



NORTH CAROLINA STATE BAR

2025 ANNUAL
REPORT

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NORTH CAROLINA
STATE BAR



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STATE BAR

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**NORTH CAROLINA
STATE BAR**

 ncbar.gov



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

KATHERINE A. FRYE | STATE BAR PRESIDENT

Dear Colleagues,

It is an honor to serve as president of the North Carolina State Bar and to work alongside attorneys who are deeply committed to professionalism, public service, and the fair administration of justice.

Over the past year, the State Bar has continued to advance its mission of strengthening the legal profession while protecting the public. A central focus has been improving communication and accessibility. In 2025, we launched updated websites for the North Carolina Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts (NC IOLTA) program and the North Carolina Lawyer Assistance Program (NC LAP). In 2026, we introduced our newly redesigned State Bar website to provide a more accessible, user-friendly experience. We have also expanded our social media presence to deliver timely updates and highlight resources that support lawyers in their practice.

The past year also brought a significant challenge to access to justice in North Carolina. Legislation enacted in July 2025 temporarily suspended NC IOLTA grantmaking through June 30, 2026. For decades, these funds have supported civil legal services for low-income North Carolinians. The resulting funding disruption has led to reduced staffing, limited services, and fewer individuals able to obtain legal assistance. The State Bar and NC IOLTA leadership continue to engage with policymakers and stakeholders to preserve this critical funding and support the continued delivery of legal services to those in need.

As we look ahead, the State Bar remains focused on strengthening the profession through innovation and a continued commitment to its core values. Key priorities include expanding support for attorney well-being through the Lawyer Assistance Program, increasing access to legal specialization, and maintaining the high ethical standards that uphold public confidence in the legal profession. In a time of ongoing change, preserving that trust remains essential.

The State Bar's work is made possible by the dedication of its professional staff, whose expertise and commitment are vital to fulfilling our mission. I am also grateful to the many volunteers who serve as councilors and on our boards and commissions. Their service is indispensable to the strength and credibility of a self-regulating profession.

The North Carolina State Bar remains firmly grounded in its mission: the regulation of the legal profession for the protection of the public. Through continued collaboration with the judiciary, the legislature, and our partners across the legal community, we are well-positioned to carry this mission forward.

Thank you for the privilege of serving.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Katherine A. Frye', written in a cursive style.

Katherine A. Frye
President, North Carolina State Bar

Who We Are



2025-2026 Officers



Katherine Frye
President



Kevin Williams
President-Elect



David Allen
Vice-President



Matthew Smith
Past-President



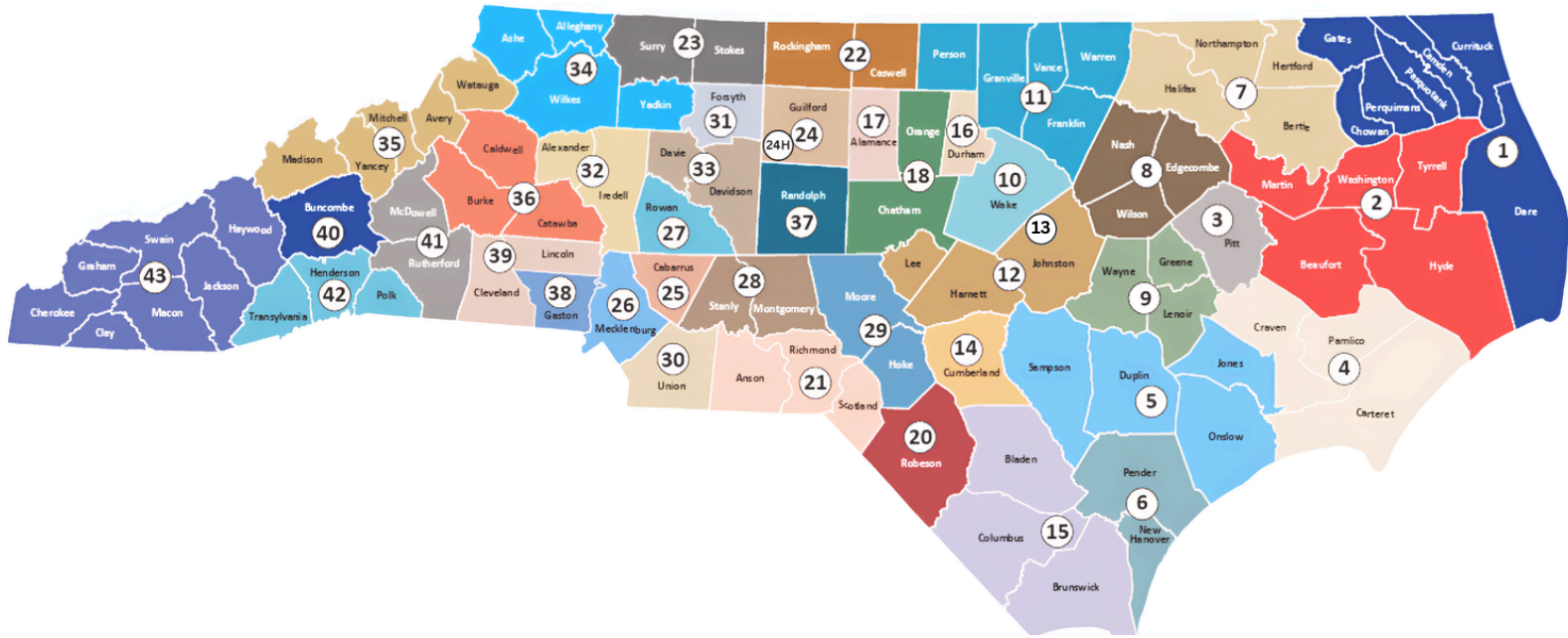
Peter Bolac
Secretary

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 34,000 licensed lawyers. Protection of the public and protection of our system of justice are the objectives of regulation.

Its governing body—the 66-member State Bar Council—is composed of lawyers elected by their peers across the state, along with three public members appointed by the governor to represent the public’s interest. Leadership is provided by four elected officers. The State Bar’s daily operations are managed by a dedicated staff of over 95 professionals based largely in Raleigh, NC.

District Map



Councilors, By Judicial District

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| 1. John D. Leidy, Elizabeth City | 15. Kyle Melvin, Elizabethtown | 27. T. Gregory Jones, Salisbury |
| 2. Thomas D. Anglim, Washington | 16. Brandon Robinson, 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. Kristen L. DelForge, Burlington | 30. Judge Nathan "Hunt" Gwyn, III, Monroe |
| 5. Kevin J. Kiernan, Clinton | 18. Fran Muse, Chapel Hill | 31. Judge George M. Cleland, Winston-Salem |
| 6. William Oden, III, Wilmington | 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 G. Vannoy, Jr., North Wilkesboro |
| 9. J. Mark Herring, Kinston | 23. Judge Thomas B. Langan, Pilot Mountain | 35. Jasmine McKinney, Blowing Rock |
| 10. Judge Julie L. Bell, Raleigh | 24. Judge Patrice A. Hinnant, Greensboro | 36. Timothy J. "TJ" Rohr, Lenoir |
| 10. Anna Davis, Raleigh | 24. Manisha P. Patel, Greensboro | 37. Judge V. Brad Long, Asheboro |
| 10. Russel Babb, Raleigh | 24H. Kathleen E. Nix, High Point | 38. Michael R. Neece, Gastonia |
| 10. Judge Keith O. Gregory, Raleigh | 25. Amanda M. Reed, Jr., Concord | 39. Judge James Morgan, Shelby |
| 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. David Sherlin, Raleigh | 26. George Laughrun, II, Charlotte | 43. Zeyland G. McKinney, Murphy Public. |
| 11. J. Thomas Burnette, Oxford | 26. Craig T. Lynch, Charlotte | Patricia "Patti" Head, Littleton Public. |
| 12. Heather H. Williams, Dunn | 26. Gena Graham Morris, Charlotte | Samantha Holmes, Morrisville Public. |
| 13. Dionne L. Fortner, Smithfield | 26. Judge Nancy B. Norelli, Charlotte | Damon Seils, Carrboro |
| 14. H. Lee Boughman, Jr., Fayetteville | 26. Timika Shafeek-Horton, Charlotte | |

The image shows the exterior of the North Carolina State Bar building, a large, curved, classical-style structure with columns and a pediment. The words "THE NORTH CAROLINA STATE BAR" are inscribed on the building's facade. 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 who violate the Rules of Professional Conduct. 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. [CLE webpage](#).

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

By working directly with lawyers and financial partners across the state to set up interest-bearing accounts, NC IOLTA has awarded more than \$134 million to organizations that provide free civil legal services to individuals, families, children, and programs that improve the administration of justice across the state. Give this important work a boost by banking with a Prime Partner! [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

Assists lawyers suffering from and impaired by substance use disorder and/or mental illness and protects the public from impaired lawyers. [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. [NC LAMP](#).

Paralegal Certification

Certifies paralegals who meet certain criteria indicative of special competence in their profession. [Paralegal webpage](#).

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 who more closely matches their needs with available services.

[Specialization webpage](#).



2025 Highlights



Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts

Our IOLTA program has been affected by the North Carolina General Assembly's legislative freeze on its grantmaking for the period from July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026. Pursuant to the legislation, no grants have been awarded for 2026.

The North Carolina Rules of Professional Conduct call on every lawyer to “devote professional time and resources and use civic influence to ensure equal access to our system of justice for all those who, because of economic or social barriers, cannot afford or secure adequate legal counsel.” As the State Bar continues to work toward a resolution on this matter, our members' support of the state's legal aid organizations and the two million-plus low-income North Carolinians who depend on their services remains a critical part of ensuring justice for all.

As of Jan. 1, 2026, no further legislative hearings have been held or scheduled on this matter. It is unknown when legislators might revisit the funding freeze. North Carolina is currently the only state in the nation that does not provide funding for civil legal aid through IOLTA grantmaking.

NC IOLTA and State Bar leadership continue to work to preserve this critical source of funding for civil legal aid, which comes at no cost to attorneys, their clients or taxpayers.

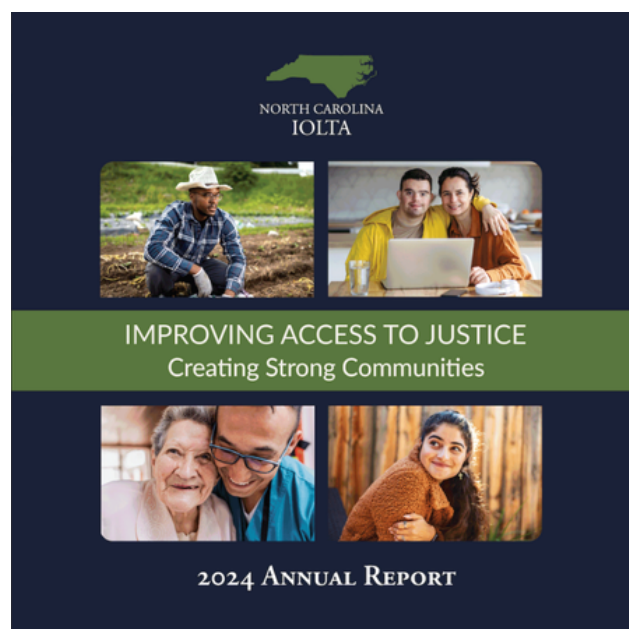
Annual Report

NC IOLTA published its 2024 Annual Report in June 2025. In it, you'll learn:

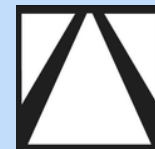
What a difference your participation in the IOLTA program makes in NC IOLTA's mission to improve the lives of North Carolinians by strengthening the justice system as a leader, partner, and funder.

2024 NC IOLTA Annual Report:

<https://nciolta.org/annual-report>



2025 Highlights



Website Improvements

The North Carolina State Bar and its affiliated programs are making strides to improve online accessibility and the user experience.

Recently, both the North Carolina Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts (NC IOLTA) program and the North Carolina Lawyer Assistance Program (NC LAP) launched redesigned websites. The updated sites feature a modern look, improved navigation, and streamlined access to key resources for lawyers and the public alike.

You can explore the new sites at nciolta.org and nclap.org.

In addition, the North Carolina State Bar has updated its primary website, ncbar.gov. Since we launched the website in Spring 2026, it has offered a refreshed design, enhanced search functionality, and improved accessibility to better serve North Carolina lawyers and the public.

New Online *Journal* Format

We've moved from a static PDF format to an interactive online experience — making it easier than ever to navigate content, search for topics that matter to you, and engage with the information you rely on.

We've created a [short demo](#) to show off some of the new features.

Check out the latest and our archive of [State Bar Journals](#).

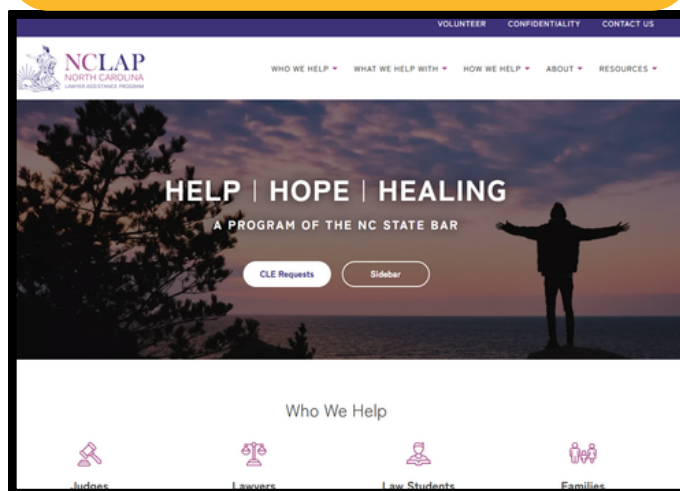
[View the new Spring 2026 edition:](#)



nciolta.org



nclap.org



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's public liaisons respond to thousands of inquiries each year from members of the public who have complaints or concerns about their lawyers and need assistance. 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.

Visit [ACAP](#).

Emails responded to:		3,886
Intake entries:		11,905
Client & attorney calls:		5,882
Letters from inmates:		2,061
Contact with lawyers:		1,223
Fee disputes opened:		510

Continuing Legal Education (CLE)



Lawyers must complete 24 hours of approved continuing education over a two-year period. This includes 4 hours of Ethics, one hour of Professional Well-Being, and one hour of Technology. This two-year requirement is staggered, depending on the individual lawyer's year of admittance to the State Bar.

Visit [CLE](#).

Approved courses: **18,300**



Required CLE hours: **24** Hours over two years



Client Security Fund (CSF)



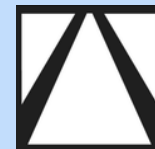
The Client Security Fund reimburses clients who suffered financial loss as a result of dishonest conduct by lawyers.

Visit [CSF](#).

Claims opened: **65**

Total money awarded: **\$120,442**

Disciplinary Results



The State Bar protects the public by issuing professional discipline to lawyers who violate the Rules of Professional Conduct. 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. Visit [About Lawyer Discipline](#).

Dismissal by Chair	986
Dismissal by Chair and Vice-Chair	395
Dismissal by Full Committee	33
Referral to the LAP	9
Referral to TACP	23

Dismissal with Letter of Caution	12
Dismissal with Letter of Warning	58
Admonition	39
Reprimand	28
Censure	23

Resolved Due to Surrender	2
Referred to DHC	42
Abate	5

Total Dispositions:

1,655

Ethics



Answering Questions of Legal Ethics

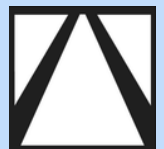
All North Carolina lawyers must follow a code of ethics called the Rules of Professional Conduct. Lawyers may call the State Bar's Ethics Hotline to receive confidential guidance from our ethics lawyers on questions pertaining to their professional responsibility.

Need Ethics Advice?

Calls received:
4,520



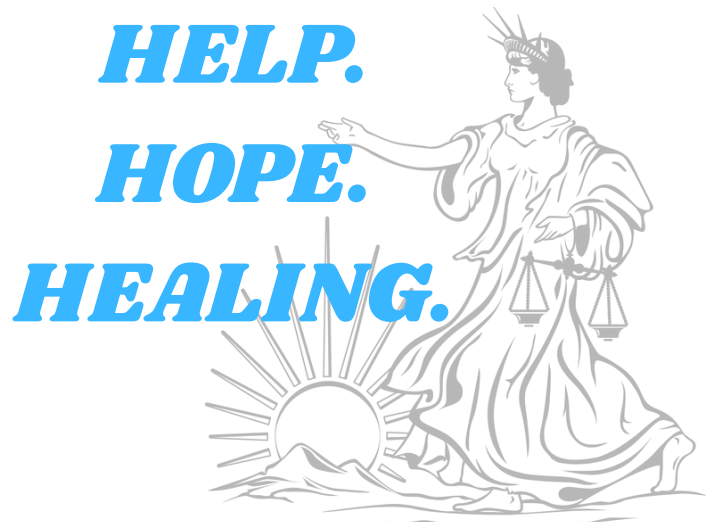
Lawyer Assistance Program (LAP)



A service of the North Carolina State Bar, the North Carolina Lawyer Assistance Program (NC LAP) is a free, confidential, non-disciplinary service that assists lawyers, judges, and law students in addressing mental health issues, including problems with drugs or alcohol, and other life stresses which impair or may impair an attorney's ability to effectively practice law.

Visit [NC LAP](#).

Number of open cases:
323



North Carolina Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts



NC IOLTA, the philanthropic arm of the North Carolina State Bar, expands access to justice by funding high-quality civil legal aid through interest earned on lawyer trust accounts—at no cost to attorneys, clients, or taxpayers. Since 1983, it has awarded more than **\$134 million** to support legal services for individuals, families, and children. In 2025, it distributed **\$12 million** in grants to over 40 organizations serving low-income North Carolinians and advancing the administration of justice statewide.

The North Carolina General Assembly included a provision in the July 2025 Public Safety Act that **freezes IOLTA grantmaking** for the period from July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026. Pursuant to the legislation, no grants have been awarded for 2026. More information about this legislation and its impact is available at nciolta.org/media-resources/. NC IOLTA and State Bar leadership continue to seek a resolution to preserve funding for civil legal aid, which plays a critical role in building a legal system that works for everyone, breaking down barriers and creating strong communities across North Carolina.



NORTH CAROLINA
IOLTA

INVESTING IN JUSTICE FOR
ALL NORTH CAROLINIANS

2025 Grants

In 2025, NC IOLTA awarded \$12.2M to 42 organizations. Grantees included:

- **24** legal services providers in areas including family law, housing, employment and income, access to benefits, consumer protections, and safety from abuse;
- **12** organizations supporting and advancing the administration of justice;
- The state's **6** accredited law schools to fund summer internships for students interested in pursuing public interest law in North Carolina counties designated as legal deserts.

Read more about the impact of our 2025 grantees at nciolta.org/grantees.

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. Visit [Legal Specialization](#).

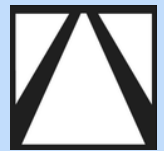
Board Certified Specialists: **1,192**

15 Board Certified Specialties

Appellate practice
Bankruptcy law
Child welfare law
Criminal law
Elder law
Employment law
Estate planning
Family law

Immigration law
Privacy and information security law
Real property law
Social Security disability law
Trademark law
Utilities law
Workers' compensation law

Paralegal Certification



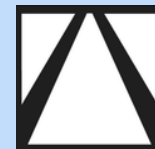
Certification highlights the importance of paralegals in the practice of law and is the hallmark of professionalism.

Visit [Paralegal Certification](#).

Certified Paralegals:
3,425

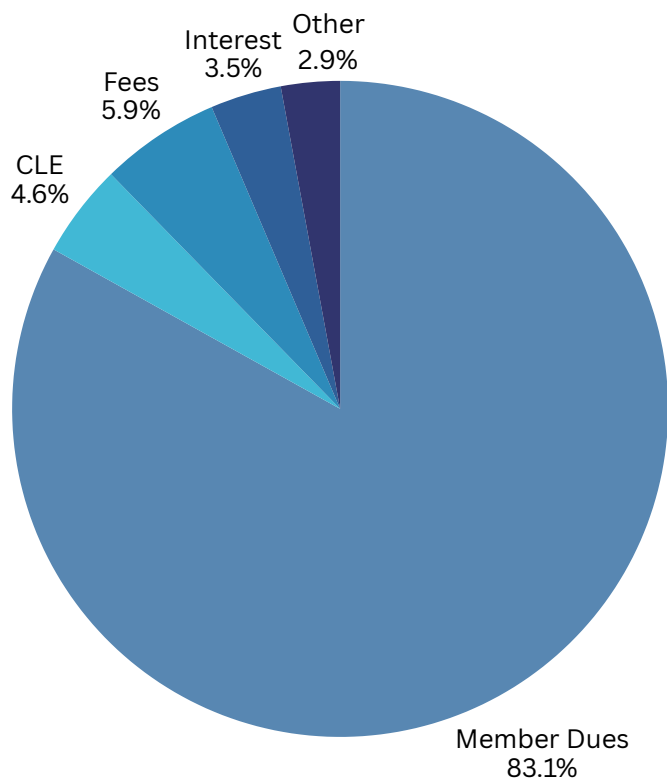


Financial Report

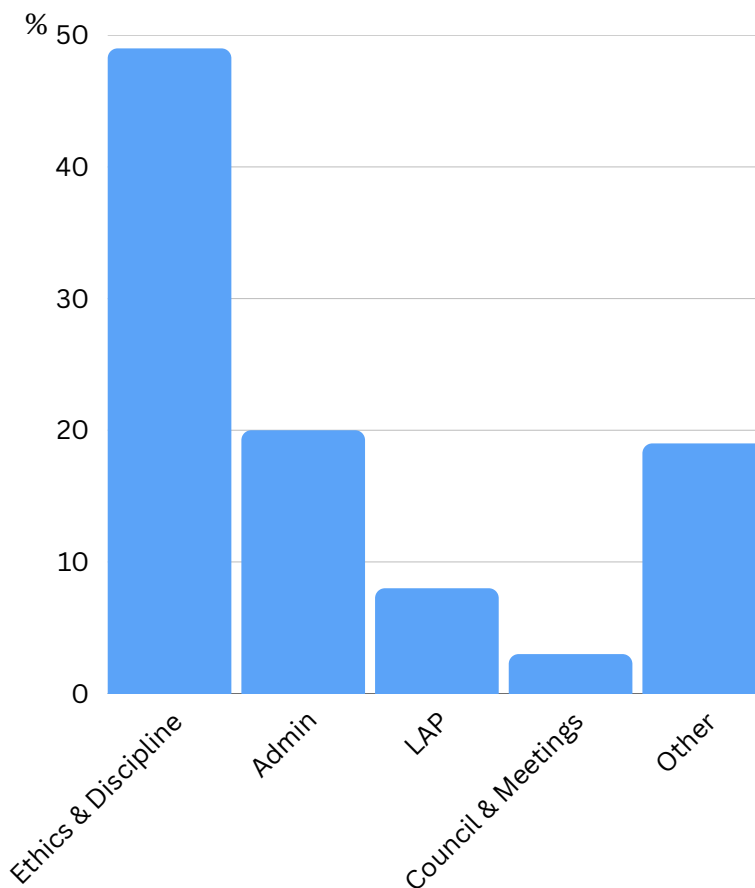


The North Carolina State Bar receives roughly 83% of our total income from member dues. The remaining income comes from fees, fines, and interest. Expenses are rising faster than the rate of membership growth, but the State Bar continues to be responsible stewards of its funds.

Income



Expenses



Dues	\$9,892,165
CLE	\$552,778
Fees	\$700,750
Interest	\$411,366
Other	\$348,070
TOTAL	\$11,905,129

Ethics & Discipline	\$5,910,567
Admin (HR, IT, etc.)	\$2,477,423
LAP	\$960,813
Council & Meetings	\$405,702
Other (building, supplies, etc.)	\$2,349,318
TOTAL	\$12,103,825

0% Dues Increase Since 2010—33,900 Active Lawyers

Contact Us



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Website: ncbar.gov



Connect with us



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