

Article 4.

Administration and Review.

§ 78C-26. Administration of Chapter.

(a) This Chapter shall be administered by the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State as Administrator may delegate all or part of the authority under this Chapter to the Deputy Securities Administrator including, but not limited to, the authority to conduct hearings, and make, execute and issue final agency orders and decisions. The Secretary of State may appoint such clerks and other assistants as may from time to time be needed. The Secretary of State may designate one or more hearing officers for the purpose of conducting administrative hearings.

(b) It is unlawful for the Administrator or any of his officers or employees to use for personal benefit any information which is filed with or obtained by the Administrator and which is not made public. No provision of this Chapter authorizes the Administrator or any of his officers or employees to disclose any such information except among themselves or when necessary or appropriate in a proceeding or investigation under this Chapter. No provision of this Chapter either creates or derogates from any privilege which exists at common law or otherwise when documentary or other evidence is sought under a subpoena directed to the Administrator or any of his officers or employees.

(b1) It is the policy of this State that an investor's financial information should be treated as confidential and unavailable for inspection or examination by members of the public under G.S. 132-6.

(c) All fees provided for under this Chapter shall be collected by the Administrator and shall be paid over to the State Treasurer to go into the General Fund. (1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1098, s. 1; 2001-126, s. 10; 2020-74, s. 23(c).)

§ 78C-27. Investigations and subpoenas.

(a) The Administrator in his discretion:

- (1) May make any investigation within or outside of this State as the Administrator deems necessary to determine whether any person has violated or is about to violate any provision of this Chapter or any rule or order hereunder, or to aid in the enforcement of this Chapter or in the prescribing of rules and forms hereunder;
- (2) May require or permit any person to file a statement in writing, under oath or otherwise as the Administrator determines, as to all the facts and circumstances concerning the matter to be investigated; and
- (3) May publish information concerning any violation of this Chapter or any rule or order hereunder.

(b) For the purpose of any investigation or proceeding under this Chapter, the Administrator or any officer designated by him may administer oaths and affirmations, subpoena witnesses, compel their attendance, take evidence and require the production of any books, papers, correspondence, memoranda, agreements, or other documents or records which the Administrator deems relevant or material to the inquiry.

(c) In case of contumacy by, or refusal to obey a subpoena issued to any person, any court of competent jurisdiction, upon application by the Administrator, may issue to the person an order requiring him to appear before the Administrator, or the officer designated by him, there to produce documentary evidence if so ordered or to give evidence touching the matter under investigation or

in question. Failure to obey the order of the court may be punished by the court as a contempt of court.

(d) The Administrator may act under subsection (b) of this section or apply under subsection (c) of this section to enforce subpoenas in this State at the request of a securities agency or administrator of any state if the alleged activities constituting a violation for which the information is sought would be a violation of this Chapter or any rule hereunder if the alleged activities had occurred in this State. (1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1098, s. 1; 1997-462, s. 8.)

§ 78C-28. Injunctions; cease and desist orders; civil penalties.

(a) Whenever it appears to the Administrator that any person has engaged or is about to engage in any act or practice constituting a violation of any provision of this Chapter or any rule or order hereunder, he may in his discretion bring an action in any court of competent jurisdiction to enjoin the acts or practices and to enforce compliance with this Chapter or any rule or order hereunder. Upon a proper showing a permanent or temporary injunction, restraining order, or writ of mandamus shall be granted and a receiver or conservator may be appointed for the defendant or the defendant's assets. In addition to any other remedies provided by this Chapter, the Administrator may apply to the court hearing this matter for an order of restitution whereby the defendant in such action shall be ordered to make restitution of those sums shown by the Administrator to have been obtained by him in violation of any of the provisions of this Chapter. Such restitution shall be payable, in the discretion of the court, to the Administrator or receiver appointed pursuant to this section for the benefit of those persons whose assets were obtained in violation of this Chapter, or directly to those persons. The court may not require the Administrator to post a bond.

- (b) (1) If the Administrator determines after giving notice of an opportunity for a hearing, that any person has engaged in, or is about to engage in, any act or practice constituting a violation of any provision of this Chapter or any rule or order hereunder, he may order such person to cease and desist from such unlawful act or practice and take such affirmative action as in the judgment of the Administrator will carry out the purposes of this Chapter.
- (2) If the Administrator makes written findings of fact that the public interest will be irreparably harmed by delay in issuing an order under G.S. 78C-28(b)(1), the Administrator may issue a temporary cease and desist order. Upon the entry of a temporary cease and desist order, the Administrator shall promptly notify in writing the person subject to the order that such order has been entered, the reasons therefor, and that within 20 days after the receipt of a written request from such person the matter shall be scheduled for hearing in accordance with Chapter 150B of the General Statutes to determine whether or not the order shall become permanent and final. If no request for a hearing, other responsive pleading, or submission is received by the Administrator within 30 business days of receipt of service of notice of the order upon the person subject to the order and no hearing is ordered by the Administrator, the order shall become final and remain in effect unless it is modified or vacated by the Administrator. If a hearing is requested or ordered, the Administrator, after giving notice of an opportunity for a hearing to the person subject to the order, shall by written findings of fact and conclusion of law, vacate, modify, or make permanent the order.

- (3) No order under subsection (b) of this section, except an order issued pursuant to G.S. 78C-28(b)(2), may be entered without prior notice or an opportunity for hearing. The Administrator may vacate or modify an order under subsection (b) of this section upon his finding that the conditions which required such an order have changed and that it is in the public interest to so vacate or modify.
- (4) A final order issued pursuant to the provisions of subsection (b) of this section shall be subject to review as provided in G.S. 78C-29.

(c) The Administrator may issue an order against an applicant, registered person, or other person who willfully violates this Chapter or a rule or order of the Administrator under this Chapter:

- (1) Imposing a civil penalty of up to two thousand five hundred dollars (\$2,500) for a single violation or of up to twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) for multiple violations in a single proceeding or a series of related proceedings; and
- (2) Requiring reimbursement of the costs of investigation.

The clear proceeds of civil penalties imposed under this subsection shall be remitted to the Civil Penalty and Forfeiture Fund in accordance with G.S. 115C-457.2. Any reimbursement imposed under this subsection shall be paid into the General Fund. No order authorized by this subsection may be entered without prior notice of an opportunity for a hearing conducted pursuant to Article 3 of Chapter 150B of the General Statutes. (1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1098, s. 1; 1991, c. 456, s. 7; 1997-462, s. 9; 1998-215, s. 121; 2001-126, s. 6.)

§ 78C-29. Judicial review of orders.

(a) Any person aggrieved by a final order of the Administrator may obtain a review of the order in the Superior Court of Wake County by filing in court, within 30 days after a written copy of the decision is served upon the person by personal service or by registered or certified mail, a written petition praying that the order be modified or set aside in whole or in part. A copy of the petition shall be forthwith served upon the Administrator, and thereupon the Administrator shall certify and file in court a copy of the filing and evidence upon which the order was entered. When these have been filed, the court has exclusive jurisdiction to affirm, modify, enforce, or set aside the order, in whole or in part. The findings of the Administrator as to the facts, if supported by competent, material and substantial evidence, are conclusive. If either party applies to the court for leave to adduce additional material evidence, and shows to the satisfaction of the court that there were reasonable grounds for failure to adduce the evidence in the hearings before the Administrator, the court may order the additional evidence to be taken before the Administrator and to be adduced upon the hearing in such manner and upon such conditions as the court considers proper. The Administrator may modify his findings and order by reason of the additional evidence and shall file in court the additional evidence together with any modified or new findings or order. The judgment of the court is final, subject to review by the Court of Appeals.

(b) The commencement of proceedings under subsection (a) of this section does not, unless specifically ordered by the court, operate as a stay of the Administrator's order. (1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1098, s. 1.)

§ 78C-30. Rules, forms, orders, and hearings.

(a) The Administrator may from time to time make, amend, and rescind such rules, forms, and orders as are necessary to carry out the provisions of this Chapter, including rules and forms governing registration, applications, and reports, and defining any terms, whether or not used in

this Chapter, insofar as the definitions are not inconsistent with the provisions of this Chapter. For the purpose of rules and forms the Administrator may classify persons, and matters within his jurisdiction, and prescribe different requirements for different classes.

(b) No rule, form, or order may be made, amended, or rescinded unless the Administrator finds that the action is necessary or appropriate in the public interest or for the protection of investors and clients and consistent with the purposes fairly intended by the policy and provisions of this Chapter. In prescribing rules and forms the Administrator may cooperate with the securities administrators of the other states and the Securities and Exchange Commission with a view to effectuating the policy of this statute to achieve maximum uniformity in the form and content of registrations, applications, and reports wherever practicable.

(c) The Administrator may by rule or order prescribe (i) the form and content of financial statements required under this Chapter, (ii) the circumstances under which consolidated financial statements shall be filed, and (iii) whether any required financial statements shall be certified by independent or certified public accountants. All financial statements required to be filed with the Administrator shall be audited and shall be prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles, except where the Administrator shall by rule or order provide otherwise.

(d) The Administrator may by rule or order require the filing of any prospectus, pamphlet, circular, form letter, advertisement, or other sales literature or advertising communication addressed or intended for distribution to prospective investors, including clients or prospective clients of an investment adviser.

(e) All rules and forms of the Administrator shall be published.

(f) No provision of this Chapter imposing any liability applies to any act done or omitted in good faith in conformity with any rule, form, or order of the Administrator, notwithstanding that the rule, form, or order may later be amended or rescinded or be determined by judicial or other authority to be invalid for any reason.

(g) Every hearing in an administrative proceeding shall be public unless the Administrator in his discretion grants a request joined in by all the respondents that the hearing be conducted privately. (1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1098, s. 1; 2003-413, s. 20.)

§ 78C-31. Administrative files and opinions.

(a) A document is filed when it is received by the Administrator.

(b) The Administrator shall keep a register of all applications for registration which are or have been effective under this Chapter and all denial, suspension, or revocation orders or similar orders which have been entered under this Chapter. The register shall be open for public inspection.

(c) The information contained in or filed with any registration, application, or report may be made available to the public under such rules as the Administrator prescribes.

(c1) The files and records of the Administrator relating to criminal investigations and enforcement proceedings undertaken pursuant to this Chapter are subject to the provisions of G.S. 132-1.4.

(c2) The files and records of the Administrator relating to noncriminal investigations and enforcement proceedings undertaken pursuant to this Chapter shall not be subject to inspection and examination pursuant to G.S. 132-6 until the investigations and proceedings are completed and cease to be active.

(c3) Any information obtained by the Administrator from any law enforcement agency, administrative agency, or regulatory organization on a confidential or otherwise restricted basis in the course of an investigation or proceeding undertaken pursuant to this Chapter shall be

confidential and exempt from G.S. 132-6 to the same extent that it is confidential in the possession of the providing agency or organization.

(c4) Notwithstanding subsections (c1) and (c2) of this section, any records obtained by the Administrator in connection with an examination under G.S. 78C-18(e), an investigation under G.S. 78C-27, or an action under G.S. 78C-28 or G.S. 78C-19 shall not be a public record available for public examination.

(c5) A record that is not required to be provided to the Administrator or filed under this act and is provided to the Administrator only on the condition that the information will not be subject to public examination or disclosure is not a public record that is available for public examination.

(c6) The Administrator may disclose a record obtained in connection with an examination under G.S. 78C-18(e), an investigation under G.S. 78C-27, or an action under G.S. 78C-28 or G.S. 78C-19 if disclosure is for the purpose of a civil, administrative, or criminal investigation, action, or proceeding or to a securities regulator of one or more states, Canada or one or more of its provinces or territories, one or more foreign countries; the United States Securities and Exchange Commission, the United States Department of Justice, the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, the Federal Trade Commission, the Securities Investor Protection Corporation, a self-regulatory organization, a national or international organization of securities regulators, federal or state banking and insurance regulators, and any governmental law enforcement agency, in order to effectuate greater uniformity in securities matters among the federal government, self-regulatory organizations, and state and foreign governments.

(d) Upon request and at such reasonable charges as the Administrator prescribes, the Administrator shall furnish to any person photostatic or other copies (certified under the seal of office if requested) of any entry in the register or any document which is a matter of public record. In any proceeding or prosecution under this Chapter, any copy so certified is prima facie evidence of the contents of the entry or document certified.

(e) The Administrator may honor requests from interested persons for interpretative opinions upon the payment of a fee of one hundred fifty dollars (\$150.00). (1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1098, s. 1; 1997-462, s. 10; 2020-74, s. 23(d).)

§§ 78C-32 through 78C-37: Reserved for future codification purposes.