

# North Carolina's Executive Branch

The executive power of the state is outlined in Article III of the North Carolina Constitution. The executive branch includes the Governor, the Council of State, the Governor's Cabinet, and more than 400 boards and commissions.

## GOVERNOR

The Governor is the state's chief executive officer and is granted all executive power by the NC Constitution. The Governor is elected to 4-year terms and may not serve more than 2 consecutive terms in office. A qualified candidate must be at least 30 years old; a US citizen for at least 5 years; and a NC resident for at least 2 years immediately prior to the election. The Governor's primary duties include the following:

- Report to the General Assembly (legislature) on the affairs of the state
- Recommend a budget to the General Assembly and administer a balanced budget
- Ensure that laws are faithfully executed
  - Serve as Commander-in-Chief of the state's national guard (except when it is called into action by the US)
  - Grant reprieves and pardons
    - Nominate and appoint state officers, some with the Senate's consent
    - Sign public acts of the General Assembly into law or exercise the veto

## GOVERNOR'S CABINET

The Cabinet is composed of the heads (or "Secretaries") of state agencies that carry out certain executive branch functions at the direction of the Governor; these secretaries are appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the Governor.

### Secretary of Commerce

Leads the state's business and industry development efforts and provides information and support to employers and employees

### Secretary of Cultural Resources

Promotes and preserves the arts, culture, and history

### Secretary of Transportation

Oversees the state's transportation systems

### Secretary of Administration

Oversees administrative functions of state government

### Secretary of Health and Human Services

Oversees public health, state hospitals, and health-related programs

### Secretary of Environmental and Natural Resources

Implements environmental protection programs

### Secretary of Public Safety

Oversees state law enforcement, emergency management, corrections, and juvenile justice programs

### Secretary of Revenue

Collects the state's revenues and enforces tax laws

## COUNCIL OF STATE

The NC Constitution establishes nine other elected offices within the executive branch. These elected officials act independently of the Governor and are collectively called the Council of State; members of the Council of State are elected to 4-year terms. With the exception of the Lieutenant Governor, each member of the Council of State oversees a related state agency (e.g., the Office of the State Auditor or the Department of Labor) and appoints staff within that agency. The Council of State oversees and approves certain state functions, such as buying and selling property.

## LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

The NC Constitution provides the Lieutenant Governor with executive and legislative authority. The executive authority includes being first in line to assume the governorship, should that office become vacant, and the legislative authority includes serving as president of the state Senate but only voting to break ties. The Lieutenant Governor has the same requirements for office and term limits as the Governor.

### State Auditor

Reviews (audits) the finances and performance of other state departments

### Commissioner of Labor

Regulates worker safety and employment

### Attorney General

Provides legal counsel to state government, protects consumers, and prosecutes criminal cases on appeal from trial courts

### Commissioner of Insurance

Regulates how insurance companies do business in the state

### State Treasurer

Manages the state's money, including the retirement systems for government employees

### Secretary of State

Facilitates business activity in the state and manages the state's official records

### Superintendent of Public Instruction

Oversees the public school system

### Commissioner of Agriculture

Promotes and oversees the safety of agricultural products, livestock, food, drugs, and cosmetics

More than **400 boards and commissions** have been established by the NC Constitution, general statute, or a Governor's executive order. Some boards and commissions oversee educational institutions (e.g., the UNC Board of Governors), while others have regulatory authority (e.g., the State Board of Elections). Other boards regulate professions and occupations (e.g., the NC Board for Licensing of Geologists) or oversee the operations of state agencies (e.g., the Board of Transportation). Some special commissions have court-like powers ("quasi-judicial") to hear and decide certain cases such as property tax disputes or power companies' rate changes. Members of boards and commissions are appointed by the Governor, the General Assembly, and other state officers.