

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
1989 SESSION

CHAPTER 624
SENATE BILL 440

AN ACT TO PROVIDE FOR ACCOUNTING PRACTICE REVIEW OF CERTIFIED
PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

Section 1. G.S. 93-12 reads as rewritten:

"§ 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 be paid, for the time actually expended in pursuance of the duties imposed upon them by this Chapter, an amount not exceeding ten dollars (\$10.00) per day, and they shall be entitled to necessary traveling expenses.
- (2) To employ legal counsel, clerical and technical assistance and to fix the compensation therefor, 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 or oral examinations of applicants for certificates of qualification at least once a year, or oftener, 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, shall have passed an examination to the satisfaction of the Board, in 'accounting theory,' 'accounting practice,' 'auditing,' 'business law,' and other related subjects.

From and after July 1, 1961, any person shall be eligible to take the examination given by the Board, or to receive a certificate of qualification to practice as a certified public accountant, who is a citizen of the United States or has declared his intention of becoming a citizen or is a resident alien, and has been domiciled in or resided for at least four months within the State of North Carolina immediately prior to the filing of an application to take the examination or to receive a certificate of qualification, is 18 years of age or over, and is of good moral character, and submits evidence satisfactory to the Board that:

- a. He holds a bachelor's degree from a college or university accredited by one of the regional accrediting associations or from a college or university determined by the Board to have standards substantially equivalent to a regionally accredited institution, and
- b. His degree studies included a concentration in accounting as defined by the Board or that he supplemented his degree studies with courses that the Board determines to be substantially equivalent to a concentration in accounting, and

- c. Satisfactory evidence of the completion of two years in an accredited college or university or its equivalent with a concentration in accounting as defined by the Board and two years experience in the practice of public accountancy under the direct supervision of a certified public accountant, in addition to other experience requirements in this section, may be substituted for a bachelor's degree.

Provided, however, 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 his educational qualifications that he is as well equipped, educationally, as if he 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.

Such applicant, in addition to passing the examination given by the Board, shall have the endorsement as to his eligibility of three certified public accountants who currently hold licenses in any state or territory of the United States or the District of Columbia and shall have had either:

- a. Two years 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, or
- b. Five years 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, or
- c. Five years experience in the field of accounting; or five years experience teaching college transfer accounting courses at a community college or technical institute accredited by one of the regional accrediting associations, or
- d. Any combination of such experience determined by the Board to be substantially equivalent to the foregoing.

A Master's or more advanced degree in accounting, tax law, economics, business administration, or the equivalent thereof, or a law degree with emphasis in taxation or accounting from an accredited college or university may be substituted for one year of experience. The Board may permit persons otherwise eligible to take its examinations and withhold certificates until such person shall have 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 such applicant has been a bona fide resident of this State for not less than four months or, if a nonresident, he has maintained or has been a member of a firm that has maintained for not less than four months a bona fide office within this State for the public practice of accounting and, provided further, 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 two hundred dollars (\$200.00). This fee shall be payable to the secretary-treasurer of the Board by the applicant at the time of filing application. In no case shall the examination fee be refunded, unless in the discretion of the Board the applicant shall be deemed ineligible for examination.
- (7a) To charge for each initial certificate of qualification provided for in this Chapter a fee not exceeding seventy-five dollars (\$75.00).
- (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 fifty dollars (\$50.00).
- (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 and regulations 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 such 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 such person may comply with the continuing professional education requirement.
 - b. The Board shall promulgate rules and regulations 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 said 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 he has participated in a continuing professional education program of the type required by the Board shall be deemed to have complied with this section.
- (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, individual proprietorship, partnership or professional association through which one or more certificate holder engages in the public practice of accountancy through an office or offices.

(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 and public accountants in this State. 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 public accountant or to censure the holder of any such certificate or 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. Any civil penalty

assessed under this section shall be collected by the Board and transferred to the State Treasurer for use in the General Fund.

- (10) Within 60 days after March 10, 1925, the Board shall formulate rules for the registration of those persons, firms, copartnerships, associations or corporations who, not being holders of valid and unrevoked certificates as certified public accountants issued under the provisions of Chapter 157 of the Public Laws of 1913, and who, having on March 10, 1925, been engaged in the practice of public accounting and maintaining an office as a public accountant in the State of North Carolina, shall, under the provisions of G.S. 93-7 apply to the Board for registration as public accountants. The Board shall maintain a register of all persons, firms, copartnerships, associations or corporations who have made application for such registration and have complied with the rules of registration adopted by the Board.
- (11) Within 60 days after March 10, 1925, the Board shall formulate rules for registration of these public accountants who are qualified to practice under this Chapter and who under the provisions of G.S. 93-10 are permitted to engage in work within the State of North Carolina. The Board shall have the power to deny or withdraw the privilege herein referred to for good and sufficient reasons.
- (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 or public accountants. Privilege license issued under G.S. 105-41 shall designate whether such license is issued to a certified public accountant, a 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 therefor 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."

Sec. 2. This act shall become effective September 1, 1989.

In the General Assembly read three times and ratified this the 12th day of July, 1989.