



NORTH CAROLINA STATE BAR

2024 ANNUAL
REPORT

Contents



NORTH CAROLINA
STATE BAR



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NORTH CAROLINA
STATE BAR

President’s Message.....3

Who We Are.....4

 District Map.....5

What We Do.....6

 Our Programs.....7

2024 Highlights.....8

By the Numbers.....10

 Attorney-Client Assistance Program.....10

 Continuing Legal Education.....11

 Client Security Fund.....11

 Discipline Results.....12

 Ethics.....13

 Lawyer Assistance Program.....13

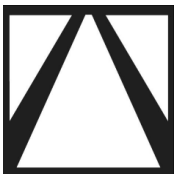
 NC IOLTA.....14

 Legal Specialization.....15

 Paralegal Certification.....15

 Financial Report.....16

Contact Us.....17



NORTH CAROLINA
STATE BAR

 ncbar.gov



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

MATTHEW W. SMITH | STATE BAR PRESIDENT

Dear Colleagues,

I am honored to serve as president of the North Carolina State Bar and to work alongside so many of you who are deeply committed to the ideals of professionalism, public service, and the just administration of law.

The past year brought meaningful advancements that reflect the State Bar's shared responsibility to both the legal profession and the people of North Carolina. We modernized the Continuing Legal Education rules, launched a cybersecurity self-assessment for attorneys, and supported thoughtful legislative reforms to enhance transparency and fairness in our grievance process. These changes are more than regulatory updates—they are signs of a legal community that is forward-looking, accountable, and resilient.

In the wake of Hurricane Helene, the State Bar worked closely with the Supreme Court to authorize out-of-state attorneys to provide *pro bono* legal services to indigent storm victims. Our IOLTA program also played a critical role by delivering additional funding to support disaster-related legal aid—a testament to our collective commitment to access to justice, especially in times of crisis.

Perhaps the most significant State Bar event in 2024 was the retirement of Alice Mine, who concluded her extraordinary career of service to the legal profession after more than three decades. Her legacy is felt across every corner of the State Bar, and I am deeply grateful for her vision, her integrity, and her unwavering support.


As we look toward 2025 and beyond, we must continue to strengthen our profession through innovation and investment in our core values. This includes expanding our commitment to mental health and well-being through the Lawyer Assistance Program, ensuring legal specialization continues to grow in both scope and accessibility, and maintaining rigorous ethical standards that uphold public trust.

Our mission could not succeed without the tireless work of the State Bar's professional staff. I am proud to work alongside such a talented and deeply dedicated group of individuals who approach each task—large or small—with professionalism and purpose.

Likewise, I extend heartfelt thanks to the volunteer lawyers who give generously of their time and expertise to serve as elected councilors and as members of our many boards and commissions. Your service is vital to the strength and credibility of a self-regulating profession.

We remain firmly grounded in our mission: the regulation of the legal profession for the protection of the public. Thanks to those who came before us, the State Bar is well positioned to carry out its mission for years to come. We look forward to continuing our work with the judiciary, the legislature, and other government partners to further strengthen the administration of justice in North Carolina.

Thank you for the privilege to serve.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew W. Smith".

Matthew W. Smith
President, North Carolina State Bar

Who We Are



2024-2025 Officers



Matthew Smith
President



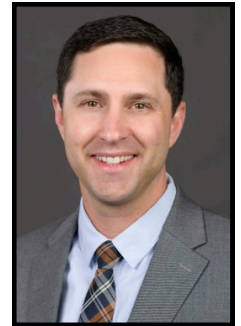
Katherine Frye
President-Elect



Kevin Williams
Vice-President



A. Todd Brown
Past-President



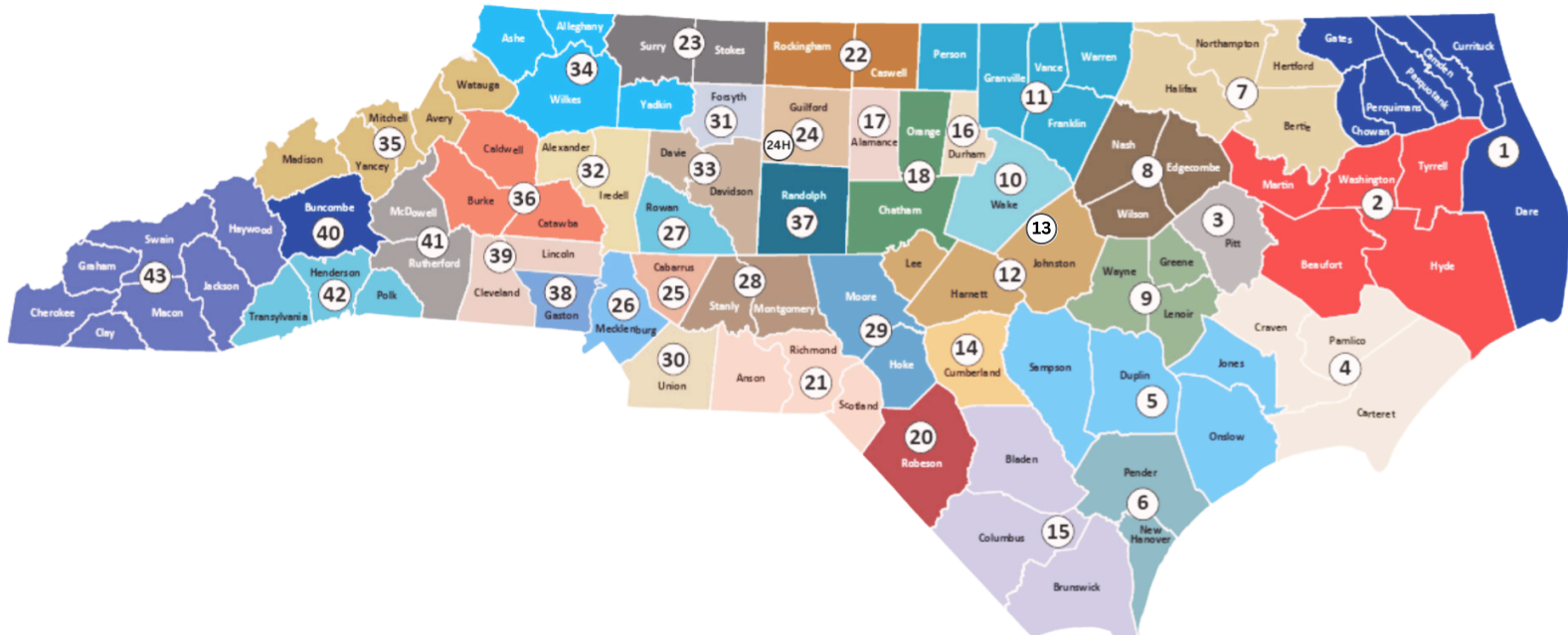
Peter Bolac
Secretary

Who We Are

The North Carolina State Bar was created in 1933 by the North Carolina General Assembly as the government agency responsible for the regulation of the legal profession in North Carolina. The State Bar currently regulates over 33,000 licensed lawyers. Protection of the public and protection of our system of justice are the objectives of regulation.

The North Carolina State Bar is governed by a 62-member council whose members are lawyers elected by the lawyers in their home communities. The public's interests are represented by three members of the council who are not lawyers and who are appointed by the governor. Four officers are elected by the members of the council to provide leadership. The daily operations of the State Bar are carried out by a dedicated professional staff based largely in Raleigh, NC.

District Map



Councilors, By Judicial District

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| 1. John D. Leidy, Elizabeth City | 15. Michael R. Ramos, Shallotte | 27. T. Gregory Jones, Salisbury |
| 2. Thomas D. Anglim, Washington | 16. Judge Dorothy Hairston Mitchell, Durham | 28. Bobby Khan, Monroe |
| 3. Judge Jeffrey B. Foster, Greenville | 16. Meredith Nicholson, Durham | 29. Matthew Rothbeind, Carthage |
| 4. Scott C. Hart, New Bern | 17. J. Wade Harrison, Burlington | 30. Judge Nathan "Hunt" Gwyn, III, Monroe |
| 5. Kevin J. Kiernan, Clinton | 18. Charles Gordon Brown, Chapel Hill | 31. Judge George M. Cleland, Winston Salem |
| 6. Judge W. Allen Cobb, Jr., Wrightsville Beach | 20. Joshua D. Malcolm, Pembroke | 32. Daryl G. Davidson, Sr., Statesville |
| 7. Judge Takiya Lewis Blalock, Ahoskie | 21. F. Davis Poisson, III, Wadesboro | 33. Shawn L. Fraley, Lexington |
| 8. Michael Peters, Tarboro | 22. Judge Jason E. Ramey, Wentworth | 34. John "Jay" G. Vannoy, Jr., Wilkesboro |
| 9. J. Mark Herring, Kinston | 23. Judge Thomas B. Langan, Pilot Mountain | 35. Crawford H. Cleveland, III, Boone |
| 10. Judge Julie L. Bell, Raleigh | 24. Judge Patrice A. Hinnant, Greensboro | 36. Timothy "TJ" J. Rohr, Lenoir |
| 10. Anna Davis, Raleigh | 24. Manisha P. Patel, Greensboro | 37. Judge Vance B. Long, Asheboro |
| 10. Nancy Grace, Raleigh | 24H. Kathleen E. Nix, High Point | 38. Michael R. Neece, Gastonia |
| 10. Evin L. Grant, Raleigh | 25. William Rogers, Jr., Concord | 39. Rebecca J. Pomeroy, Lincolnnton |
| 10. Jessica Heffner, Raleigh | 26. Stacy C. Cordes, Charlotte | 40. Gill Beck, Asheville |
| 10. Kimberly A. Moore, Raleigh | 26. Fred W. DeVore, III, Charlotte | 41. Merrimon "Merri" B. Oxley, Forest City |
| 10. Judge Ashleigh Parker, Raleigh | 26. Milton "Heath" Gilbert, Jr., Charlotte | 42. Michael A. Lovejoy, Hendersonville |
| 10. Judge Robert Rader, Raleigh | 26. George Laughrun, II, Charlotte | 43. Zeyland G. McKinney, Murphy |
| 11. J. Thomas Burnette, Oxford | 26. Craig T. Lynch, Charlotte | Public. Patricia "Patti" Head, Littleton |
| 12. Vacant | 26. Gena Graham Morris, Charlotte | Public. Samantha Holmes, Morrisville |
| 13. Dionne Loy Fortner, Smithfield | 26. Nancy B. Norelli, Charlotte | Public. Damon Seils, Carrboro |
| 14. H. Lee Boughman, Jr., Fayetteville | 26. Timika Shafeek-Horton, Charlotte | |

The image shows a close-up, low-angle view of the North Carolina State Bar building. The building is a large, curved, classical-style structure with white stone or concrete. It features tall columns and large windows. The words "THE NORTH CAROLINA STATE BAR" are inscribed in a semi-circle above the windows. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds.

What We Do

The North Carolina State Bar is the government agency that regulates the legal profession for the protection of the public. Although the State Bar is also responsible for the administration of numerous programs for the improvement of the legal profession, the key regulatory responsibilities of the State Bar are the promulgation of the Rules of Professional Conduct and the investigation and prosecution of lawyers who violate the State Bar's code of ethics.

Protect the Public

The State Bar protects the public by issuing professional discipline to lawyers. Allegations of lawyer misconduct are investigated by the State Bar's professional staff and reviewed by the Grievance Committee of the State Bar Council. Cases that are not resolved at the Grievance Committee level are tried before the Disciplinary Hearing Commission, an independent administrative tribunal composed of lawyers and nonlawyers.

Advise Lawyers on Ethical Questions

The State Bar provides advice to lawyers who are faced with ethical questions through its Ethics Committee and professional staff. The committee regularly reviews and recommends changes to the North Carolina Rules of Professional Conduct, the ethical code to which North Carolina lawyers must conform their conduct and pursuant to which a lawyer may receive professional discipline.

Investigate Unauthorized Practice of Law

The State Bar, through its Authorized Practice Committee and professional staff, investigates complaints and obtains injunctions to prevent violations of the statutes prohibiting the unauthorized practice of law. These cases often involve nonlawyers who mislead the public about their ability to provide legal services and who take money from members of the public without providing the offered service.

Our Programs



Attorney-Client Assistance

Responds to thousands of inquiries each year from members of the public who need assistance with their lawyers.

Client Security Fund

Reimburses clients who suffered financial loss as a result of dishonest conduct by lawyers.

Continuing Legal Education

Establishes annual minimum educational requirements and enforces lawyers' compliance with these standards. nccle.org

Fee Dispute Resolution

Offers clients a way to resolve their fee disputes with their lawyers. All lawyers are required to participate in the process when initiated by a client.

Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts

Working with lawyers and financial partners to set up interest-bearing accounts, NC IOLTA improves access to justice across North Carolina by funding high-quality legal assistance programs across the state. nciolta.org

Law Practice Wind Down

Facilitates the wind down of law practices of lawyers who are unavailable due to death,

disappearance, disability, or disbarment by identifying and providing resources to court-appointed trustees.

Lawyer Assistance Program

Protects the public from impaired lawyers, and assists lawyers suffering from and impaired by chemical dependency and/or mental illness. nclap.org

Legal Assistance for Military Personnel

Provides training for military and civilian lawyers to enable them to better serve the legal needs of members of the armed services and their dependents in North Carolina. nclamp.gov

Paralegal Certification

Certifies paralegals who meet certain criteria indicative of special competence in their profession. nccertifiedparalegal.gov

Specialization

Certifies lawyers who satisfy certain criteria demonstrating special substantive knowledge, skill, and proficiency in 15 areas of law. This assists the public in identifying a lawyer that more closely matches their needs with available services. nclawspecialists.gov



2024 Highlights



New CLE Rules

In 2024, the North Carolina Supreme Court approved sweeping changes to the CLE rules and procedures to improve the program. The new rules took effect on March 1, 2024. A few of the major highlights include a two-year reporting period, an annual attendance fee, course application fees, and the elimination of the requirement to file an annual report. To create a stagger where the reporting period ends for half of the lawyers each year, lawyers with an odd year of admittance had a one-time, one-year/12-hours requirement in 2024. Even-year lawyers went directly to a two-year/24-hours reporting period.

Legislative Changes to Grievance Process

The General Assembly, based on a report from a legislative review committee, enacted the following changes to the State Bar's grievance process:

- Requires the State Bar to provide a copy of the complaint and supporting materials when issuing a letter of notice to a respondent attorney (upon request), and to provide certain other materials and information when recommending disciplinary action against the respondent attorney.

- Allows a respondent attorney to address the Grievance Committee and to hear the Office of Counsel's presentation to the Grievance Committee.
- Allows the chair of the Grievance Committee to designate a person a vexatious complainant if the complainant has initiated grievances to the State Bar warranting dismissal in a manner and volume that amounts to an "abuse of the Bar disciplinary process."
- Specifies who may file a grievance with the State Bar (standing).
- Directs the State Bar to adopt rules to implement an expungement process for certain disciplinary actions.

Cybersecurity Self-Assessment

This year the North Carolina State Bar was pleased to announce the launch of a free and anonymous Cybersecurity Self-Assessment for lawyers. This self-assessment was made possible with the sponsorship and support of Lawyers Mutual. This initiative reflects a shared commitment to empower lawyers with the resources and guidance needed to improve cybersecurity practices and safeguard against growing cyber threats.

2024 Highlights



Lawyer Assistance Program

This year marks the North Carolina Lawyer Assistance Program's 44th year of operation. Staff opened 143 files, bringing the total number of open cases to 607. They closed 33 files, resulting in a combined total of 574 open cases at year's end. They have assisted approximately 15% of the Bar since the program's inception in the late 1970s.

Disaster Relief

In the wake of Hurricane Helene, the State Bar worked closely with the Supreme Court to authorize out-of-state attorneys to provide *pro bono* legal services to indigent storm victims. In addition, NC IOLTA moved quickly to provide more than \$900K in new funding to groups delivering critical legal aid to residents—a testament to our collective commitment to access to justice, especially in times of crisis.

Alice Mine Retirement

After more than 30 years of dedicated service to the North Carolina State Bar, Alice Mine retired as executive director in 2024. Alice's leadership profoundly shaped the legal profession in North Carolina, leaving an enduring impact on attorney regulation, ethics, and professionalism. Throughout her tenure, she played a pivotal role in guiding the Bar's initiatives, fostering innovation and upholding the integrity of the legal system.

With Alice's retirement, the State Bar welcomed Peter Bolac as the new executive director. As he takes the helm, the Bar looks forward to continuing its work under his guidance, building on the strong foundation Alice helped establish. We extend our deepest gratitude to Alice for her remarkable service and wish her all the best in this next chapter.









By the Numbers



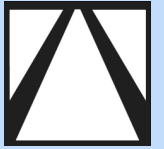
Attorney-Client Assistance Program (ACAP)



The Attorney-Client Assistance Program helps to resolve issues between clients and lawyers on an informal basis. ACAP responds to thousands of inquiries each year from members of the public who need assistance with their lawyers. Public liaisons respond to calls from members of the general public who have complaints or concerns about their lawyers. Depending upon the situation, the public liaison will contact the lawyer and try to help find a resolution to the caller's problem. The public liaison does not represent one side or the other when attempting a resolution. Additionally, the public liaison is unable to offer legal advice, but may be able to direct the caller to an information source.

Number of emails responded to:		3,626
Number of received calls:		13,806
Number of client & attorney calls:		6,161
Number of letters from inmates:		1,922
Contact with lawyers:		471
Number of fee disputes opened:		489

Continuing Legal Education (CLE)



Beginning in 2024, lawyers must complete 24 hours of approved continuing education over a two-year period. This two-year requirement is staggered, depending on the individual lawyer's year of admittance to the State Bar.

Number of approved courses: **20,268**



Number of required CLE hours: **24** Hours over two years



Client Security Fund (CSF)

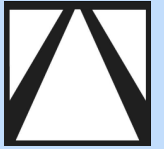


The Client Security Fund reimburses clients who suffered financial loss as a result of dishonest conduct by lawyers.

Number of claims opened: **64**

Total money awarded: **\$144,736**

Disciplinary Results



The State Bar protects the public by issuing professional discipline to lawyers. Allegations of lawyer misconduct are investigated by the State Bar's professional staff and reviewed by the Grievance Committee of the State Bar Council. Cases that are not resolved at the Grievance Committee level are tried before the Disciplinary Hearing Commission, an independent administrative tribunal composed of lawyers and nonlawyers.

Dismissal by Chair	1132
Dismissal by Chair and Vice-Chair	469
Dismissal by Full Committee	36
Dismiss and Retain	6

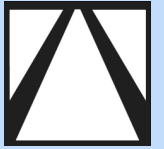
Dismissal with Letter of Caution	13
Dismissal with Letter of Warning	27
Admonition	6
Reprimand	10
Censure	6

Resolved Due to Surrender	52
Referred to DHC	30
Abate	3
Other	3

Total Dispositions:

1,793

Ethics



Answering Questions of Legal Ethics

All North Carolina lawyers must follow a code of ethics called the Rules of Professional Conduct. After consulting the Rules of Professional Conduct and relevant ethics opinions, lawyers may call the State Bar with questions pertaining to their professional responsibility.



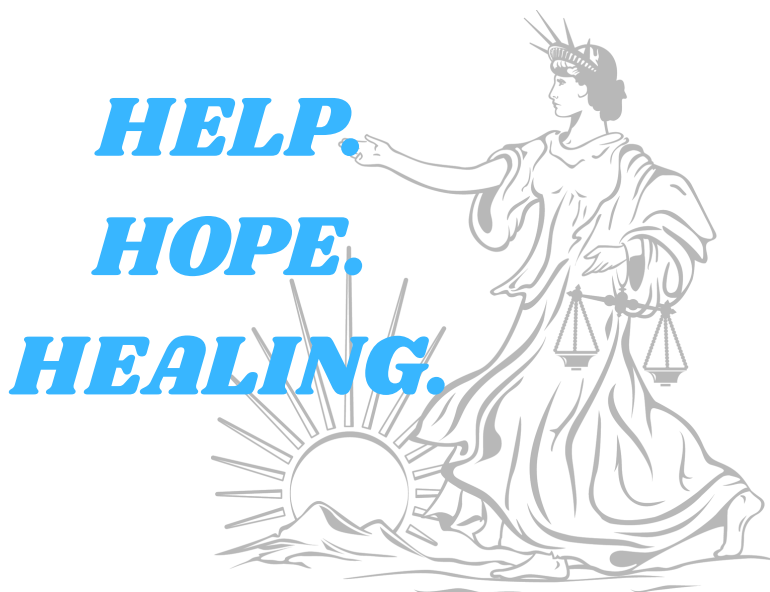
Number of calls received:

4,172

Lawyer Assistance Program (LAP)



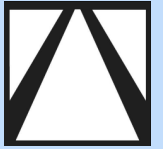
A service of the North Carolina State Bar, the North Carolina Lawyer Assistance Program (NC LAP) is a free, confidential, and nondisciplinary service that supports lawyers, judges, and law students facing challenges with mental health, alcohol, or drug use.



Number of open cases:

607

North Carolina Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts



Due to limited resources and insufficient funding, only a fraction of North Carolinians have access to the critical legal services they need to thrive. As the philanthropic focus of the State Bar, NC IOLTA provides access to justice by funding high-quality legal assistance. By working directly with lawyers and financial institutions across the state to set up interest-bearing accounts, NC IOLTA has awarded more than \$120M in 2024 to organizations that help provide legal aid to individuals, families, and children. Grants support access to legal aid around important civil matters and protect basic human rights, such as access to housing and shelter, family safety and health care.

2024 Grants

\$9,467,600 awarded to **28** grantees to fund civil legal aid for low-income individuals, families, and children, as well as to advance the administration of justice in North Carolina.

Disaster Relief Grants

\$910,500 awarded to support organizations providing free civil legal services in communities impacted by Hurricane Helene.

Public Interest Internships

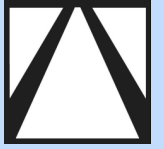
\$186,800 to fund summer stipends for **24** law students pursuing public interest internships in North Carolina counties designated as legal deserts.



NORTH CAROLINA
IOLTA

INVESTING IN JUSTICE FOR
ALL NORTH CAROLINIANS

Legal Specialization



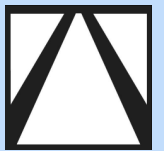
Certifies lawyers who satisfy certain criteria demonstrating special substantive knowledge, skill, and proficiency in **15** areas of law. This assists the public in identifying a lawyer that more closely matches their needs with available services.

Number of Board Certified Specialists: **1,160**

15 Board Certified Specialties

Appellate practice	Immigration law
Bankruptcy law	Privacy and information security law
Child welfare law	Real property law
Criminal law	Social Security disability law
Elder law	Trademark law
Employment law	Utilities law
Estate planning	Workers' compensation law
Family law	

Paralegal Certification

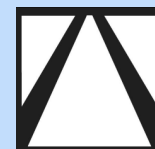


Certification highlights the importance of paralegals in the practice of law and is the hallmark of professionalism.

Number of Certified Paralegals:
3,565

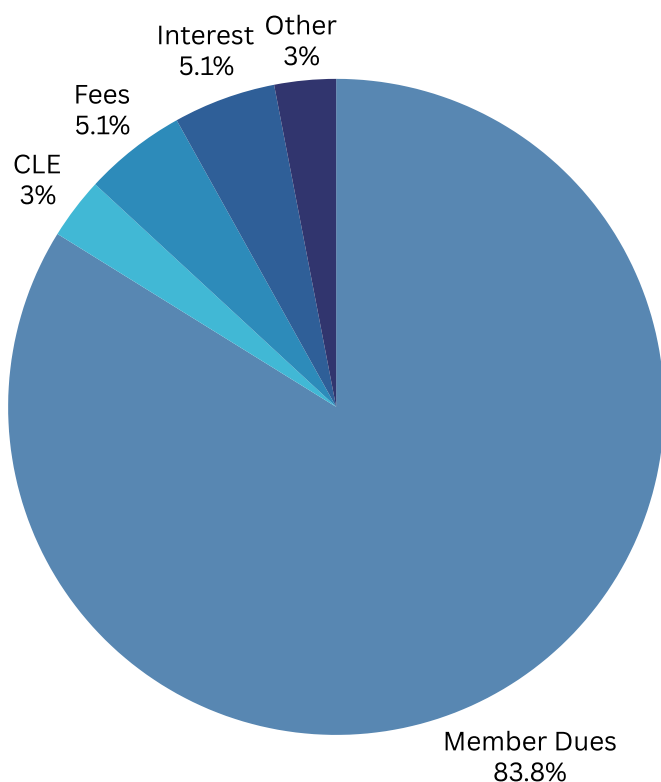


Financial

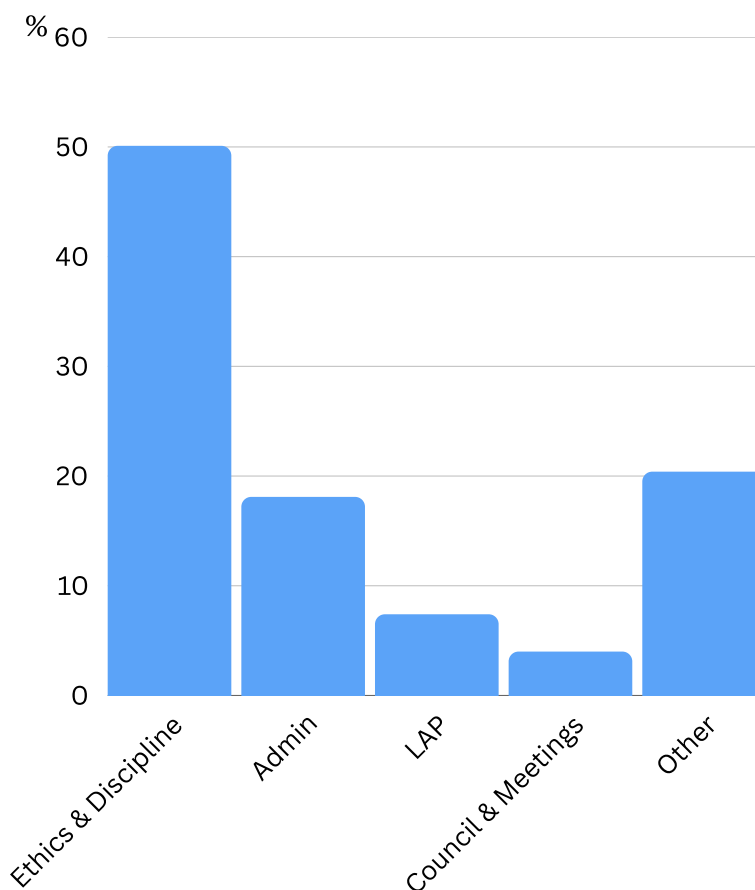


The North Carolina State Bar receives roughly 83% of our total income from member dues. The remaining income comes from fees, fines, and interest. Expenses are rising faster than the rate of membership growth, but the State Bar continues to be responsible stewards of its funds.

Income



Expenses



Dues	\$9,702,965
CLE	\$380,888
Fees	\$601,176
Interest	\$573,526
Other	\$299,463
TOTAL	\$11,558,018

Ethics & Discipline	\$5,695,453
Admin (HR, IT, etc.)	\$2,051,422
LAP	\$840,704
Council & Meetings	\$454,379
Other (building, supplies, etc.)	\$2,319,954
TOTAL	\$11,361,914

0% Dues Increase Since 2010—33,100 Members

Contact Us

North Carolina State Bar

217 East Edenton Street
Raleigh, NC 27601

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Email: general@ncbar.gov

Website: ncbar.gov



Connect with us



Please follow and connect with our official State Bar social media.

