manner of any other title or designation in such practice.

§ 93-8. Public practice of accounting by corporations prohibited.

It shall be unlawful for any certified public accountant to engage in the public practice of accountancy in this State through any corporate form, except as provided in General Statutes Chapter 55B.

§ 93-9. Assistants need not be certified.

Nothing contained in this Chapter shall be construed to prohibit the employment by a certified public accountant or by any person, firm, copartnership, association, or corporation permitted to engage in the practice of public accounting in the State of North Carolina, of persons who have not received certificates of qualification admitting them to practice as certified public accountants, as assistant accountants or clerks: Provided, that such employees work under the control and supervision of certified public accountants and do not certify to anyone the accuracy or verification of audits or statements; and provided further, that such employees do not hold themselves out as engaged in the practice of public accounting.

§ 93-10. Practice privileges.

(a) An individual whose principal place of business is outside this State is granted the privilege to perform or offer to perform services, whether in person or by mail, telephone, or other electronic means, in this State as a certified public accountant without notice to the Board, the submission of any other documentation, or the payment of any fee if the individual meets all of the following conditions:

- (1) Holds a valid and unrevoked certificate as a certified public accountant, or its equivalent, issued by another state, a territory of the United States, or the District of Columbia.
- (2) Holds a valid and unrevoked license or permit to practice as a certified public accountant issued by another state, a territory of the United States, or the District of Columbia.
- (3) Has passed the Uniform CPA Examination.
- (4) Has not been convicted of a felony under the laws of the United States, any state, a territory of the United States, or the District of Columbia and has never been convicted of a crime, an essential element of which is dishonesty, deceit, or fraud unless the jurisdiction in which the individual is licensed has determined the felony or other crime has no effect on the individual's license.

(b) An individual who satisfies the requirements of subsection (a) of this section and exercises the privilege afforded under this section by performing or offering to perform services as a certified public accountant in this State simultaneously consents as a condition of the grant of this privilege to:

- (1) Comply with the laws of this State, the provisions of this Chapter, and rules adopted by the Board.
- (2) Have an administrative notice of hearing served on the licensing board in the individual's principal state of business, notwithstanding the individual notice requirements of G.S. 150B-38.
- (3) Be subject to personal jurisdiction, subject matter jurisdiction, and disciplinary authority of the Board.

(c) A firm whose principal place of business is outside this State and has no office in this State is granted the privilege to perform or offer to perform services, whether in person or by mail, telephone, or electronic means, in this State as a firm without notice to the Board, submission of any other documentation, or payment of any fee, except as otherwise provided in subdivision (3) of this subsection. A firm that exercises the privilege afforded under this section simultaneously consents as a condition of the grant of the privilege to:

- (1) Comply with the laws of this State, the provisions of this Chapter, and rules adopted by the Board.
- (2) Be subject to personal jurisdiction, subject matter jurisdiction, and disciplinary authority of the Board.
- (3) Provide notice without a fee to the Board if any individual with the firm who has been granted privileges in North Carolina to practice as a certified public accountant performs any of the following services for a client in this State:
 - a. A financial statement audit or other engagement performed in accordance with the Statements on Auditing Standards.
 - b. An examination of prospective financial information performed in accordance with the Statements on Standards for Attestation Engagements.
 - c. An engagement performed in accordance with the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board auditing standards.

§ 93-11. Not applicable to officers of State, county or municipality.

Nothing herein contained shall be construed to restrict or limit the power or authority of any State, county or municipal officer or appointee engaged in or upon the examination of the accounts of any public officer, his employees or appointees.

§ 93-12. Board of Certified Public Accountant Examiners.

The name of the State Board of Accountancy is hereby changed to State Board of Certified Public Accountant Examiners and said name State Board of Certified Public Accountant Examiners is hereby substituted for the name State Board of Accountancy wherever the latter name appears or is used in Chapter 93 of the General Statutes. Said Board is created as an agency of the State of North Carolina and shall consist of seven members to be appointed by the Governor, five persons to be holders of valid and unrevoked certificates as certified public accountants issued under the provisions of this Chapter and two persons who are not certified public accountants who shall represent the interest of the public at large. Members of the Board shall hold office for the term of three years and until their successors are appointed. Appointments to the Board shall be made under the provisions of this Chapter as and when the terms of the members of the present State Board of Accountancy expire; provided, that all future appointments to said Board shall be made for a term of three years expiring on the thirtieth day of June. All Board members serving on June 30, 1980, shall be eligible to complete their respective terms. No member appointed to a term on or after July 1, 1980, shall serve more than two complete consecutive terms. The powers and duties of the Board shall be as follows:

- (1) To elect from its members a president, vice-president and secretary-treasurer. The members of the Board shall receive compensation and reimbursement for travel expenses in accordance with G.S. 93B-5.
- (2) To employ legal counsel, clerical and technical assistance and to fix the compensation therefore, and to incur such other expenses as may be deemed necessary in the performance of its duties and the enforcement of the provisions of this Chapter. Upon request the Attorney General of North Carolina will advise the Board with respect to the performance of its duties and will assign a member of his staff, or approve the employment of counsel, to represent the Board in any hearing or litigation arising under this Chapter. The Board may, in the exercise of its discretion, cooperate with similar boards of other states, territories and the District of Columbia in activities designed to bring about uniformity in standards of admission to the public practice of accountancy by certified public accountants, and may employ a uniform system of preparation of examinations to be given to candidates for certificates as certified public accountants, including the services and facilities of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, or of any other persons or organizations of recognized skill in the field of accountancy, in the preparation of examinations and assistance in establishing and maintaining a uniform system of grading of examination papers, provided however, that all examinations given by said Board shall be adopted and approved by the Board and that the grade or grades given to all persons taking said examinations shall be determined and approved by the Board.
- (3) To formulate rules for the government of the Board and for the examination of applicants for certificates of qualification admitting such applicants to practice as certified public accountants.
- (4) To hold written, oral, and computer-based examinations of applicants for certificates of qualification at least once a year, or more often, as may be deemed necessary by the Board.

- (5) To issue certificates of qualification admitting to practice as certified public accountants, each applicant who, having the qualifications herein specified, has passed an examination to the satisfaction of the Board, in "accounting," "auditing," "business law," and other related subjects.

A person is eligible to take the examination given by the Board, or to receive a certificate of qualification to practice as a certified public accountant, if the person is a citizen of the United States, has declared the intention of becoming a citizen, is a resident alien, or is a citizen of a foreign jurisdiction which extends to citizens of this State like or similar privileges to be examined or certified, is 18 years of age or over, and is of good moral character.

To be eligible to take the examination given by the Board, a person shall submit evidence satisfactory to the Board that the person holds a bachelors degree from a college or university that is accredited by one of the regional accrediting associations or from a college or university determined by the Board to have standards that are substantially equivalent to a regionally accredited institution. The degree studies shall include a concentration in accounting as prescribed by the Board or shall be supplemented with courses that are determined by the Board to be substantially equivalent to a concentration in accounting.

The Board may, in its discretion, waive the education requirement of any candidate if the Board is satisfied from the result of a special written examination given the candidate by the Board to test the candidate's educational qualifications that the candidate is as well qualified as if the candidate met the education requirements specified above. The Board may provide by regulation for the general scope of such examinations and may obtain such advice and assistance as it deems appropriate to assist it in preparing, administering and grading such special examinations.

To be eligible to receive a certificate of qualification to practice as a certified public accountant, a person shall submit evidence satisfactory to the Board that:

- a. The person has completed 150 semester hours and received a bachelors degree with a concentration in accounting and other courses that the Board may require from a college or university that is accredited by a regional accrediting association or from a college or university determined by the Board to have standards that are substantially equivalent to those of a regionally accredited institution.
- b. The person has the endorsement as to the person's eligibility of three certified public accountants who currently hold licenses in any state or territory of the United States or the District of Columbia.
- c. The person has one of the following:
 1. One year's experience in the field of accounting under the direct supervision of a certified public accountant who currently holds a valid license in any state or territory of the United States or the District of Columbia.
 2. Four years of experience teaching accounting in a four-year college or university accredited by one of the regional accrediting associations or in a college or university determined by the Board to have standards substantially equivalent to a regionally accredited institution.
 3. Four years of experience in the field of accounting.
 4. Four years of experience teaching college transfer accounting courses at a community college or technical institute accredited by one of the regional accrediting associations.
 5. Any combination of such experience determined by the Board to be substantially equivalent to the foregoing.

The Board may permit persons otherwise eligible to take its examinations and withhold certificates until the person has had the required experience.

- (6) In its discretion to grant certificates of qualification admitting to practice as certified public accountants such applicants who shall be the holders of valid and unrevoked certificates as certified public accountants, or the equivalent, issued by or under the authority of any state, or territory of the United States or the District of Columbia, when in the judgment of the Board the requirements for the issuing or granting of such certificates or degrees are substantially equivalent to the requirements established by this Chapter: Provided, however, that the state or political subdivision of the United States upon whose certificate the reciprocal action is based grants the same privileges to holders of certificates as certified public accountants issued pursuant to the provisions of this Chapter. The Board, by general rule, may grant temporary permits to applicants under this subsection pending their qualification for reciprocal certificates.
- (7) To charge for each examination provided for in this Chapter a fee not exceeding four hundred dollars (\$400.00). In addition to the examination fee, if the Board uses a testing service for the preparation, administration, or grading of examinations, the Board may charge the applicant the actual cost of the examination services. The applicant shall pay all fees and costs associated with the examination at the time the application is filed with the Board. Examination fees and costs shall not be refunded unless the Board deems the applicant ineligible for examination.
- (7a) To charge for each initial certificate of qualification provided for in this Chapter a fee not exceeding one hundred fifty dollars (\$150.00).
- (7b) To require an annual registration of each firm and to charge an annual registration fee not to exceed two hundred dollars (\$200.00) for each firm with one office, and a fee not to exceed twenty-five dollars (\$25.00) for each additional North Carolina office of the firm, to defray the administrative costs of accounting practice review programs. The Board may charge an annual fee not to exceed twenty-five dollars (\$25.00) for each firm application for exemption from the accounting practice review program.
- (8) To require the renewal of all certificates of qualification annually on the first day of July, and to charge an annual renewal fee not to exceed one hundred dollars (\$100.00).
- (8a) To require the registration of certified public accountant firms which have offices both within and outside of North Carolina, and the payment by such firms of an annual registration fee based on the total number of partners in each such firm, but not to exceed two thousand five hundred dollars (\$2,500) per firm per year.
- (8b) To formulate rules for the continuing professional education of all persons holding the certificate of certified public accountant, subject to the following provisions:
 - a. After January 1, 1983, any person desiring to obtain or renew a certificate as a certified public accountant must offer evidence satisfactory to the Board that the person has complied with the continuing professional education requirement approved by the Board. The Board may grant a

conditional license for not more than 12 months for persons who are being licensed for the first time, or moving into North Carolina, or for other good cause, in order that the person may comply with the continuing professional education requirement.

- b. The Board shall adopt rules for the administration of the continuing professional education requirement with a minimum number of hours of 20 and a maximum number of hours of 40 per year, and the Board may exempt persons who are retired or inactive from the continuing professional education requirement. The Board may also permit any certified public accountant to accumulate hours of continuing professional education in any calendar year of as much as two additional years annual requirement in advance of or subsequent to the required calendar year.
 - c. Any applicant who offers satisfactory evidence on forms promulgated by the Board that the applicant has participated in a continuing professional education program of the type required by the Board shall be deemed to have complied with this subdivision.
- (8c) The Board may formulate rules and regulations for report review and peer review of audits, reviews, compilations, and other reports issued on financial information in the public practice of accountancy of all firms, as herein defined, subject to the following provisions:
- a. After June 30, 1992, any firm desiring to obtain or maintain a registration as a firm must offer satisfactory evidence to the Board that such firm has complied with the peer review and report review requirements approved by the Board; provided, however, that the Board shall give to every firm subject to this section not less than 12 months advance notice of each peer review and report review required of the firm.
 - b. The Board may grant a conditional registration for not more than 24 months for firms which are being registered for the first time, or moving into North Carolina, or for other good cause, in order that such firm may comply with the report review and peer review requirements, and in order that the Board may develop a system of review rotation among the various firms that must comply with this section.
 - c. The peer review and report review shall be valid for a minimum of three years subject to the power of the Board to require remedial action by any firm with a deficiency in the review according to the rules established by the Board.
 - d. The Board shall promulgate rules and regulations for the administration of the report review and peer review requirements and the Board shall exempt firms that show to the satisfaction of the Board that they are not engaged in the public practice of accountancy or that the scope of their practice does not come within the peer review and report review guidelines established by the Board.
 - e. Any firm that offers satisfactory evidence to the Board that the firm has satisfactorily participated in and successfully completed a peer review or a report review of the type required by the Board shall be deemed to have complied with this section and the Board shall promulgate rules and regulations for the administration of this procedure.
 - f. For purposes of this section, a firm means an entity, sole proprietorship, partnership, registered limited liability partnership, professional limited liability company, or professional corporation through which one or more certificate holders engage in the public practice of accountancy through an office.
- (9) Adoption of Rules of Professional Conduct; Disciplinary Action. – The Board shall have the power to adopt rules of professional ethics and conduct to be observed by certified public accountants in this State and persons exercising the practice privilege authorized by this Chapter. The Board shall have the power to revoke, either permanently or for a specified period, any certificate issued under the provisions of this Chapter to a certified public accountant or any practice privilege authorized by the provisions of this Chapter or to censure the holder of any such certificate or person exercising the practice privilege authorized by this Chapter. The Board shall also have the power to assess a civil penalty not to exceed one thousand dollars (\$1,000) for any one or combination of the following causes:
- a. Conviction of a felony under the laws of the United States or of any state of the United States.
 - b. Conviction of any crime, an essential element of which is dishonesty, deceit or fraud.
 - c. Fraud or deceit in obtaining a certificate as a certified public accountant.
 - d. Dishonesty, fraud or gross negligence in the public practice of accountancy.
 - e. Violation of any rule of professional ethics and professional conduct adopted by the Board.

Any disciplinary action taken shall be in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 150B of the General Statutes. The clear proceeds of any civil penalty assessed under this section shall be remitted to the Civil Penalty and Forfeiture Fund in accordance with G.S. 115C-457.2.

- (12) To submit annually on or before the first day of May to the Secretary of Revenue the names of all persons who have qualified under this Chapter as certified public accountants. Privilege license issued under G.S. 105-41 shall designate whether such license is issued to a certified public accountant or an accountant.
- (13) The Board shall keep a complete record of all its proceedings and shall annually submit a full report to the Governor.
- (14) All fees collected on behalf of the Board and all receipts of every kind and nature, as well as the compensation paid the members of the Board and the necessary expenses incurred by them in the performance of the duties imposed upon them, shall be reported annually to the State Treasurer. All fees and other moneys received by the Board pursuant to the provisions of the General Statutes shall be kept in a separate fund by the treasurer of the Board, to be held and expended only for such purposes as are proper and necessary to the discharge of the duties of the Board and to enforce the provisions of this Chapter. No expense incurred by the Board shall be charged against the State.

- (15) Any certificate of qualification issued under the provisions of this Chapter, or issued under the provisions of Chapter 157 of the Public Laws of 1913, shall be forfeited for the failure of the holder to renew same and to pay the renewal fee therefore to the State Board of Accountancy within 30 days after demand for such renewal fee shall have been made by the State Board of Accountancy.
- (16) To apply to the courts, in its own name, for injunctive relief to prevent violations of this Chapter or violations of any rules adopted pursuant to this Chapter. Any court may grant injunctive relief regardless of whether criminal prosecution or any other action is instituted as a result of the violation. A single violation is sufficient to invoke the injunctive relief under this subdivision.
- (17) The Board shall have the power to acquire, hold, rent, encumber, alienate, and otherwise deal with real property in the same manner as a private person or corporation, subject only to approval of the Governor and the Council of State as to the acquisition, rental, encumbering, leasing, and sale of real property. Collateral pledged by the Board for an encumbrance is limited to the assets, income, and revenues of the Board.

§ 93-12.1. Effect of new requirements.

Any person who applies to the Board of Certified Public Accountant Examiners before July 1, 1983, to take the examination, who meets the educational requirement as it existed prior to June 4, 1979, and complies with any of the experience requirements of this Chapter shall be deemed to have met the prerequisites to taking such examination.

§ 93-12.2. Board records are confidential.

Records, papers, and other documents containing information collected or compiled by the Board, its members, or employees, as a result of a complaint, investigation, inquiry, or interview in connection with an application for examination, certification, or registration, or in connection with a certificate holder's professional ethics and conduct, shall not be considered public records within the meaning of Chapter 132 of the General Statutes. Any notice or statement of charges against a certificate holder or applicant, or any notice to a certificate holder or applicant of a hearing to be held by the Board is a public record, even though it may contain information collected and compiled as a result of a complaint, investigation, inquiry, or interview conducted by the Board. If any record, paper, or other document containing information collected and compiled by the Board is admitted into evidence in a hearing held by the Board, it shall then be a public record within the meaning of Chapter 132 of the General Statutes.

§ 93-13. Violation of Chapter; penalty.

A violation of G.S. 93-3, 93-4, 93-5, 93-6, or 93-8 shall be a Class 1 misdemeanor.

Chapter 93B - Occupational Licensing Boards

§ 93B-1. Definitions. As used in this Chapter:

"License" means any license (other than a privilege license), certificate, or other evidence of qualification which an individual is required to obtain before he may engage in or represent himself to be a member of a particular profession or occupation.

"Occupational licensing board" means any board, committee, commission, or other agency in North Carolina which is established for the primary purpose of regulating the entry of persons into, and/or the conduct of persons within, a particular profession or occupation, and which is authorized to issue licenses; "occupational licensing board" does not include State agencies, staffed by full-time State employees, which as a part of their regular functions may issue licenses.

§ 93B-2. Annual reports required; contents; open to inspection; sanction for failure to report.

(a) No later than October 31 of each year, each occupational licensing board shall file with the Secretary of State, the Attorney General, and the Joint Legislative Administrative Procedure Oversight Committee an annual report containing all of the following information:

- (1) The address of the board, and the names of its members and officers.
- (2) The number of persons who applied to the board for examination.
- (3) The number who were refused examination.
- (4) The number who took the examination.
- (5) The number to whom initial licenses were issued.
- (6) The number who applied for license by reciprocity or comity.
- (7) The number who were granted licenses by reciprocity or comity.
- (7a) The number of official complaints received involving licensed and unlicensed activities.
- (7b) The number of disciplinary actions taken against licensees, or other actions taken against nonlicensees, including injunctive relief.
- (8) The number of licenses suspended or revoked.
- (9) The number of licenses terminated for any reason other than failure to pay the required renewal fee.
- (10) The substance of any anticipated request by the occupational licensing board to the General Assembly to amend statutes related to the occupational licensing board.
- (11) The substance of any anticipated change in rules adopted by the occupational licensing board or the substance of any anticipated adoption of new rules by the occupational licensing board.

(b) No later than October 31 of each year, each occupational licensing board shall file with the Secretary of State, the Attorney General, the Office of State Budget and Management, and the Joint Legislative Administrative Procedure Oversight Committee a financial report that includes the source and amount of all funds credited to the occupational licensing board and the purpose and amount of all funds disbursed by the occupational licensing board during the previous fiscal year.

(c) The reports required by this section shall be open to public inspection.

(d) Failure of a board to comply with the reporting requirements of this section by October 31 of each year shall result in a suspension of the board's authority to expend any funds until such time as the board files the required reports. Suspension of a board's authority to expend funds under this subsection shall not affect the board's duty to issue and renew licenses or the validity of any application or license for which fees have been tendered in accordance with law. Each board shall adopt rules establishing a

procedure for implementing this subsection and shall maintain an escrow account into which any fees tendered during a board's period of suspension under this subsection shall be deposited.

§ 93B-3. Register of persons licensed; information as to licensed status of individuals.

Each occupational licensing board shall prepare a register of all persons currently licensed by the board and shall supplement said register annually by listing the changes made in it by reason of new licenses issued, licenses revoked or suspended, death, or any other cause. The board shall, upon request of any citizen of the State, inform the requesting person as to the licensed status of any individual.

§ 93B-4. Audit of Occupational Licensing Boards; payment of costs.

(a) The State Auditor shall audit occupational licensing boards from time to time to ensure their proper operation. The books, records, and operations of each occupational licensing board shall be subject to the oversight of the State Auditor pursuant to Article 5A of Chapter 147 of the General Statutes. In accordance with G.S. 147-64.7(b), the State Auditor may contract with independent professionals to meet the requirements of this section.

The cost of all audits shall be paid from funds of the occupational licensing board audited.

(b) Each occupational licensing board with a budget of at least fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) shall conduct an annual financial audit of its operations and provide a copy to the State Auditor.

§ 93B-5. Compensation, employment, and training of board members.

(a) Board members shall receive as compensation for their services per diem not to exceed one hundred dollars (\$100.00) for each day during which they are engaged in the official business of the board.

(b) Board members shall be reimbursed for all necessary travel expenses in an amount not to exceed that authorized under G.S. 138-6(a) for officers and employees of State departments. Actual expenditures of board members in excess of the maximum amounts set forth in G.S. 138-6(a) for travel and subsistence may be reimbursed if the prior approval of the State Director of Budget is obtained and such approved expenditures are within the established and published uniform standards and criteria of the State Director of Budget authorized under G.S. 138-7 for extraordinary charges for hotels, meals, and convention registration for State officers and employees, whenever such charges are the result of required official business of the Board.

(d) Except as provided herein board members shall not be paid a salary or receive any additional compensation for services rendered as members of the board.

(e) Board members shall not be permanent, salaried employees of said board.

(g) Within six months of a board member's initial appointment to the board, and at least once within every two calendar years thereafter, a board member shall receive training, either from the board's staff, including its legal advisor, or from an outside educational institution such as the School of Government of the University of North Carolina, on the statutes governing the board and rules adopted by the board, as well as the following State laws, in order to better understand the obligations and limitations of a State agency:

- (1) Chapter 150B, The Administrative Procedure Act.
- (2) Chapter 132, The Public Records Law.
- (3) Article 33C of Chapter 143, The Open Meetings Act.
- (4) Articles 31 and 31A of Chapter 143, The State Tort Claims Act and The Defense of State Employees Law.
- (5) Chapter 138A, The State Government Ethics Act.
- (6) Chapter 120C, Lobbying.

Completion of the training requirements contained in Chapter 138A and Chapter 120C of the General Statutes satisfies the requirements of subdivisions (5) and (6) of this subsection.

§ 93B-6. Use of funds for lobbying prohibited.

Occupational licensing boards shall not use any funds to promote or oppose in any manner the passage by the General Assembly of any legislation.

§ 93B-7. Rental of state-owned office space.

Any occupational licensing board, which financially operates on the licensing fees charged and also occupies state-owned office space, shall pay rent, in a reasonable amount to be determined by the Governor, to the State for the occupancy of such space.

§ 93B-8. Examination procedures.

(a) Each applicant for an examination given by any occupational licensing board shall be informed in writing or print of the required grade for passing the examination prior to the taking of such examination.

(b) Each applicant for an examination given by any occupational licensing board shall be identified, for purposes of the examination, only by number rather than by name.

(c) Each applicant who takes an examination given by any occupational licensing board, and does not pass such examination, shall have the privilege to review his examination in the presence of the board or a representative of the board. Except as provided in this subsection, an occupational licensing board shall not be required to disclose the contents of any examination or of any questions which have appeared thereon, or which may appear thereon in the future.

(d) Notwithstanding the provisions of this section, under no circumstances shall an occupational licensing board be required to disclose to an applicant questions or answers to tests provided by recognized testing organizations pursuant to contracts which prohibit such disclosures.

§ 93B-9. Age requirements.

Any other provision notwithstanding, no occupational licensing board may require that an individual be more than 18 years of age as a requirement for receiving a license.

§ 93B-10. Expiration of term of appointment of board member.

A board member serving on an occupational and professional licensing board whose term of appointment has expired shall continue to serve until a successor is appointed and qualified.

§ 93B-11. Interest from State Treasurer's Investment Program.

Any interest earned by an occupational licensing board under G.S. 147-69.3(d) may be used only for the following purposes:

- (1) To reduce fees;
- (2) Improve services offered to licensees and the public; or
- (3) For educational purposes to benefit licensees or the public.

§ 93B-12. Information from licensing boards having authority over health care providers.

(a) Every occupational licensing board having authority to license physicians, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, and nurse midwives in this State shall modify procedures for license renewal to include the collection of information specified in this section for each board's regular renewal cycle. The purpose of this requirement is to assist the State in tracking the availability of health care providers to determine which areas in the State suffer from inequitable access to specific types of health services and to anticipate future health care shortages which might adversely affect the citizens of this State. Occupational licensing boards shall collect, report, and update the following information:

- (1) Area of health care specialty practice;
- (2) Address of all locations where the licensee practices; and
- (3) Other information the occupational licensing board deems relevant to assisting the State in achieving the purpose set out in this section, including social security numbers for research purposes only in matching other data sources.

(b) Every occupational licensing board required to collect information pursuant to subsection (a) of this section shall report and update the information on an annual basis to the Department of Health and Human Services. The Department shall provide this information to programs preparing primary care physicians, physicians assistants, and nurse practitioners upon request by the program and by the Board of Governors of The University of North Carolina. Information provided by the occupational licensing board pursuant to this subsection may be provided in such form as to omit the identity of the health care licensee.

§ 93B-13. Revocation when licensing privilege forfeited for nonpayment of child support or for failure to comply with subpoena.

(a) Upon receipt of a court order, pursuant to G.S. 50-13.12 and G.S. 110-142.1, revoking the occupational license of a licensee under its jurisdiction, an occupational licensing board shall note the revocation in its records, report the action within 30 days to the Department of Health and Human Services, and follow the normal postrevocation rules and procedures of the board as if the revocation had been ordered by the board. The revocation shall remain in effect until the board receives certification by the clerk of superior court or the Department of Health and Human Services in an IV-D case that the licensee is no longer delinquent in child support payments, or, as applicable, that the licensee is in compliance with or is no longer subject to the subpoena that was the basis for the revocation.

(b) Upon receipt of notification from the Department of Health and Human Services that a licensee under an occupational licensing board's jurisdiction has forfeited the licensee's occupational license pursuant to G.S. 110-142.1, then the occupational licensing board shall send a notice of intent to revoke or suspend the occupational license of that licensee as provided by G.S. 110-142.1(d). If the license is revoked as provided by the provisions of G.S. 110-142.1, the revocation shall remain in effect until the board receives certification by the designated representative or the child support enforcement agency that the licensee is no longer delinquent in child support payments, or, as applicable, that the licensee is in compliance with or no longer subject to a subpoena that was the basis for the revocation.

(c) If at the time the court revokes a license pursuant to subsection (a) of this section, or if at the time the occupational licensing board revokes a license pursuant to subsection (b) of this section, the occupational licensing board has revoked the same license under the licensing board's disciplinary authority over licensees under its jurisdiction, and that revocation period is greater than the revocation period resulting from forfeiture pursuant to G.S. 50-13.12 or G.S. 110-142.1 then the revocation period imposed by the occupational licensing board applies.

(d) Immediately upon certification by the clerk of superior court or the child support enforcement agency that the licensee whose license was revoked pursuant to subsection (a) or (b) of this section is no longer delinquent in child support payments, the occupational licensing board shall reinstate the license. Immediately upon certification by the clerk of superior court or the child support enforcement agency that the licensee whose license was revoked because of failure to comply with a subpoena is in compliance with or no longer subject to the subpoena, the occupational licensing board shall reinstate the license. Reinstatement of a license pursuant to this section shall be made at no additional cost to the licensee.

§ 93B-14. Information on applicants for licensure.

Every occupational licensing board shall require applicants for licensure to provide to the Board the applicant's social security number. This information shall be treated as confidential and may be released only as follows:

- (1) To the State Child Support Enforcement Program of the Department of Health and Human Services upon its request and for the purpose of enforcing a child support order.
- (2) To the Department of Revenue for the purpose of administering the State's tax laws.

§ 93B-15. Payment of license fees by members of the armed forces.

An individual who is serving in the armed forces of the United States and to whom G.S. 105-249.2 grants an extension of time to file a tax return is granted an extension of time to pay any license fee charged by an occupational licensing board as a condition of retaining a license granted by the board. The extension is for the same period that would apply if the license fee were a tax.

§ 93B-16. Occupational board liability for negligent acts.

(a) An occupational licensing board may purchase commercial insurance of any kind to cover all risks or potential liability of the board, its members, officers, employees, and agents, including the board's liability under Articles 31 and 31A of Chapter 143 of the General Statutes.

(b) Occupational licensing boards shall be deemed State agencies for purposes of Articles 31 and 31A of Chapter 143 of the General Statutes, and board members and employees of occupational licensing boards shall be considered State employees for purposes of Articles 31 and 31A of Chapter 143 of the General Statutes. To the extent an occupational licensing board purchases commercial liability insurance coverage in excess of one hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$150,000) per claim for liability arising under Article 31 or 31A of Chapter 143 of the General Statutes, the provisions of G.S. 143-299.4 shall not apply. To the extent that an occupational licensing board purchases commercial insurance coverage for liability arising under Article 31 or 31A of Chapter 143 of the General Statutes, the provisions of G.S. 143-300.6(c) shall not apply.

(c) The purchase of insurance by an occupational licensing board under this section shall not be construed to waive sovereign immunity or any other defense available to the board, its members, officers, employees, or agents in an action or contested matter in any court, agency, or tribunal. The purchase of insurance by an occupational licensing board shall not be construed to alter or expand the limitations on claims or payments established in G.S. 143-299.2 or limit the right of board members, officers, employees, or agents to defense by the State as provided by G.S. 143-300.3.

Chapter 55B - Professional Corporation Act

§ 55B-1. Title.

This Chapter may be cited as "The Professional Corporation Act."

§ 55B-2. Definitions.

As used in this Chapter, the following words shall, unless the context requires otherwise, have the following meanings:

- (1) "Disqualified person" means a licensed person who for any reason becomes legally disqualified to render the same professional services which are or were being rendered by the professional corporation of which such person is an officer, director, shareholder or employee.
- (2) "Licensee" means any natural person who is duly licensed by the appropriate licensing board to render the same professional services which will be rendered by the professional corporation of which he is, or intends to become, an officer, director, shareholder or employee.
- (3) "Licensing board" means a board which is charged with the licensing and regulating of the profession or practice in this State in which the professional corporation is organized to engage.
- (4) The term "licensing board," as the same applies to attorneys at law, shall mean the Council of the North Carolina State Bar, and it shall include the North Carolina State Board of Law Examiners only to the extent that the North Carolina Board of Law Examiners is authorized to issue licenses for the practice of law under the supervision of the Council of the North Carolina State Bar.
- (5) "Professional corporation" means a corporation which is engaged in rendering the professional services as herein specified and defined, pursuant to a certificate of registration issued by the Licensing Board regulating the profession or practice, and which has as its shareholders only those individuals permitted by G.S. 55B-6 of this Chapter to be shareholders and which designates itself as may be required by this statute, and which is organized under the provisions of this Chapter and of Chapter 55, the North Carolina Business Corporation Act.
- (6) The term "professional service" means any type of personal or professional service of the public which requires as a condition precedent to the rendering of such service the obtaining of a license from a licensing board as herein defined, and pursuant to the following provisions of the General Statutes: Chapter 83A, "Architects"; Chapter 84, "Attorneys-at-Law"; Chapter 93, "Public Accountants"; and the following Articles in Chapter 90: Article 1, "Practice of Medicine," Article 2, "Dentistry," Article 6, "Optometry," Article 7, "Osteopathy," Article 8, "Chiropractic," Article 9A, "Nursing Practice Act," with regard to registered nurses, Article 11, "Veterinarians," Article 12A, "Podiatrists," Article 18A, "Practicing Psychologists," Article 18C, "Marriage and Family Therapy Licensure," Article 18D, "Occupational Therapy," and Article 24, "Licensed Professional Counselors"; Chapter 89C, "Engineering and Land Surveying"; Chapter 89A, "Landscape Architects"; Chapter 90B, "Social Worker Certification and Licensure Act" with regard to Certified [Licensed] Clinical Social Workers as defined by G.S. 90B-3; Chapter 89E, "Geologists"; Chapter 89B, "Foresters"; and Chapter 89F, "North Carolina Soil Scientist Licensing Act."

§ 55B-3. North Carolina Business Corporation Act applicable; other applicable law.

(a) Chapter 55 of the General Statutes, the North Carolina Business Corporation Act, applies to professional corporations, including their organization, and professional corporations shall enjoy the powers and privileges and shall be subject to the duties, restrictions and liabilities of other corporations, except insofar as the same may be limited or enlarged by this Chapter. If any provision of this Chapter conflicts with the provisions of Chapter 55 of the General Statutes, the North Carolina Business Corporation Act, the provisions of this Chapter shall prevail.

(b) A document required or permitted by this Chapter to be filed by the Secretary of State shall be filed under Chapter 55D of the General Statutes, Filings, Names, and Registered Agents for Corporations, Nonprofit Corporations, Limited Liability Companies, Limited Partnerships, and Limited Partnerships.

§ 55B-4. Formation of corporation.

A professional corporation under this Chapter may be formed pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 55, the North Carolina Business Corporation Act, with the following limitations:

- (1) At least one incorporator shall be a "licensee" as hereinabove defined in G.S. 55B-2(2).

- (2) All of the shares of stock of the corporation shall be owned and held by a licensee, or licensees, as hereinabove defined in G.S. 55B-2(2), except as otherwise permitted in G.S. 55B-6.
- (3) At least one director and one officer shall be a "licensee" as hereinabove defined in G.S. 55B-2(2).
- (4) The articles of incorporation, in addition to the requirements of Chapter 55, shall designate the personal services to be rendered by the professional corporation and shall be accompanied by a certification by the appropriate licensing board that the ownership of the shares of stock is in compliance with the requirements of G.S. 55B-4(2) and G.S. 55B-6.

§ 55B-5. Corporate name.

The corporate name used by professional corporations under this Chapter, except as limited by the licensing acts of the respective professions, shall be governed by the provisions of Chapter 55D, provided that professional corporations may use the words "Professional Association, P.A.," "Professional Corporation," or "P.C." in lieu of the corporate designations specified in Chapter 55D, and provided further that licensing boards by regulations may make further corporate name requirements or limitations for the respective professions, but such regulations may not prohibit the continued use of any corporate name duly adopted in conformity with the General Statutes and with the pertinent licensing board regulations in effect at the date of such adoption.

§ 55B-6. Capital stock.

(a) Except as provided in subsection (b), a professional corporation may issue shares of its capital stock only to a licensee as defined in G.S. 55B-2, and a shareholder may voluntarily transfer such shares of stock issued to him only to another such licensee. No share or shares of any stock of such corporation shall be transferred upon the books of the corporation unless the corporation has received a certification of the appropriate licensing board that the transferee of such shares is a licensee. Provided, it shall be lawful in the case of professional corporations rendering services as defined in Chapters 83A, 89A, 89C, 89E, and 89F, for non-licensed employees of such corporation to own not more than one-third of the total issued and outstanding shares of such corporation. Provided further, subject to any additional conditions that the appropriate licensing board may by rule or order impose in the public interest, it shall be lawful for individuals who are not licensees but who perform professional services on behalf of a professional corporation in another jurisdiction in which the corporation maintains an office, and who are duly licensed to perform professional services under the laws of the other jurisdiction, to be shareholders of the corporation so long as there is at least one shareholder who is a licensee as defined in G.S. 55B-2, and the corporation renders its professional services in the State only through those shareholders that are licensed in North Carolina. Upon the transfer of any shares of such corporation to a non-licensed employee of such corporation, the corporation shall inform the appropriate licensing board of the name and address of the transferee and the number of shares issued to such nonprofessional transferee. Any share of stock of such corporation issued or transferred in violation of this section shall be null and void. No shareholder of a professional corporation shall enter into a voting trust agreement or any other type of agreement vesting in another person the authority to exercise the voting power of any or all of his stock.

(a1) Any person may own up to forty-nine percent of the stock of a professional corporation rendering services under Chapter 93 of the General Statutes as long as:

- (1) Licensees continue to own and control voting stock that represents at least fifty-one percent (51%) of the votes entitled to be cast in the election of directors of the professional corporation; and
- (2) All licensees who perform professional services on behalf of the corporation comply with Chapter 93 of the General Statutes and the rules adopted thereunder.

(b) A professional corporation formed pursuant to this Chapter may issue one hundred percent (100%) of its capital stock to another professional corporation in order for that corporation (the distributing corporation) to distribute in accordance with section 355 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended (or any succeeding section), the stock of the controlled corporation to one or more shareholders of the distributing corporation authorized under this section to hold the shares. The distributing corporation shall distribute the stock of the controlled corporation within 30 days after the stock is issued to the distributing corporation. A share of stock of the controlled corporation that is not transferred in accordance with this subsection within 30 days after the share was issued to the distributing corporation is void.

§ 55B-7. Death or disqualification of a stockholder or employee.

(a) If any officer, shareholder, agent or employee of a corporation organized under this Chapter who is a licensee becomes legally disqualified to render professional services within this State, he shall sever all employment with, and financial interest in, such corporation forthwith. A corporation's failure to comply with this provision shall constitute grounds for the forfeiture of its certificate of incorporation and its dissolution. When a corporation's failure to comply with this provision is brought to the attention of the Secretary of State, the Secretary of State shall forthwith certify that fact to the Attorney General for appropriate action to dissolve the corporation.

(b) A professional corporation shall report to the appropriate licensing board the death of any of its shareholders within 30 days thereafter. Within one year of the date of such death, all of the shares owned by such deceased shareholder shall be transferred to and acquired by the professional corporation or persons qualified to own such shares. In the absence of an agreement which determines the equitable value of the shares, then the price for such shares shall be the fair market value of the stock, but not less than the book value as of the end of the month immediately preceding the death or disqualification. Notwithstanding any other provisions of this Chapter, the shares of stock owned by such deceased shareholder may be owned and held by the person or persons who may be legally entitled to receive such shares for a period of one year after the death of such deceased shareholder, or in the case of the death of the owner of all the shares of such corporation, for such period of time as may be necessary to liquidate the corporation.

§ 55B-8. Rendition of professional services.

A professional service corporation may render professional services only through its officers, employees and agents who are duly licensed to render such professional services; provided, however, this provision shall not be interpreted to include in the term

"employee," as used herein, clerks, secretaries, bookkeepers, technicians and other assistants who are not considered by law to be rendering professional services to the public.

§ 55B-9. Professional relationship and liability.

(a) Relationship. - Nothing in this Chapter shall be interpreted to abolish, modify, restrict, limit or alter the law in this State applicable to the professional relationship and liabilities between the licensee furnishing the professional services and the person receiving such professional service, or the standards of professional conduct applicable to the rendering therein of such services.

(b) Liability. - A shareholder, a director, or an officer of a professional corporation is not individually liable, directly or indirectly, including by indemnification, contribution, assessment, or otherwise, for the debts, obligations, and liabilities of, or chargeable to, the professional corporation that arise from errors, omissions, negligence, malpractice, incompetence, or malfeasance committed by another shareholder, director, or officer or by a representative of the professional corporation; provided, however, nothing in this Chapter shall affect the liability of a shareholder, director, or officer of a professional corporation for his or her own errors, omissions, negligence, malpractice, incompetence, or malfeasance committed in the rendering of professional services.

§ 55B-10. Registration with licensing board.

No professional corporation shall open, operate, or maintain an establishment for any of the purposes set forth in this Chapter without first having obtained a certificate of registration from the licensing board or boards. Applications for such registration shall be made to the licensing board or boards in writing and shall contain the name and address of the corporation and such other information as may be required by the licensing board or boards. If the board finds that no disciplinary action is pending before the board against any of the licensed incorporators, officers, directors, shareholders or employees of such corporation, and if it appears that such corporation will be conducted in compliance with the law and the regulations of the board, the board shall issue, upon the payment of a registration fee, not to exceed fifty dollars (\$50.00), a certificate of registration which shall remain effective until January 1 following the date of such registration or until such other expiration or renewal date as may be established by law or by the regulations of the licensing board.

§ 55B-11. Renewal of certificate of registration.

Upon written application of the holder, accompanied by a fee not to exceed the sum of twenty-five dollars (\$25.00), the licensing board shall renew the certificate of registration of a professional corporation as required by law or the regulations of the licensing board if the board finds that the corporation has complied with its regulations and the provisions of this section. If the corporation does not apply for renewal of its certificate of registration within 30 days after the date of the expiration of such certificate, the certificate of registration shall be automatically suspended and may be reinstated within the calendar year upon the payment of the required renewal fee plus a penalty of ten dollars (\$10.00), if such corporation is then otherwise qualified and entitled to a renewal of its certificate of registration.

§ 55B-12. Application of regulations of licensing boards.

A professional corporation shall be subject to the applicable rules and regulations adopted by, and all the disciplinary powers of, the licensing board as herein defined. Nothing in this Chapter shall impair the disciplinary powers of any licensing board applicable to a licensee as herein defined. No professional corporation may do any act which its shareholders as licensees are prohibited from doing.

§ 55B-13. Suspension or revocation of certificate of registration.

A licensing board may suspend or revoke a certificate of registration issued by it to a domestic or foreign professional corporation for any of the following reasons:

- (1) Upon the failure of such corporation to promptly remove or discharge an officer, director, shareholder or employee who becomes disqualified by reason of the revocation or suspension of his license to practice; or
- (2) Upon a finding by the licensing board that the professional corporation has failed to comply with the provisions of this Chapter or the regulations of the licensing board.

Upon the suspension or revocation of a certificate of registration issued to a professional corporation, such corporation shall cease forthwith to render professional services, and the Secretary of State shall be notified to the end that the corporation may be removed from active status and remain as such until reinstatement.

§ 55B-14. Types of professional services.

(a) A professional corporation shall render only one specific type professional service, and such services as may be ancillary thereto, and shall not engage in any other business or profession; provided, however, such corporation may own real and personal property necessary or appropriate for rendering the type of professional services it was organized to render and it may invest in real estate, mortgages, stocks, bonds, and any other type of investments.

(b) Notwithstanding subsection (a) of this section, in the case of architectural, landscape architectural, engineering or land surveying, geological, and soil science services, as defined in Chapters 83A, 89A, 89C, 89E, and 89F respectively, one corporation may be authorized to provide such of these services where such corporation, and at least one corporate officer who is a stockholder thereof, is duly licensed by the licensing board of each such profession.

§ 55B-15. Applicability of Chapter.

(a) This Chapter shall not apply to the following:

- (1) A corporation which prior to June 5, 1969, was permitted by law to render professional services or the corporate successor of that corporation by merger or otherwise by operation of law, provided there is no substantial change in the direct or indirect beneficial ownership of the shares of that corporation as the result of the merger or other transaction. For purposes of this subdivision, a change of twenty percent (20%) or less shall not be considered substantial.
- (2) A corporation authorized in this State to render primary services governed by Articles 1, 2, 4, or 5 of Chapter 87 of the General Statutes, if the corporation renders services as defined in Chapter 89C of the General Statutes, that are

reasonably necessary and connected with the primary services performed by individuals regularly employed in the ordinary course of business by the corporation. The professional services may not be offered, performed, or rendered independently from the primary services rendered by the corporation. This subdivision does not restrict, limit, or modify the requirement that professional services must be provided by individuals regularly employed in the ordinary course of business by the corporation and duly licensed to render these professional services in this State. Nothing in this subdivision shall be interpreted to abolish, modify, restrict, limit, or alter the law in this State applicable to the professional relationship and liabilities between licensees furnishing the professional service and the person receiving the professional service, or the standards of professional conduct applicable to the rendering of the professional service.

(b) A corporation or its successor exempt under subsection (a) of this section may be brought within the provisions of this Chapter by the filing of an amendment to its articles of incorporation declaring that its shareholders have elected to bring the corporation within the provisions of this Chapter and to make the same conform to all of the provisions of this Chapter.

§ 55B-16. Foreign professional corporations.

(a) A foreign professional corporation may apply for a certificate of authority to transact business in this State pursuant to the provisions of this Chapter and Chapter 55 of the General Statutes provided that:

- (1) The corporation obtains a certificate of registration from the appropriate licensing board or boards in this State;
- (2) With respect to each professional service practiced through the corporation in this State, at least one director and one officer shall be a licensee of the licensing board which regulates the profession in this State;
- (3) Each officer, employee, and agent of the corporation who will provide professional services to persons in this State shall be a licensee of the appropriate licensing board in this State;
- (4) The corporation shall be subject to the applicable rules and regulations adopted by, and all the disciplinary powers of, the appropriate licensing board or boards in this State;
- (5) The corporation's activities in this State shall be limited as provided by G.S. 55B-14; and
- (6) The application for certificate of authority, in addition to the requirements of G.S. 55-15-03, shall set forth the personal services to be rendered by the foreign professional corporation and the individual or individuals who will satisfy the requirements of G.S. 55B-16(a)(2) and shall be accompanied by a certification by the appropriate licensing board that each individual is a "licensee" as defined in G.S. 55B-2(2) and by additional certifications as may be required to establish that the corporation is a "foreign professional corporation" as defined in G.S. 55B-16(b).

(b) For purposes of this section, "foreign professional corporation" means a corporation for profit that:

- (1) Is incorporated under a law other than the law of this State;
- (2) Is incorporated for the purpose of rendering professional services of the type that if rendered in this State would require the obtaining of a license from a licensing board pursuant to the statutory provisions referred to in G.S. 55B-2(6); and
- (3) Has as its shareholders only individuals who:
 - a. Qualify to hold shares of a corporation organized under this Chapter;
 - b. Are licensed to provide professional services as defined in G.S. 55B-2(6) in a state in which the corporation is incorporated or is authorized to transact business, provided that such professional services are the same as the professional service rendered by the corporation;
 - c. Are nonlicensed employees of a corporation rendering services of the type defined in Chapters 83A, 89A, 89C, and 89E of the General Statutes, provided that all such nonlicensed employees own no more than one-third of the total issued and outstanding shares of such corporation in the aggregate; or
 - d. With respect to a professional corporation rendering services under Chapter 93 of the General Statutes, are persons who own not more than forty-nine percent (49%) of the stock in the professional corporation as long as:
 1. Individuals who meet the requirements of sub-subdivision a. or b. of this subdivision own and control voting stock that represents at least fifty-one percent (51%) of the votes entitled to be cast in the election of directors of the professional corporation; and
 2. All licensees who perform professional services on behalf of the corporation in this State comply with Chapter 93 of the General Statutes and the rules adopted thereunder.

(c) A foreign professional corporation with a valid certificate of authority has the same but no greater rights and privileges as, and is subject to the same duties, restrictions, penalties, and liabilities now or later imposed on, a domestic professional corporation of like character, except that the provisions of G.S. 55B-6 and G.S. 55B-7 do not apply.

Chapter 57C - North Carolina Limited Liability Company Act

§ 57C-1-01. Short title.

This Chapter is the "North Carolina Limited Liability Company Act" and may be cited by that name.

§ 57C-2-01. Purposes.

(a) Every limited liability company formed under this Chapter has the purpose of engaging in any lawful business unless a more limited lawful purpose is set forth in its articles of organization.

(b) A domestic or foreign limited liability company engaging in a business that is subject to regulation under another statute of this State may be formed or authorized to transact business under this Chapter only if permitted by and subject to all limitations of the other statute giving effect to subsection (c) of this section.

(c) Subsections (a) and (b) of this section to the contrary notwithstanding and except as set forth in this subsection, a domestic or foreign limited liability company shall engage in rendering professional services only to the extent that a professional corporation acting pursuant to Chapter 55B of the General Statutes or a corporation acting pursuant to Chapter 55 of the General Statutes may engage in rendering professional services under the conditions and limitations imposed by an applicable licensing statute. Chapter 55B of the General Statutes and each applicable licensing statute are deemed amended to provide that professionals licensed under the applicable licensing statute may render professional services through a domestic or foreign limited liability

company. For purposes of applying the provisions, conditions, and limitations of Chapter 55B of the General Statutes and the applicable licensing statute to domestic and foreign limited liability companies that engage in rendering professional services, (i) unless the context clearly requires otherwise, references to Chapter 55 of the General Statutes (the North Carolina Business Corporation Act) shall be treated as references to this Chapter, and references to a "corporation" or "foreign corporation" shall be treated as references to a limited liability company or foreign limited liability company, respectively, (ii) members shall be treated in the same manner as shareholders of a professional corporation, (iii) managers and directors shall be treated in the same manner as directors of a professional corporation, (iv) the persons signing the articles of organization of a limited liability company shall be treated in the same manner as the incorporators of a professional corporation, and (v) the name of a domestic or foreign limited liability company so engaged shall comply with Article 3 of Chapter 55D of the General Statutes and, in addition, shall contain the word "Professional" or the abbreviation "P.L.L.C." or "PLLC". For purposes of this subsection, "applicable licensing statute" shall mean those provisions of the General Statutes referred to in G.S. 55B-2(6).

Nothing in this Chapter shall be interpreted to abolish, modify, restrict, limit, or alter the law in this State applicable to the professional relationship and liabilities between the individual furnishing the professional services and the person receiving the professional services, the standards of professional conduct applicable to the rendering of the services, or any responsibilities, obligations, or sanctions imposed under applicable licensing statutes. A member, manager, director, or executive of a professional limited liability company is not individually liable, directly or indirectly, including by indemnification, contribution, assessment, or otherwise, for debts, obligations, and liabilities of, or chargeable to, the professional limited liability company that arise from errors, omissions, negligence, malpractice, incompetence, or malfeasance committed by another member, manager, director, executive, employee, agent, or other representative of the professional limited liability company; provided, however, nothing in this Chapter shall affect the liability of a member, manager, director, or executive of a professional limited liability company for his or her own errors, omissions, negligence, malpractice, incompetence, or malfeasance committed in the rendering of professional services.

§ 57C-2-02. Powers of the limited liability company.

Unless its articles of organization or this Chapter provide otherwise, each limited liability company has the same powers as an individual to do all things necessary or convenient to carry out its business and affairs, including, without limitation, power:

- (16) To render professional services, subject to G.S. 57C-2-01(c).

Chapter 59 - Partnership

§ 59-32. Definition of terms.

As used in this Chapter, except as otherwise defined in Article 5 of this Chapter for purposes of that Article, unless the context otherwise requires:

- (7) "Registered limited liability partnership" means a partnership that is registered under G.S. 59-84.2 and complies with G.S. 59-84.3.

§ 59-45. Nature of partner's liability in ordinary partnerships and in registered limited liability partnerships.

(a) Except as provided by subsections (a1) and (b) of this section, all partners are jointly and severally liable for the acts and obligations of the partnership.

(b) Nothing in this Chapter shall be interpreted to abolish, modify, restrict, limit, or alter the law in this State applicable to the professional relationship and liabilities between the individual furnishing the professional services and the person receiving the professional services, the standards of professional conduct applicable to the rendering of the services, or any responsibilities, obligations, or sanctions imposed under applicable licensing statutes. A partner in a registered limited liability partnership is not individually liable, directly or indirectly, including by indemnification, contribution, assessment, or otherwise, for the debts, obligations, and liabilities of, or chargeable to, the registered limited liability partnership that arise from errors, omissions, negligence, malpractice, incompetence, or malfeasance committed by another partner or by an employee, agent, or other representative of the partnership; provided, however, nothing in this Chapter shall affect the liability of a partner of a professional registered limited liability partnership for his or her own errors, omissions, negligence, malpractice, incompetence, or malfeasance committed in the rendering of professional services.

§ 59-84.2. Registered limited liability partnerships.

(a) A partnership whose internal affairs are governed by the laws of this State, other than a limited partnership, may become a registered limited liability partnership by filing with the Secretary of State an application stating all of the following:

- (1) The name of the partnership.
- (2) The street address, and the mailing address if different from the street address, of its principal office and the county in which the principal office is located.
- (3) The name and street address, and the mailing address if different from the street address, of the partnership's registered agent and registered office for service of process.
- (4) The county in this State in which the registered office is located.
- (7) The fiscal year end of the partnership.

(f1) A partnership becomes a registered limited liability partnership when its application for registration becomes effective.

(h) A partnership shall promptly amend its registration to reflect any change in the information contained in its application for registration, other than changes that are properly included in other documents filed with the Secretary of State. A registration is amended by filing a certificate of amendment with the Secretary of State.

(j) A partnership may cancel its registration by filing a certificate of cancellation with the Secretary of State.

§ 59-84.3. Name of registered limited liability partnerships.

A registered limited liability partnership's name must meet the requirements of G.S. 55D-20 and G.S. 55D-21.

§ 59-84.4. Annual report for Secretary of State.

(a) Each registered limited liability partnership and each foreign limited liability partnership authorized to transact business in this State shall deliver to the Secretary of State for filing an annual report, in a form prescribed by the Secretary of State, that sets forth all of the following:

- (1) The name of the registered limited liability partnership or foreign limited liability partnership and the state or country under whose law it is formed.
- (2) The street address, and the mailing address if different from the street address, of the registered office, the county in which the registered office is located, and the name of its registered agent at that office in this State, and a statement of any change of the registered office or registered agent, or both.
- (3) The street address and telephone number of its principal office.
- (4) A brief description of the nature of its business.
- (5) The fiscal year end of the partnership.

If the information contained in the most recently filed annual report has not changed, a certification to that effect may be made instead of setting forth the information required by subdivisions (2) through (4) of this subsection. The Secretary of State shall make available the form required to file an annual report.

Chapter 105 - Taxation

§ 105-41. Attorneys-at-law and other professionals.

(a) Every individual in this State who practices a profession or engages in a business and is included in the list below must obtain from the Secretary a statewide license for the privilege of practicing the profession or engaging in the business. A license required by this section is not transferable to another person. The tax for each license is fifty dollars (\$50.00).

(c) Every person engaged in the public practice of accounting as a principal, or as a manager of the business of public accountant, shall pay for such license fifty dollars (\$50.00), and in addition shall pay a license of twelve dollars and fifty cents (\$12.50) for each person employed who is engaged in the capacity of supervising or handling the work of auditing, devising or installing systems of accounts.

(h) Counties and cities may not levy any license tax on the business or professions taxed under this section.

(i) Obtaining a license required by this Article does not of itself authorize the practice of a profession, business, or trade for which a State qualification license is required.

Chapter 150B - Administrative Procedure Act

Article 1.

General Provisions.

§ 150B-1. Policy and scope.

(a) Purpose. - This Chapter establishes a uniform system of administrative rule making and adjudicatory procedures for agencies. The procedures ensure that the functions of rule making, investigation, advocacy, and adjudication are not all performed by the same person in the administrative process.

(b) Rights. - This Chapter confers procedural rights.

§ 150B-2. Definitions.

As used in this Chapter,

(1) "Administrative law judge" means a person appointed under G.S. 7A-752, 7A-753, or 7A-757.

(1a) "Agency" means an agency or an officer in the executive branch of the government of this State and includes the Council of State, the Governor's Office, a board, a commission, a department, a division, a council, and any other unit of government in the executive branch. A local unit of government is not an agency.

(1b) "Adopt" means to take final action to create, amend, or repeal a rule.

(1c) "Codifier of Rules" means the Chief Administrative Law Judge of the Office of Administrative Hearings or a designated representative of the Chief Administrative Law Judge.

(1d) "Commission" means the Rules Review Commission.

(2) "Contested case" means an administrative proceeding pursuant to this Chapter to resolve a dispute between an agency and another person that involves the person's rights, duties, or privileges, including licensing or the levy of a monetary penalty. "Contested case" does not include rulemaking, declaratory rulings, or the award or denial of a scholarship, a grant, or a loan.

(2b) "Hearing officer" means a person or group of persons designated by an agency that is subject to Article 3A of this Chapter to preside in a contested case hearing conducted under that Article.

(3) "License" means any certificate, permit or other evidence, by whatever name called, of a right or privilege to engage in any activity, except licenses issued under Chapter 20 and Subchapter I of Chapter 105 of the General Statutes and occupational licenses.

(4) "Licensing" means any administrative action issuing, failing to issue, suspending, or revoking a license or occupational license. "Licensing" does not include controversies over whether an examination was fair or whether the applicant passed the examination.

(4a) "Occupational license" means any certificate, permit, or other evidence, by whatever name called, of a right or privilege to engage in a profession, occupation, or field of endeavor that is issued by an occupational licensing agency.

(4b) "Occupational licensing agency" means any board, commission, committee or other agency of the State of North Carolina which is established for the primary purpose of regulating the entry of persons into, and/or the conduct of persons within a particular profession, occupation or field of endeavor, and which is authorized to issue and revoke licenses. "Occupational licensing agency" does not include State agencies or departments which may as only a part of their regular function issue permits or licenses.

- (5) "Party" means any person or agency named or admitted as a party or properly seeking as of right to be admitted as a party and includes the agency as appropriate.
- (6) "Person aggrieved" means any person or group of persons of common interest directly or indirectly affected substantially in his or its person, property, or employment by an administrative decision.
- (7) "Person" means any natural person, partnership, corporation, body politic and any unincorporated association, organization, or society which may sue or be sued under a common name.
- (8) "Residence" means domicile or principal place of business.
- (8a) "Rule" means any agency regulation, standard, or statement of general applicability that implements or interprets an enactment of the General Assembly or Congress or a regulation adopted by a federal agency or that describes the procedure or practice requirements of an agency. The term includes the establishment of a fee and the amendment or repeal of a prior rule. The term does not include the following:
 - a. Statements concerning only the internal management of an agency or group of agencies within the same principal office or department enumerated in G.S. 143A-11 or 143B-6, including policies and procedures manuals, if the statement does not directly or substantially affect the procedural or substantive rights or duties of a person not employed by the agency or group of agencies.
 - b. Budgets and budget policies and procedures issued by the Director of the Budget, by the head of a department, as defined by G.S. 143A-2 or G.S. 143B-3, by an occupational licensing board, as defined by G.S. 93B-1, or by the State Board of Elections.
 - c. Nonbinding interpretative statements within the delegated authority of an agency that merely define, interpret, or explain the meaning of a statute or rule.
 - d. A form, the contents or substantive requirements of which are prescribed by rule or statute.
 - e. Statements of agency policy made in the context of another proceeding, including:
 - 1. Declaratory rulings under G.S. 150B-4.
 - 2. Orders of establishing or fixing rates or tariffs.
 - f. Requirements, communicated to the public by the use of signs or symbols, concerning the use of public roads, bridges, ferries, buildings, or facilities.
 - g. Statements that set forth criteria or guidelines to be used by the staff of an agency in performing audits, investigations, or inspections; in settling financial disputes or negotiating financial arrangements; or in the defense, prosecution, or settlement of cases.
 - h. Scientific, architectural, or engineering standards, forms, or procedures, including design criteria and construction standards used to construct or maintain highways, bridges, or ferries.
 - i. Job classification standards, job qualifications, and salaries established for positions under the jurisdiction of the State Personnel Commission.
 - j. Establishment of the interest rate that applies to tax assessments under G.S. 105-241.21 and the variable component of the excise tax on motor fuel under G.S. 105-449.80.
 - k. The State Medical Facilities Plan, if the Plan has been prepared with public notice and hearing as provided in G.S. 131E-176(25), reviewed by the Commission for compliance with G.S. 131E-176(25), and approved by the Governor.
- (8b) "Substantial evidence" means relevant evidence a reasonable mind might accept as adequate to support a conclusion.

§ 150B-3. Special provisions on licensing.

(a) When an applicant or a licensee makes a timely and sufficient application for issuance or renewal of a license or occupational license, including the payment of any required license fee, the existing license or occupational license does not expire until a decision on the application is finally made by the agency, and if the application is denied or the terms of the new license or occupational license are limited, until the last day for applying for judicial review of the agency order. This subsection does not affect agency action summarily suspending a license or occupational license under subsections (b) and (c) of this section.

(b) Before the commencement of proceedings for the suspension, revocation, annulment, withdrawal, recall, cancellation, or amendment of any license other than an occupational license, the agency shall give notice to the licensee, pursuant to the provisions of G.S. 150B-23. Before the commencement of such proceedings involving an occupational license, the agency shall give notice pursuant to the provisions of G.S. 150B-38. In either case, the licensee shall be given an opportunity to show compliance with all lawful requirements for retention of the license or occupational license.

(c) If the agency finds that the public health, safety, or welfare requires emergency action and incorporates this finding in its order, summary suspension of a license or occupational license may be ordered effective on the date specified in the order or on service of the certified copy of the order at the last known address of the licensee, whichever is later, and effective during the proceedings. The proceedings shall be promptly commenced and determined.

Nothing in this subsection shall be construed as amending or repealing any special statutes, in effect prior to February 1, 1976, which provide for the summary suspension of a license.

(d) This section does not apply to the following:

- (1) Revocations of occupational licenses based solely on a court order of child support delinquency or a Department of Health and Human Services determination of child support delinquency issued pursuant to G.S. 110-142, 110-142.1, or 110-142.2.
- (2) Refusal to renew an occupational license pursuant to G.S. 87-10.1, 87-22.2, 87-44.2, or 89C-18.1, based solely on a Department of Revenue determination that the licensee owes a delinquent income tax debt.

§ 150B-4. Declaratory rulings.

(a) On request of a person aggrieved, an agency shall issue a declaratory ruling as to the validity of a rule or as to the applicability to a given state of facts of a statute administered by the agency or of a rule or order of the agency. Upon request, an agency shall also issue a declaratory ruling to resolve a conflict or inconsistency within the agency regarding an interpretation of the law or a rule adopted by the agency. The agency shall prescribe in its rules the procedure for requesting a declaratory ruling and the circumstances in which rulings shall or shall not be issued. A declaratory ruling is binding on the agency and the person

requesting it unless it is altered or set aside by the court. An agency may not retroactively change a declaratory ruling, but nothing in this section prevents an agency from prospectively changing a declaratory ruling.

(a1) An agency shall respond to a request for a declaratory ruling as follows:

- (1) Within 30 days of receipt of the request for a declaratory ruling, the agency shall make a written decision to grant or deny the request. If the agency fails to make a written decision to grant or deny the request within 30 days, the failure shall be deemed a decision to deny the request.
- (2) If the agency denies the request, the decision is immediately subject to judicial review in accordance with Article 4 of this Chapter.
- (3) If the agency grants the request, the agency shall issue a written ruling on the merits within 45 days of the decision to grant the request. A declaratory ruling is subject to judicial review in accordance with Article 4 of this Chapter.
- (4) If the agency fails to issue a declaratory ruling within 45 days, the failure shall be deemed a denial on the merits, and the person aggrieved may seek judicial review pursuant to Article 4 of this Chapter. Upon review of an agency's failure to issue a declaratory ruling, the court shall not consider any basis for the denial that was not presented in writing to the person aggrieved.

Article 2A.

Rules.

Part 1. General Provisions.

§ 150B-18. Scope and effect.

This Article applies to an agency's exercise of its authority to adopt a rule. A rule is not valid unless it is adopted in substantial compliance with this Article. An agency shall not seek to implement or enforce against any person a policy, guideline, or other interpretive statement that meets the definition of a rule contained in G.S. 150B-2(8a) if the policy, guideline, or other interpretive statement has not been adopted as a rule in accordance with this Article.

§ 150B-19. Restrictions on what can be adopted as a rule.

An agency may not adopt a rule that does one or more of the following:

- (1) Implements or interprets a law unless that law or another law specifically authorizes the agency to do so.
- (2) Enlarges the scope of a profession, occupation, or field of endeavor for which an occupational license is required.
- (3) Imposes criminal liability or a civil penalty for an act or omission, including the violation of a rule, unless a law specifically authorizes the agency to do so or a law declares that violation of the rule is a criminal offense or is grounds for a civil penalty.
- (4) Repeats the content of a law, a rule, or a federal regulation. A brief statement that informs the public of a requirement imposed by law does not violate this subdivision and satisfies the "reasonably necessary" standard of review set in G.S. 150B-21.9(a)(3).
- (5) Establishes a fee or other charge for providing a service in fulfillment of a duty unless a law specifically authorizes the agency to do so or the fee or other charge is for one of the following:
 - a. A service to a State, federal, or local governmental unit.
 - b. A copy of part or all of a State publication or other document, the cost of mailing a document, or both.
 - c. A transcript of a public hearing.
 - d. A conference, workshop, or course.
 - e. Data processing services.
- (6) Allows the agency to waive or modify a requirement set in a rule unless a rule establishes specific guidelines the agency must follow in determining whether to waive or modify the requirement.

§ 150B-19.1. Requirements for agencies in the rule-making process.

(a) In developing and drafting rules for adoption in accordance with this Article, agencies shall adhere to the following principles:

- (1) An agency may adopt only rules that are expressly authorized by federal or State law and that are necessary to serve the public interest.
- (2) An agency shall seek to reduce the burden upon those persons or entities who must comply with the rule.
- (3) Rules shall be written in a clear and unambiguous manner and must be reasonably necessary to implement or interpret federal or State law.
- (4) An agency shall consider the cumulative effect of all rules adopted by the agency related to the specific purpose for which the rule is proposed. The agency shall not adopt a rule that is unnecessary or redundant.
- (5) When appropriate, rules shall be based on sound, reasonably available scientific, technical, economic, and other relevant information. Agencies shall include a reference to this information in the notice of text required by G.S. 150B-21.2(c).
- (6) Rules shall be designed to achieve the regulatory objective in a cost-effective and timely manner.

(b) Each agency subject to this Article shall conduct an annual review of its rules to identify existing rules that are unnecessary, unduly burdensome, or inconsistent with the principles set forth in subsection (a) of this section. The agency shall repeal any rule identified by this review.

(c) Each agency subject to this Article shall post on its Web site, no later than the publication date of the notice of text in the North Carolina Register, all of the following:

- (1) The text of a proposed rule.
- (2) An explanation of the proposed rule and the reason for the proposed rule.
- (3) The federal certification required by subsection (g) of this section.

- (4) Instructions on how and where to submit oral or written comments on the proposed rule.
- (5) Any fiscal note that has been prepared for the proposed rule.

If an agency's staff proposes any such change to be presented to the rule-making agency, the staff shall publish the proposed change on the agency's Web site as soon as practicable after the change is drafted.

(d) Each agency shall determine whether its policies and programs overlap with the policies and programs of another agency. In the event two or more agencies' policies and programs overlap, the agencies shall coordinate the rules adopted by each agency to avoid unnecessary, unduly burdensome, or inconsistent rules.

(e) Each agency shall quantify the costs and benefits to all parties of a proposed rule to the greatest extent possible. Prior to submission of a proposed rule for publication in accordance with G.S. 150B-21.2, the agency shall review the details of any fiscal note prepared in connection with the proposed rule and must approve the fiscal note before submission.

(f) If the agency determines that a proposed rule will have a substantial economic impact as defined in G.S. 150B-21.4(b1), the agency shall consider at least two alternatives to the proposed rule. The alternatives may have been identified by the agency or by members of the public.

(g) Whenever an agency proposes a rule that is purported to implement a federal law, or required by or necessary for compliance with federal law, or on which the receipt of federal funds is conditioned, the agency shall:

- (1) Prepare a certification identifying the federal law requiring adoption of the proposed rule. The certification shall contain a statement setting forth the reasons why the proposed rule is required by federal law. If all or part of the proposed rule is not required by federal law or exceeds the requirements of federal law, then the certification shall state the reasons for that opinion.
- (2) Post the certification on the agency Web site in accordance with subsection (c) of this section.
- (3) Maintain a copy of the federal law and provide to the Office of State Budget and Management the citation to the federal law requiring or pertaining to the proposed rule.

(h) Before an agency that is within the Governor's cabinet submits the proposed text of a permanent rule change for publication in the North Carolina Register, the agency must submit the text of the proposed rule change and an analysis of the proposed rule change to the Office of State Budget and Management and obtain a certification from the Office that the agency has adhered to the principles set forth in this section. Before an agency that is within the departments of the Council of State, other than the Governor, submits the proposed text of a permanent rule change for publication in the North Carolina Register, the agency must submit the text of the proposed rule change and an analysis of the proposed rule change to the Commission and obtain a certification from the Commission, or the Commission's designee, as described in G.S. 150B-21.1(b), that the agency has adhered to the principles set forth in this section. The Office of State Budget and Management or the Commission, respectively, must respond to an agency's request for certification within 20 business days of receipt of the request.

§ 150B-19.2. Review of existing rules.

(a) The Rules Modification and Improvement Program. - The Rules Modification and Improvement Program is established to conduct an annual review of existing rules. The Office of State Budget and Management (OSBM) shall coordinate and oversee the Rules Modification and Improvement Program. The OSBM shall invite comments from the public on whether any existing rules, implementation processes, or associated requirements are unnecessary, unduly burdensome, or inconsistent with the principles set forth in G.S. 150B-19.1. Comments must identify a specific rule or regulatory program and may include recommendations regarding modifying, expanding, or repealing existing rules or changing the rule review and publication process. The OSBM shall direct each agency to conduct an internal review of its rules as required by G.S. 150B-19.1(b) and to forward a report of its review to the OSBM. The OSBM shall assemble and evaluate the public comments and forward any comments it deems to have merit to the appropriate agency for further review. Agencies shall review the public comments and prepare a report on whether any of the recommendations contained in the comments have potential merit and justify further action. Agencies shall submit a report of their findings to the OSBM by January 31 of each year. The OSBM shall publish an annual report by April 30 of each year summarizing all public comments and resulting actions taken or planned.

(b) The OSBM shall establish a single Web portal dedicated to receiving public comments and tracking agency progress on reforming rules.

§ 150B-20. Petitioning an agency to adopt a rule.

(a) Petition. - A person may petition an agency to adopt a rule by submitting to the agency a written rule-making petition requesting the adoption. A person may submit written comments with a rule-making petition. If a rule-making petition requests the agency to create or amend a rule, the person must submit the proposed text of the requested rule change and a statement of the effect of the requested rule change. Each agency must establish by rule the procedure for submitting a rule-making petition to it and the procedure the agency follows in considering a rule-making petition.

(b) Time. - An agency must grant or deny a rule-making petition submitted to it within 30 days after the date the rule-making petition is submitted, unless the agency is a board or commission. If the agency is a board or commission, it must grant or deny a rule-making petition within 120 days after the date the rule-making petition is submitted.

(c) Action. - If an agency denies a rule-making petition, it must send the person who submitted the petition a written statement of the reasons for denying the petition. If an agency grants a rule-making petition, it must inform the person who submitted the rule-making petition of its decision and must initiate rule-making proceedings. When an agency grants a rule-making petition, the notice of rule-making proceedings it publishes in the North Carolina Register may state that the agency is initiating rule-making proceedings as the result of a rule-making petition and state the name of the person who submitted the rule-making petition. If the rule-making petition requested the creation or amendment of a rule, the notice of text the agency publishes after the notice of rule-making proceedings may set out the text of the requested rule change submitted with the rule-making petition and state whether the agency endorses the proposed text.

(d) Review. - Denial of a rule-making petition is a final agency decision and is subject to judicial review under Article 4 of this Chapter. Failure of an agency to grant or deny a rule-making petition within the time limits set in subsection (b) is a denial of the rule-making petition.

§ 150B-21. Agency must designate rule-making coordinator; duties of coordinator.

- (a) Each agency must designate one or more rule-making coordinators to oversee the agency's rule-making functions. The coordinator shall serve as the liaison between the agency, other agencies, units of local government, and the public in the rule-making process. The coordinator shall report directly to the agency head.
- (b) The rule-making coordinator shall be responsible for the following:
- (1) Preparing notices of public hearings.
 - (2) Coordinating access to the agency's rules.
 - (3) Screening all proposed rule actions prior to publication in the North Carolina Register to assure that an accurate fiscal note has been completed as required by G.S. 150B-21.4(b).
 - (4) Consulting with the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners and the North Carolina League of Municipalities to determine which local governments would be affected by any proposed rule action.
 - (5) Providing the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners and the North Carolina League of Municipalities with copies of all fiscal notes required by G.S. 150B-21.4(b), prior to publication in the North Carolina Register of the proposed text of a permanent rule change.
 - (6) Coordinating the submission of proposed rules to the Governor as provided by G.S. 150B-21.26.
- (c) At the earliest point in the rule-making process and in consultation with the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners, the North Carolina League of Municipalities, and with samples of county managers or city managers, as appropriate, the rule-making coordinator shall lead the agency's efforts in the development and drafting of any rules or rule changes that could:
- (1) Require any unit of local government, including a county, city, school administrative unit, or other local entity funded by or through a unit of local government to carry out additional or modified responsibilities;
 - (2) Increase the cost of providing or delivering a public service funded in whole or in part by any unit of local government; or
 - (3) Otherwise affect the expenditures or revenues of a unit of local government.
- (d) The rule-making coordinator shall send to the Office of State Budget and Management for compilation a copy of each final fiscal note prepared pursuant to G.S. 150B-21.4(b).
- (e) The rule-making coordinator shall compile a schedule of the administrative rules and amendments expected to be proposed during the next fiscal year. The coordinator shall provide a copy of the schedule to the Office of State Budget and Management in a manner proposed by that Office.
- (f) Whenever an agency proposes a rule that is purported to implement a federal law, or required by or necessary for compliance with federal law, or on which the receipt of federal funds is conditioned, the rule-making coordinator shall:
- (1) Attach to the proposed rule a certificate prepared by the rule-making coordinator identifying the federal law requiring adoption of the proposed rule. The certification shall contain a statement setting forth the reasons for why the proposed rule is required by law. If all or part of the proposed rule is not required by federal law or exceeds the requirements of federal law, then the certification shall state the reasons for that opinion. No comment or opinion shall be included in the certification with regard to the merits of the proposed rule; and
 - (2) The rule-making coordinator shall maintain a copy of the federal law and shall provide to the Office of State Budget and Management for compilation the citation to the federal law requiring or pertaining to the proposed rule.

§ 150B-21.4. Fiscal notes on rules.

- (a) State Funds. - Before an agency publishes in the North Carolina Register the proposed text of a permanent rule change that would require the expenditure or distribution of funds subject to the State Budget Act, Chapter 143C of the General Statutes it must submit the text of the proposed rule change, an analysis of the proposed rule change, and a fiscal note on the proposed rule change to the Office of State Budget and Management and obtain certification from the Office that the funds that would be required by the proposed rule change are available. The fiscal note must state the amount of funds that would be expended or distributed as a result of the proposed rule change and explain how the amount was computed. The Office of State Budget and Management must certify a proposed rule change if funds are available to cover the expenditure or distribution required by the proposed rule change.

Article 3A.

Other Administrative Hearings.

§ 150B-38. Scope; hearing required; notice; venue.

- (a) The provisions of this Article shall apply to:
- (1) Occupational licensing agencies.
- (b) Prior to any agency action in a contested case, the agency shall give the parties in the case an opportunity for a hearing without undue delay and notice not less than 15 days before the hearing. Notice to the parties shall include:
- (1) A statement of the date, hour, place, and nature of the hearing;
 - (2) A reference to the particular sections of the statutes and rules involved; and
 - (3) A short and plain statement of the facts alleged.
- (c) Notice shall be given by one of the methods for service of process under G.S. 1A-1, Rule 4(j) or Rule 4(j3). If given by registered or certified mail, by signature confirmation as provided by the United States Postal Service, or by designated delivery service authorized pursuant to 26 U.S.C. § 7502(f)(2) with delivery receipt, notice shall be deemed to have been given on the delivery date appearing on the return receipt, copy of proof of delivery provided by the United States Postal Service, or delivery receipt. If notice cannot be given by one of the methods for service of process under G.S. 1A-1, Rule 4(j) or Rule 4(j3), then notice shall be given in the manner provided in G.S. 1A-1, Rule 4(j1).
- (d) A party who has been served with a notice of hearing may file a written response with the agency. If a written response is filed, a copy of the response must be mailed to all other parties not less than 10 days before the date set for the hearing.

(e) All hearings conducted under this Article shall be open to the public. A hearing conducted by the agency shall be held in the county where the agency maintains its principal office. A hearing conducted for the agency by an administrative law judge requested under G.S. 150B-40 shall be held in a county in this State where any person whose property or rights are the subject matter of the hearing resides. If a different venue would promote the ends of justice or better serve the convenience of witnesses, the agency or the administrative law judge may designate another county. A person whose property or rights are the subject matter of the hearing waives his objection to venue if he proceeds in the hearing.

(f) Any person may petition to become a party by filing with the agency or hearing officer a motion to intervene in the manner provided by G.S. 1A-1, Rule 24. In addition, any person interested in a contested case under this Article may intervene and participate to the extent deemed appropriate by the agency hearing officer.

(g) When contested cases involving a common question of law or fact or multiple proceedings involving the same or related parties are pending before an agency, the agency may order a joint hearing of any matters at issue in the cases, order the cases consolidated, or make other orders to reduce costs or delay in the proceedings.

(h) Every agency shall adopt rules governing the conduct of hearings that are consistent with the provisions of this Article.

§ 150B-39. Depositions; discovery; subpoenas.

(a) A deposition may be used in lieu of other evidence when taken in compliance with the Rules of Civil Procedure, G.S. 1A-1. Parties in a contested case may engage in discovery pursuant to the provisions of the Rules of Civil Procedure, G.S. 1A-1.

(b) Upon a request for an identifiable agency record involving a material fact in a contested case, the agency shall promptly provide the record to a party, unless the record relates solely to the agency's internal procedures or is exempt from disclosure by law.

(c) In preparation for, or in the conduct of, a contested case subpoenas may be issued and served in accordance with G.S. 1A-1, Rule 45. Upon a motion, the agency may quash a subpoena if, upon a hearing, the agency finds that the evidence, the production of which is required, does not relate to a matter in issue, the subpoena does not describe with sufficient particularity the evidence the production of which is required, or for any other reason sufficient in law the subpoena may be quashed. Witness fees shall be paid by the party requesting the subpoena to subpoenaed witnesses in accordance with G.S. 7A-314. However, State officials or employees who are subpoenaed shall not be entitled to any witness fees, but they shall receive their normal salary and they shall not be required to take any annual leave for the witness days. Travel expenses of State officials or employees who are subpoenaed shall be reimbursed as provided in G.S. 138-6.

§ 150B-40. Conduct of hearing; presiding officer; *ex parte* communication.

(a) Hearings shall be conducted in a fair and impartial manner. At the hearing, the agency and the parties shall be given an opportunity to present evidence on issues of fact, examine and cross-examine witnesses, including the author of a document prepared by, on behalf of or for the use of the agency and offered into evidence, submit rebuttal evidence, and present arguments on issues of law or policy.

If a party fails to appear in a contested case after he has been given proper notice, the agency may continue the hearing or proceed with the hearing and make its decision in the absence of the party.

(b) Except as provided under subsection (e) of this section, hearings under this Article shall be conducted by a majority of the agency. An agency shall designate one or more of its members to preside at the hearing. If a party files in good faith a timely and sufficient affidavit of the personal bias or other reason for disqualification of any member of the agency, the agency shall determine the matter as a part of the record in the case, and its determination shall be subject to judicial review at the conclusion of the proceeding. If a presiding officer is disqualified or it is impracticable for him to continue the hearing, another presiding officer shall be assigned to continue with the case, except that if assignment of a new presiding officer will cause substantial prejudice to any party, a new hearing shall be held or the case dismissed without prejudice.

(c) The presiding officer may:

- (1) Administer oaths and affirmations;
- (2) Sign and issue subpoenas in the name of the agency, requiring attendance and giving of testimony by witnesses and the production of books, papers, and other documentary evidence;
- (3) Provide for the taking of testimony by deposition;
- (4) Regulate the course of the hearings, set the time and place for continued hearings, and fix the time for filing of briefs and other documents;
- (5) Direct the parties to appear and confer to consider simplification of the issues by consent of the parties; and
- (6) Apply to any judge of the superior court resident in the district or presiding at a term of court in the county where a hearing is pending for an order to show cause why any person should not be held in contempt of the agency and its processes, and the court shall have the power to impose punishment as for contempt for acts which would constitute direct or indirect contempt if the acts occurred in an action pending in superior court.

(d) Unless required for disposition of an *ex parte* matter authorized by law, a member of an agency assigned to make a decision or to make findings of fact and conclusions of law in a contested case under this Article shall not communicate, directly or indirectly, in connection with any issue of fact or question of law, with any person or party or his representative, except on notice and opportunity for all parties to participate. This prohibition begins at the time of the notice of hearing. An agency member may communicate with other members of the agency and may have the aid and advice of the agency staff other than the staff which has been or is engaged in investigating or prosecuting functions in connection with the case under consideration or a factually-related case. This section does not apply to an agency employee or party representative with professional training in accounting, actuarial science, economics or financial analysis insofar as the case involves financial practices or conditions.

(e) When a majority of an agency is unable or elects not to hear a contested case, the agency shall apply to the Director of the Office of Administrative Hearings for the designation of an administrative law judge to preside at the hearing of a contested case under this Article. Upon receipt of the application, the Director shall, without undue delay, assign an administrative law judge to hear the case.

The provisions of this Article, rather than the provisions of Article 3, shall govern a contested case in which the agency requests an administrative law judge from the Office of Administrative Hearings.

The administrative law judge assigned to hear a contested case under this Article shall sit in place of the agency and shall have the authority of the presiding officer in a contested case under this Article. The administrative law judge shall make a proposal for decision, which shall contain proposed findings of fact and proposed conclusions of law.

An administrative law judge shall stay any contested case under this Article on motion of an agency which is a party to the contested case, if the agency shows by supporting affidavits that it is engaged in other litigation or administrative proceedings, by whatever name called, with or before a federal agency, and this other litigation or administrative proceedings will determine the position, in whole or in part, of the agency in the contested case. At the conclusion of the other litigation or administrative proceedings, the contested case shall proceed and be determined as expeditiously as possible.

The agency may make its final decision only after the administrative law judge's proposal for decision is served on the parties, and an opportunity is given to each party to file exceptions and proposed findings of fact and to present oral and written arguments to the agency.

§ 150B-41. Evidence; stipulations; official notice.

(a) In all contested cases, irrelevant, immaterial, and unduly repetitious evidence shall be excluded. Except as otherwise provided, the rules of evidence as applied in the trial division of the General Court of Justice shall be followed; but, when evidence is not reasonably available under such rules to show relevant facts, they may be shown by the most reliable and substantial evidence available. It shall not be necessary for a party or his attorney to object to evidence at the hearing in order to preserve the right to object to its consideration by the agency in reaching its decision, or by the court of judicial review.

(b) Evidence in a contested case, including records and documents shall be offered and made a part of the record. Other factual information or evidence shall not be considered in determination of the case, except as permitted under G.S. 150B-30. Documentary evidence may be received in the form of a copy or excerpt or may be incorporated by reference, if the materials so incorporated are available for examination by the parties. Upon timely request, a party shall be given an opportunity to compare the copy with the original if available.

(c) The parties in a contested case under this Article by a stipulation in writing filed with the agency may agree upon any fact involved in the controversy, which stipulation shall be used as evidence at the hearing and be binding on the parties thereto. Parties should agree upon facts when practicable. Except as otherwise provided by law, disposition may be made of a contested case by stipulation, agreed settlement, consent order, waiver, default, or other method agreed upon by the parties.

(d) Official notice may be taken of all facts of which judicial notice may be taken and of other facts within the specialized knowledge of the agency. The noticed fact and its source shall be stated and made known to affected parties at the earliest practicable time, and any party shall on timely request be afforded an opportunity to dispute the noticed fact through submission of evidence and argument. An agency may use its experience, technical competence, and specialized knowledge in the evaluation of evidence presented to it.

§ 150B-42. Final agency decision; official record.

(a) After compliance with the provisions of G.S. 150B-40(e), if applicable, and review of the official record, as defined in subsection (b) of this section, an agency shall make a written final decision or order in a contested case. The decision or order shall include findings of fact and conclusions of law. Findings of fact shall be based exclusively on the evidence and on matters officially noticed. Findings of fact, if set forth in statutory language, shall be accompanied by a concise and explicit statement of the underlying facts supporting them. A decision or order shall not be made except upon consideration of the record as a whole or such portion thereof as may be cited by any party to the proceeding and shall be supported by substantial evidence admissible under G.S. 150B-41. A copy of the decision or order shall be served upon each party by one of the methods for service of process under G.S. 1A-1, Rule 5(b). If service is by registered, certified, or first-class mail, by signature confirmation as provided by the United States Postal Service, or by designated delivery service authorized pursuant to 26 U.S.C. § 7502(f)(2) with delivery receipt, the copy shall be addressed to the party at the latest address given by the party to the agency. Service by one of the additional methods provided in G.S. 1A-1, Rule 5(b), is effective as provided therein and shall be accompanied by a certificate of service as provided in G.S. 1A-1, Rule 5(b1). G.S. 1A-1, Rule 6(e), applies if service is by first-class mail. A copy shall be furnished to the party's attorney of record.

(b) An agency shall prepare an official record of a hearing that shall include:

- (1) Notices, pleadings, motions, and intermediate rulings;
- (2) Questions and offers of proof, objections, and rulings thereon;
- (3) Evidence presented;
- (4) Matters officially noticed, except matters so obvious that a statement of them would serve no useful purpose;
- (5) Proposed findings and exceptions; and
- (6) Any decision, opinion, order, or report by the officer presiding at the hearing and by the agency.

(c) Proceedings at which oral evidence is presented shall be recorded, but need not be transcribed unless requested by a party. Each party shall bear the cost of the transcript or part thereof or copy of said transcript or part thereof which said party requests.

Article 4.

Judicial Review.

§ 150B-43. Right to judicial review.

Any party or person aggrieved by the final decision in a contested case, and who has exhausted all administrative remedies made available to the party or person aggrieved by statute or agency rule, is entitled to judicial review of the decision under this Article, unless adequate procedure for judicial review is provided by another statute, in which case the review shall be under such other statute. Nothing in this Chapter shall prevent any party or person aggrieved from invoking any judicial remedy available to the party or person aggrieved under the law to test the validity of any administrative action not made reviewable under this Article.

§ 150B-44. Right to judicial intervention when decision unreasonably delayed.

Unreasonable delay on the part of any agency or administrative law judge in taking any required action shall be justification for any person whose rights, duties, or privileges are adversely affected by such delay to seek a court order compelling action by the agency or administrative law judge. Failure of an administrative law judge subject to Article 3 of this Chapter or failure of an agency subject to Article 3A of this Chapter to make a final decision within 120 days of the close of the contested case hearing is justification for a person whose rights, duties, or privileges are adversely affected by the delay to seek a court order compelling action by the agency or by the administrative law judge. The Board of Trustees of the North Carolina State Health Plan for Teachers and State Employees is a "board" for purposes of this section.

§ 150B-45. Procedure for seeking review; waiver.

(a) Procedure. - To obtain judicial review of a final decision under this Article, the person seeking review must file a petition within 30 days after the person is served with a written copy of the decision. The petition must be filed as follows:

(1) Contested tax cases. - A petition for review of a final decision in a contested tax case arising under G.S. 105-241.15 must be filed in the Superior Court of Wake County.

(2) Other final decisions. - A petition for review of any other final decision under this Article must be filed in the Superior Court of Wake County or in the superior court of the county where the person resides.

(b) Waiver. - A person who fails to file a petition within the required time waives the right to judicial review under this Article. For good cause shown, however, the superior court may accept an untimely petition.

§ 150B-46. Contents of petition; copies served on all parties; intervention.

The petition shall explicitly state what exceptions are taken to the decision or procedure and what relief the petitioner seeks. Within 10 days after the petition is filed with the court, the party seeking the review shall serve copies of the petition by personal service or by certified mail upon all who were parties of record to the administrative proceedings. Names and addresses of such parties shall be furnished to the petitioner by the agency upon request. Any party to the administrative proceeding is a party to the review proceedings unless the party withdraws by notifying the court of the withdrawal and serving the other parties with notice of the withdrawal. Other parties to the proceeding may file a response to the petition within 30 days of service. Parties, including agencies, may state exceptions to the decision or procedure and what relief is sought in the response.

Any person aggrieved may petition to become a party by filing a motion to intervene as provided in G.S. 1A-1, Rule 24.

§ 150B-47. Records filed with clerk of superior court; contents of records; costs.

Within 30 days after receipt of the copy of the petition for review, or within such additional time as the court may allow, the Office of Administrative Hearings shall transmit to the reviewing court the original or a certified copy of the official record in the contested case under review. With the permission of the court, the record may be shortened by stipulation of all parties to the review proceedings. Any party unreasonably refusing to stipulate to limit the record may be taxed by the court for such additional costs as may be occasioned by the refusal. The court may require or permit subsequent corrections or additions to the record when deemed desirable.

§ 150B-48. Stay of decision.

At any time before or during the review proceeding, the person aggrieved may apply to the reviewing court for an order staying the operation of the administrative decision pending the outcome of the review. The court may grant or deny the stay in its discretion upon such terms as it deems proper and subject to the provisions of G.S. 1A-1, Rule 65.

§ 150B-49. New evidence.

A party or person aggrieved who files a petition in the superior court may apply to the court to present additional evidence. If the court is satisfied that the evidence is material to the issues, is not merely cumulative, and could not reasonably have been presented at the administrative hearing, the court may remand the case so that additional evidence can be taken. If an administrative law judge did not make a final decision in the case, the court shall remand the case to the agency that conducted the administrative hearing under Article 3A of this Chapter. After hearing the evidence, the agency may affirm or modify its previous findings of fact and final decision. If an administrative law judge made a final decision in the case, the court shall remand the case to the administrative law judge. After hearing the evidence, the administrative law judge may affirm or modify his previous findings of fact and final decision. The additional evidence and any affirmation or modification of a final decision shall be made part of the official record.

§ 150B-50. Review by superior court without jury.

The review by a superior court of agency decisions under this Chapter shall be conducted by the court without a jury.

§ 150B-51. Scope and standard of review.

(b) The court reviewing a final decision may affirm the decision or remand the case for further proceedings. It may also reverse or modify the decision if the substantial rights of the petitioners may have been prejudiced because the findings, inferences, conclusions, or decisions are:

(1) In violation of constitutional provisions;

(2) In excess of the statutory authority or jurisdiction of the agency or administrative law judge;

(3) Made upon unlawful procedure;

(4) Affected by other error of law;

(5) Unsupported by substantial evidence admissible under G.S. 150B-29(a), 150B-30, or 150B-31 in view of the entire record as submitted; or

(6) Arbitrary, capricious, or an abuse of discretion.

(c) In reviewing a final decision in a contested case, the court shall determine whether the petitioner is entitled to the relief sought in the petition based upon its review of the final decision and the official record. With regard to asserted errors pursuant to

subdivisions (1) through (4) of subsection (b) of this section, the court shall conduct its review of the final decision using the de novo standard of review. With regard to asserted errors pursuant to subdivisions (5) and (6) of subsection (b) of this section, the court shall conduct its review of the final decision using the whole record standard of review.

(d) In reviewing a final decision allowing judgment on the pleadings or summary judgment, the court may enter any order allowed by G.S. 1A-1, Rule 12(c) or Rule 56. If the order of the court does not fully adjudicate the case, the court shall remand the case to the administrative law judge for such further proceedings as are just.

§ 150B-52. Appeal; stay of court's decision.

A party to a review proceeding in a superior court may appeal to the appellate division from the final judgment of the superior court as provided in G.S. 7A-27. The scope of review to be applied by the appellate court under this section is the same as it is for other civil cases. In cases reviewed under G.S. 150B-51(c), the court's findings of fact shall be upheld if supported by substantial evidence. Pending the outcome of an appeal, an appealing party may apply to the court that issued the judgment under appeal for a stay of that judgment or a stay of the administrative decision that is the subject of the appeal, as appropriate.