

# vote.

# North Carolina

## North Carolina's Council of State

## ATTORNEY GENERAL

The N.C. Constitution establishes nine elected offices in addition to the office of governor 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 in statewide elections to four-year terms. With the exception of the lieutenant governor, each member of the Council of State oversees a related state agency and appoints staff within that agency. The Council of State oversees and approves certain state functions, such as buying and selling property.

- ★ **Lieutenant Governor** (Linda Coleman-D v. Dan Gurley-R)  
The N.C. Constitution provides the lieutenant governor with executive and legislative authority. The executive authority includes being first in line to succeed the governorship, should that office become vacant, and the legislative authority includes serving as president of the state Senate, but casting votes only to break ties. The lieutenant governor has the same requirements for office and term limits as the governor
- ★ **State Auditor** (Beth Wood-D v. Debra Goldman-R)  
Reviews (audits) the finances and performance of other state departments
- ★ **Attorney General** (Roy Cooper-D, unopposed)  
Provides legal advice and representation to state government, protects consumers, and prosecutes criminal cases on appeal from state trial courts
- ★ **Commissioner of Insurance** (Wayne Godwin-D v. Mike Causey-R)  
Regulates how insurance companies do business in the state
- ★ **Commissioner of Agriculture** (Walter Smith-D v. Steve Troxler-R)  
Promotes agriculture and oversees the safety of agricultural products, livestock, food, drugs and cosmetics
- ★ **State Treasurer** (Janet Cowell-D v. Steve Royal-R)  
Manages the state's money, including the retirement system for teachers and state employees
- ★ **Commissioner of Labor** (John Brooks-D v. Cherie Berry-R)  
Regulates worker safety and employment
- ★ **Secretary of State** (Elaine Marshall-D v. Ed Goodwin-R)  
Facilitates business activities in the state and manages the state's official records
- ★ **Superintendent of Public Instruction** (June Atkinson-D v. John Tedesco-R)  
Oversees the public school system

The attorney general oversees the N.C. Department of Justice and protects the interests of the state's citizens by:

- ★ providing legal representation and advice to all state government departments, agencies, and commissions
- ★ serving as prosecutor in appeals of criminal cases from the state's trial courts to North Carolina's Court of Appeals and Supreme Court
- ★ providing legal opinions about how the state's laws should be interpreted as requested by public officials
- ★ taking legal action on behalf of the state and its citizens, when public interests are at stake
- ★ educating North Carolina consumers and protecting them from fraud and scams
- ★ protecting the rights of victims and helping citizens better understand the criminal justice system
- ★ overseeing the State Bureau of Investigation
- ★ helping police and sheriff's departments that work in the state's cities and counties by providing training, deciding what training officers must have, and disciplining officers who misbehave

## Think more!

★ N.C.'s 1776 Constitution established the office of state attorney general. At that time, the N.C. General Assembly selected the state's attorney general (and the governor). Since 1868, voters have elected the attorney general. Do you believe the attorney general should be appointed or elected and why? Write and deliver a speech or write an editorial or blog that expresses your opinion.

★ The N.C. Constitution does not specify training or work experience as qualifications for serving on the Council of State except for attorney general who must be authorized to practice in the state's courts. Use news and other sources to learn about the candidates for one office and current issues that involve the office. What do you think should be important to voters?

### HELP WANTED COUNCIL OF STATE

Each official must be:

- ★ A qualified and registered voter
- ★ At least 21 years of age

Special qualifications:

Lt. governor (same as governor)

Attorney general

- ★ Authorized to practice law in the state's courts

## DID YOU KNOW?

- ★ James Iredell, N.C.'s second attorney general serving from 1779-1882, went on to become one of the original Justices of the Supreme Court of the United States. President George Washington appointed Iredell, and he served on the court from 1790 until his death in 1799.

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