

**§ 114-2.3. Use of private counsel limited.**

(a) Every agency, institution, department, bureau, board, or commission of the State, authorized by law to retain private counsel, shall obtain written permission from the Attorney General prior to employing private counsel. This section does not apply to counties, cities, towns, other municipal corporations or political subdivisions of the State, or any agencies of these municipal corporations or political subdivisions, or to county or city boards of education. This subsection does not apply to private counsel retained by the Judicial Department for the defense of an official or employee of the Department in any action arising from conduct undertaken in the course of the official's or employee's official duties and in which the Attorney General has declined to provide the litigation services.

(b) Article 2A of this Chapter applies to any contract to retain private counsel authorized by the Attorney General under this section.

(c) Except as provided in G.S. 147-17, the Attorney General shall represent the State in any action requiring the State to be a party under G.S. 1-72.3.

(d) No State funds shall be withdrawn from the State treasury to pay for litigation services provided by private counsel except as expressly authorized by an appropriation of the General Assembly. As used in this subsection, litigation services include legal work conducted in anticipation of, or in preparation for, any suit or action. As used in this section, private counsel includes any licensed attorney retained by, engaged by, or otherwise representing a department, officer, agency, institution, commission, bureau, or other organized activity of the State but does not include a licensed attorney who holds a permanent budgeted position in either the Department of Justice or the applicable department, officer, agency, institution, commission, bureau, or other organized activity of the State. (1985, c. 479, s. 135; 2014-110, s. 1.2; 2016-109, s. 2(b); 2017-57, s. 6.7(b); 2021-180, s. 16.10(c).)