

**§ 147-17. May employ counsel in cases wherein State is interested.**

(a) No department, officer, agency, institution, commission, bureau or other organized activity of the State which receives support in whole or in part from the State shall employ private counsel, except with the approval of the Governor. The Governor shall give his approval only if the Attorney General has advised him, as provided in subsection (b) of this section, that it is impracticable for the Attorney General to render the legal services. In any case or proceeding, civil or criminal, in or before any court or agency of this State or any other state or the United States, or in any other matter in which the State of North Carolina is interested, the Governor may employ private counsel as he may deem proper or necessary to represent the interest of the State, and may fix the compensation for their services, subject to the provisions of subsection (c1) of this section. This subsection does not apply to the Judicial Department or an agency that is under the control of an official who is a member of the Council of State.

(b) The Attorney General shall be counsel for all departments, officers, agencies, institutions, commissions, bureaus or other organized activities of the State which receive support in whole or in part from the State. Whenever the Attorney General shall advise the Governor that it is impracticable for him to render legal services to any State agency, officer, institution, commission, bureau or other organized activity, or to defend a State employee or former employee as authorized by Article 31A of Chapter 143 of the General Statutes, the Governor may authorize the employment of private counsel, as in his judgment, should be employed to render such services, and may fix the compensation for their services.

(c) Subject to the provisions of subsection (c1) of this section, the Governor may direct that the compensation fixed under this section for private counsel shall be paid out of appropriations or other funds credited to the appropriate department, agency, institution, commission, bureau, or other organized activity of the State or out of the Contingency and Emergency Fund.

(c1) Notwithstanding subsection (c) of this section and G.S. 143C-4-4(b), no State funds shall be withdrawn from the State treasury to pay for litigation services provided by private counsel except as expressly authorized by an appropriation of the General Assembly.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.

(d) In those instances when a department, officer, agency, institution, commission, bureau, or other organized activity of the State which receives support in whole or in part from the State shall employ private counsel other than the Attorney General as permitted by law, such employed counsel shall allocate authority between counsel and the State client in conformance with Rule 1.2 of the North Carolina Rules of Professional Conduct. In those instances where more than one counsel is providing legal representation, counsel, or service on a legal matter on behalf of a State client, the client shall designate in writing which of its legal counsel possesses final decision-making authority on behalf of the State client, and other co-counsel shall, consistent with the Rules of Professional Conduct, cooperate with such designated lead counsel. (1868-9, c. 270, s. 6; 1870-1, c. 111; 1873-4, c. 160, s. 2; 1883, c. 71; Code, ss. 3320, 3324; 1901, c. 744; Rev., s. 5332; C.S., s. 7640; 1925, c. 207, s. 3; 1961, c. 1007; 1963, c. 1009; 1967, c. 1092, s. 2; 1985, c. 479, s. 136; 2011-145, s. 22.4; 2017-57, s. 6.7(a); 2021-180, s. 16.10(d); 2024-57, s. 3D.1(m).)