

**NORTH CAROLINA SUPPLEMENTAL RETIREMENT BOARD
OF TRUSTEES
FISCAL ANALYSIS OF PROPOSED RULES**

Rule Information

Authority and Citation

Statutory authority N.C.G.S. §§ 135-91(c) and (e), 143B-426.24(h2), and 115C-341.2(c)

Rule citation (proposed) 20 NCAC 11 .0101, *et. seq.*

Statements of Impact

State government Yes
Local Government No
Private sector Yes
Substantial impact Yes

Contact Information

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Background

The North Carolina Supplemental Retirement Plans are voluntary defined contribution retirement plans that are offered as an optional employment benefit to state and local governmental employees. The Plans, which are tax-advantaged under various provisions of the Internal Revenue Code (the “Code”), consist of the Supplemental Retirement Income Plan of North Carolina (the “NC 401(k) Plan”), the North Carolina Public Employee Deferred Compensation Plan (the “NC 457 Plan”), and the North Carolina Public School Teachers' and Professional Educators' Investment Plan (the “NC 403(b) Program”).

The NC 401(k) Plan, established in 1985, is a State-sponsored, qualified defined contribution plan under Internal Revenue Code Section 401(k) that is available to members of the Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System, the Local Governmental Employees' Retirement System, and certain other governmental defined benefit plans, as well as state and local law enforcement officers. Participation in the NC 401(k) Plan is voluntary, and – with the exception of certain statutory employer contributions for law enforcement officers – employers and employees have the discretion to determine the amounts they contribute to the plan. Employers must contribute five percent of a law enforcement officer's monthly compensation to the NC 401(k) Plan. In addition, law enforcement officers, except for sheriffs, receive a share of court costs collected.

The NC 457 Plan, established in 1974, is a State-sponsored, eligible defined contribution plan under Code Section 457(b) that is available to the employees of the State and participating community colleges, local governments, and political subdivisions. Participation in, and contributions to, the plan are voluntary for employers and employees.

The investment options are the same in the NC 401(k) and NC 457 Plans, and the assets of the two plans are commingled in a group trust for purposes of investment.

The NC 403(b) Program, launched in 2014, provides investment options and recordkeeping services for Code 403(b) defined contribution plans sponsored by school districts and community colleges. In addition, the NC 403(b) Program offers a plan document for adoption by school districts and community colleges. The program can be used by employers as a stand-alone 403(b) plan or as one component of its larger, multi-offering 403(b) plan.

Eligible employees are permitted to participate in more than one Plan.

The North Carolina Supplemental Retirement Board of Trustees (the “Board”) and the North Carolina Department of State Treasurer (the “Department”) administer the Plans pursuant to the Code, the North Carolina General Statutes, and the policies and plan documents adopted by the Board, as well as the Board-authorized contracts with external vendors, most notably investment managers, the recordkeeper, and the custodian. In addition, the Board has the responsibility and authority to hire, or cause to be hired, individual investment managers to execute the various investment mandates described in the Plans' *Statement of Investment Policy*.

The Board, and the Investment and Audit Subcommittees established by the Board, are structured and conduct their business according to the charter adopted by the Board, as well as North

Carolina's Open Meetings Law (Chapter 143, Article 33C of the North Carolina General Statutes). The agenda, minutes, and Board materials (except those for which a Public Records Act exemption applies) for each meeting are posted on the Department's website, and plan participants and members of the public have the opportunity to provide comments at each meeting.

Summary of Proposed Rules

The Board and the Department do not receive any appropriations to operate the NC 401(k) Plan, the NC 457 Plan, or the NC 401(k) Program. Instead, to the knowledge of the Department, the operational expenses of the Board and the Department have historically been funded through an administrative fee charged to participants who opt to enroll in the Supplemental Retirement Plans. However, the Board desires to codify its administrative fee through the rulemaking process. The proposed rules reflect the Board's commitment to transparency and procedure.

In addition, the current rulemaking is consistent with recent statutory changes. The Board's authority to charge an administrative fee for the NC 457 Plan and the NC 403(b) Program were clarified by the General Assembly this year with the enactment of Session Law 2018-84, which added fee provisions to the NC 457 Plan's statute (N.C.G.S. § 143B-426.24) and the NC 403(b) Program's statute (N.C.G.S. § 115C-341.2(c)). The Board was established by the NC 401(k) Plan's statute, which already included a fee provision.

The Board establishes the administrative fee and adopts the budget for the use of the receipts. For participants in the NC 401(k) and NC 457 Plans, the annual administrative fee is 0.025% (2.5 basis points) of a participant's account balance. For participants in the NC 403(b) Program, the annual administrative fee is 0.050% (5.0 basis points) of a participant's account balance. The fee is charged quarterly. The administrative fee in the proposed rules is a continuation of the current fee, so participants will not experience a change in costs as a result of the rules.

Benefits

The Supplemental Retirement Plans help state and local governmental employees prepare financially for retirement and help state and local governments attract and retain employees. More than 275,000 current and former state and local governmental employees, representing more than 1,000 employers, participate in one or more of the Supplemental Retirement Plans, with total assets exceeding \$11 billion. As of December 31, 2017, approximately 72% of active employees in the Supplemental Retirement Plans were "retirement ready," compared with 46% of state and local governmental employees who were not participating in the plans. "Retirement readiness" is defined as the ability to replace 80% of income from retirement through age 85.

The Board and the Department use the administrative fee receipts to fund the administration of the Plans, including Departmental personnel costs and investment consulting and auditing fees. Table 1, below, shows the actual administrative fees collected for 2016 and 2017, the estimated fees for 2018, and the projected fees for 2019 and 2020.

Costs

Administrative Fee

As noted above, the annual administrative fee is 0.025% (2.5 basis points) of a participant's account balance in the NC 401(k) and NC 457 Plans and 0.050% (5.0 basis points) of a participant's account balance in the NC 403(b) Program. The administrative fee in the proposed rules is a continuation of the current fee, so participants will not experience a change in costs as a result of the rules.

Table 1 shows the actual administrative fees collected for 2016 and 2017, the estimated fees for 2018, and the projected fees for 2019 and 2020. Recent asset growth in the NC 401(k) and NC 457 Plans has resulted mostly from earnings, while both net contributions and earnings have contributed significantly to asset growth in the NC 403(b) Program. Therefore, the estimated and projected fees for 2018-20 assume that the assets in the NC 401(k) and NC 457 Plans grow at the rate of a portfolio of 65% domestic equities and 35% domestic fixed income. For the NC 403(b) Program, the 2018 estimated fee is based on the actual receipts for January-September, and the projected fees for 2019-20 assume asset growth in the program that is comparable to, though slightly lower, than recent rates of growth.

The Board approved a fee waiver for 2019, so actual fee receipts for 2019 will be \$0. However, the forecasted amount assuming no fee waiver is included in Table 1 to illustrate the trend in fee receipts.

Plan	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018 (Est.)</u>	<u>2019</u> <u>(For.)</u>	<u>2020</u> <u>(For.)</u>
NC 401(k) Plan	\$1,971,103	\$2,233,815	\$2,499,426	\$2,625,147	\$2,757,192
NC 457 Plan	\$347,842	\$394,203	\$441,075	\$463,261	\$486,563
NC 403(b) Program	\$1,200	\$4,175	\$7,031	\$9,140	\$11,882

Opportunity Cost

The costs of the rule include the forgone returns that could have been earned from investing the amount paid by participants for the administrative fee. Table 2 shows the estimated returns from investing the administrative fees in Table 1 under the following assumptions:

- The alternative administrative fee is \$0 (*i.e.*, the entire amount in Table 1 is invested); and
- The fee is invested in portfolio of 65% domestic equities and 35% domestic fixed income.

TABLE 2: OPPORTUNITY COSTS FOR CY 2016 - CY 2020						
Plan	2016	2017	2018 (Est.)	2019 (For.)	2020 (For.)	Total*
NC 401(k) Plan	\$166,686	\$345,348	\$158,701	\$132,045	\$138,687	\$1,083,378
NC 457 Plan	\$29,415	\$60,944	\$28,006	\$23,302	\$24,474	\$191,184
NC 403(b) Program	\$101	\$646	\$446	\$460	\$598	\$2,468

*Includes compounding.

Alternatives

Eliminating administrative fees is not a feasible alternative. The Board and the Department do not receive any appropriations to operate the NC 401(k) Plan, the NC 457 Plan, or the NC 401(k) Program; therefore, unless appropriations are made in the future, the Board must continue to charge an administrative fee to operate the Supplemental Retirement Plans.

The Board and the Department chose not to propose higher or lower administrative fees to operate the Supplemental Retirement Plans. Higher administrative fees would be unnecessarily costly to participants.

Receipts have exceeded expenses for the past several years due to increased asset balances in the Supplemental Retirement Plans. The Board's reserve account currently holds between two and three times annual expenses, which exceeds the Board's target balance of one year of annual expenses. However, the Board and the Department do not propose lowering the fees because receipts could decrease or increase slower than expenses if net contributions slow or asset markets soften.

The Board and Department instead propose to use their discretion to issue fee waivers to reduce participants' costs when collections consistently exceed expenses. The Board has the discretion to waive the fee for a certain period of time – a procedure codified by the proposed rules – and the Board recently adopted a fee waiver for all of 2019, which will significantly decrease the reserve balance.

Text of Proposed Rules

CHAPTER 11 – SUPPLEMENTAL RETIREMENT PLANS

SECTION .0100 – ADMINISTRATIVE FEES

20 NCAC 11 .0101 ADMINISTRATIVE FEES: NC 401(K) AND NC 457 PLANS

- (a) The Board and the Department shall charge an administrative fee at an annual rate of 0.025% of the assets in each account in the Supplemental Retirement Income Plan of North Carolina and in each account in the North Carolina Public Employee Deferred Compensation Plan.
- (b) The Board and Department may waive the administrative fee in Paragraph (a) for a period of up to 12 months based upon the following factors:
1. The balance of the administrative expense account for the plans;
 2. Department projections of future expenses to administer the plans; and
 3. Department projections of future receipts available for the administration of the plans.
- (c) The Board and the Department shall provide notice of a fee waiver on the plans' website and on participants' quarterly statements.

History Note: *Authority G.S. 135-91(e); 143B-426.24(h2);*
Eff. _____;

20 NCAC 11 .0102 ADMINISTRATIVE FEES: NC 403(B) PROGRAM

- (a) The Board and the Department shall charge an administrative fee at an annual rate of 0.050% of the assets in each account in the North Carolina Public School Teachers' and Professional Educators' Investment Plan.
- (b) The Board may waive the administrative fee in Paragraph (a) for a period of up to 12 months based upon the following factors:
1. The balance of the administrative expense account for the plans;
 2. Department projections of future expenses to administer the plan; and
 3. Department projections of future receipts available for the administration of the plan.
- (c) The Board and the Department shall provide notice of a fee waiver on the plan's website and on participants' quarterly statements.

History Note: *Authority G.S. 115C-341.2(c);*
Eff. _____;