

Attorney General ^[1]

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by Wiley J. Williams, 2006

See also: [State Bureau of Investigation](#) ^[2].

Attorney General is North Carolina's chief legal officer. The first attorney general in the Carolina colony was appointed in 1677 by the English Crown. In 1776 the office was made appointive by the [General Assembly](#) ^[3], and the [North Carolina Constitution of 1868](#) ^[4] made it elective by the people. In 1971 the attorney general was placed in the executive branch of the state government as head of the newly created [Department of Justice](#) ^[5] for a four-year term.

The attorney general's ultimate responsibilities are in legal services and law enforcement. The legal services of the Department of Justice are the concern of several divisions, including criminal; civil; trade and commerce; administrative, with separate sections relating to particular clients or areas of the law, such as mental health/medical facilities, health and public assistance, elections, and the Real Estate Commission; special litigation (for example, the Education Section represents the [State Board of Education](#) ^[6], the [Department of Public Instruction](#) ^[7], and the [State Board of Community Colleges](#) ^[8]); victims' rights, child and elder abuse, domestic violence and family matters; and environmental issues. The attorney general has also played a crucial role in enforcing laws relating to public health and safety as well as the state's natural resources by advising and representing in legal proceedings a variety of state departments and agencies, including the [Department of Labor](#) ^[9], the [Department of Insurance](#) ^[10], the [Marine Fisheries Commission](#) ^[11], the [Wildlife Commission](#) ^[12], and the [Pesticide Board](#) ^[13].

Law enforcement in the Department of Justice is addressed by two departments: the [State Bureau of Investigation](#) ^[2] and the [Division of Training and Standards](#) ^[14]. Training and Standards includes four major units: the [North Carolina Justice Academy at Salemburg](#) ^[15], the [Criminal Justice Standards Division](#) ^[16], the [Sheriffs' Standards Division](#) ^[17], and the [Law Enforcement Liaison Section](#) ^[18].

Additional Resources:

NC Department of Justice: <http://www.ncdoj.gov/> ^[5]

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[Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press.](#) ^[22]

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