

Labor, North Carolina Department of ^[1]

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by Wiley J. Williams, 2006

The Bureau of Labor Statistics, predecessor of the modern North Carolina Department of Labor, was established by the General Assembly ^[2] in 1887 as an agency within the Department of Agriculture, Immigration, and Statistics ^[3]. The bureau was headed by a commissioner appointed by the governor, with state senate approval, to a two-year term. The commissioner of labor statistics collected information on work hours, wages, workforce education, and finance, and on ways to promote the "mental, material, social, and moral prosperity" of the state's labor force. The commissioner was aided by a chief clerk and other assistants appointed as needed. A detailed annual report on the bureau's findings was submitted to the legislature and supplied to newspapers around the state. In later years, the commissioner could institute legal proceedings for safety violations, and all violations, accidents, injuries, and deaths were to be recorded by the commissioner's office.

In 1899 the bureau was re-created as the Bureau of Labor and Printing, separate from the Department of Agriculture. In addition to collecting and publishing data relating to labor, the new bureau oversaw all printing and binding for state government. The two-year term of the commissioner, now publicly elected, was extended to four years, and an assistant commissioner with practical printing experience was employed. In 1919 the governor was added to the State Printing Commission (formed in 1901), and the bureau became the Department of Labor and Printing. Finally, in 1931 the General Assembly reorganized the department and changed its name to the Department of Labor. This legislation laid the broad groundwork for the department's gradual development into an agency that administered laws and programs affecting a majority of North Carolina citizens.

The modern Department of Labor's principal regulatory, enforcement, and promotional programs are implemented by various bureaus, each headed by a bureau chief. They include Apprenticeship and Training, Boiler Safety, Elevator and Amusement Devices, Employment Discrimination, Wage and Hour, and Agricultural Safety and Health. Support services are handled by the Budget and Management, Human Resources, and Communications Divisions, a departmental library, and a legal affairs office.

Five statutory boards assist the labor commissioner in policy and program development. The Occupational Safety and Health Review Board is a separate unit, independent of the Department of Labor, which hears appeals of citations and penalties imposed by the department's Occupational Safety and Health Division.

Additional resources:

North Carolina Department of Labor website: <http://www.nclabor.com/> ^[4]

Archived webpages, NC Department of Labor. 2002-present: http://wayback.archive-it.org/194/*/www.nclabor.com ^[5];
1998-2006: http://wayback.archive-it.org/194/*/www.dol.state.nc.us ^[6]

North Carolina State Government Publications Collection: <http://www.ncgovdocs.org/> ^[7]

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Authors:

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From:

Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press. ^[11]

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1 January 2006 | Williams, Wiley J.

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