

Sixty-eighth Legislative Assembly of North Dakota In Regular Session Commencing Tuesday, January 3, 2023

SENATE BILL NO. 2180
(Senators Klein, Magrum, Myrdal)
(Representatives Monson, Vigesaa, Weisz)

AN ACT to amend and reenact subsection 1 of section 54-10-01, sections 54-10-14, 54-10-15, and 54-10-27 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to the annual comprehensive financial report, audits of state agencies, reports, financial audits, and petitions; and to provide for retroactive application.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NORTH DAKOTA:

SECTION 1. AMENDMENT. Subsection 1 of section 54-10-01 of the North Dakota Century Code is amended and reenacted as follows:

1. The state auditor shall:
 - a. Be vested with the duties, powers, and responsibilities involved in performing the postaudit of all financial transactions of state government, detecting and reporting any defaults, and determining that expenditures have been made in accordance with law and appropriation acts.
 - b. Perform or provide for the audit of the general purpose financial statements and a review of the material included in the ~~comprehensive~~ annual comprehensive financial report of the state in accordance with government auditing standards.
 - c. Perform or provide for audits of state agencies in accordance with government auditing standards and legislative audit and fiscal review committee guidelines developed under section 54-35-02.10. Except for the annual audit of the North Dakota lottery required by section 53-12.1-03, the state auditor shall audit each state agency once every two to four years. Audits may be conducted at more frequent intervals if requested by the governor or the legislative audit and fiscal review committee. The state auditor shall charge an amount equal to the cost of the audit and other services rendered by the state auditor to all agencies that receive and expend moneys from other than the general fund. This charge may be reduced for an agency that receives and expends both general fund and nongeneral fund moneys. State agencies shall use nongeneral fund moneys to pay for the cost of the audit. If nongeneral fund moneys are not available, the agency may, upon approval of the legislative assembly, or the budget section if the legislative assembly is not in session, use general fund moneys to pay for the audit. Any budget section action under this subdivision must comply with section 54-35-02.9.
 - d. Perform or provide for performance audits of state agencies, or the agencies' blended component units or discreetly presented component units, as determined necessary by the legislative assembly, or the legislative audit and fiscal review committee if the legislative assembly is not in session. When determining the necessity of a performance audit, the legislative audit and fiscal review committee shall consider:
 - (1) The potential cost-savings or efficiencies that may be gained as a result of the performance audit;
 - (2) The staff resources of the state auditor's office and of the state agency being audited which will be required to conduct the audit;
 - (3) The potential for discovery of noncompliance with state law or legislative intent regarding the program or agency; and

- (4) The potential for the performance audit to identify opportunities for program improvements.
- e. Report on the functions of the state auditor's office to the governor and the secretary of state in accordance with section 54-06-04 or more often as circumstances may require.
- f. Perform work on mineral royalties for the federal government in accordance with section 1735(a) of the Mineral Lands and Mining Act [30 U.S.C. 1735 et seq.].
- g. Perform all other duties as prescribed by law.

SECTION 2. AMENDMENT. Section 54-10-14 of the North Dakota Century Code is amended and reenacted as follows:

54-10-14. Political subdivisions - Audits - Fees - Alternative audits and reports.

- 1. The state auditor shall audit the following political subdivisions once every two years, except as provided in this section or otherwise by law:
 - a. Counties.
 - b. Cities, and when a city is audited, to include any political subdivision that was created by the city and has bonding authority.
 - c. Park districts.
 - d. School districts.
 - e. Firefighters relief associations.
 - f. Airport authorities.
 - g. Public libraries.
 - h. Water resource districts.
 - i. Garrison Diversion Conservancy District.
 - j. Rural fire protection districts.
 - k. Special education districts.
 - l. Area career and technology centers.
 - m. Correction centers.
 - n. Recreation service districts.
 - o. Weed boards.
 - p. Irrigation districts.
 - q. Rural ambulance service districts.
 - r. Southwest water authority.
 - s. Regional planning councils.
 - t. Soil conservation districts.
 - u. Western area water supply authority industrial water sales on an annual basis.

2. The state auditor shall charge the political subdivision an amount equal to the fair value of the audit and any other services rendered. The fees must be deposited in the state auditor operating account. The state treasurer shall credit the state auditor operating account with the amount of interest earnings attributable to the deposits in that account. Expenses relating to political subdivision audits must be paid from the state auditor operating account, within the limits of legislative appropriation.
3. In lieu of conducting an audit every two years, the state auditor may require annual reports from political subdivisions subject to this section, or otherwise provided by law, for any report delinquent as of June 30, 2023, or from political subdivisions with less than seven hundred fifty thousand two million dollars of annual receipts, excluding any federal funds passed through the political subdivision to another entity. If any federal agency performs or requires an audit of a political subdivision that receives federal funds to pass through to another entity, the political subdivision shall provide a copy to the state auditor upon request by the state auditor. The reports must contain the financial information required by the state auditor. The state auditor also may make:
 - a. Make any additional examination or audit determined necessary in addition to the annual report. When a report is not filed, the state auditor may charge
 - b. Charge the political subdivision an amount equal to the fair value of the additional examination or audit and any other services rendered. The state auditor may charge
 - c. Charge a political subdivision a fee not to exceed eighty-sixninety dollars an hour for the costs of reviewing the annual report.
4. A political subdivision, at the option of its governing body, may be audited by a certified public accountant or licensed public accountant rather than by the state auditor. The public accountant annually shall register with the state auditor and comply with generally accepted government auditing standards for audits of political subdivisions. The report must be in the form and content required by the state auditor. The number of copies of the audit report requested by the state auditor must be filed with the state auditor when the public accountant delivers the audit report to the political subdivision. The state auditor shall review the audit report to determine if the report is in the required form and has the required content, and if the audit meets generally accepted government auditing standards. The state auditor also may periodically review the public accountant's workpapers to determine if the audit meets generally accepted government auditing standards. If the report is in the required form and has the required content, and the report and workpapers comply with generally accepted government auditing standards, the state auditor shall accept the audit report. The state auditor may charge the political subdivision a fee of up to eighty-sixninety dollars an hour, but not to exceed seven hundred fifty dollars per review, for the related costs of reviewing the audit report and workpapers.
5. A political subdivision may not pay a public accountant for an audit until the state auditor has accepted the audit. However, a political subdivision may make progress payments to the public accountant. A political subdivision shall retain twenty percent of any progress payment until the audit report is accepted by the state auditor.
6. The state auditor may require the correction of any irregularities, objectionable accounting procedures, or illegal actions on the part of the governing board, officers, or employees of the political subdivision disclosed by the audit report or workpapers, and failure to make the corrections must result in audits being resumed by the state auditor until the irregularities, objectionable accounting procedures, or illegal actions are corrected.

SECTION 3. AMENDMENT. Section 54-10-15 of the North Dakota Century Code is amended and reenacted as follows:

54-10-15. Audits of political subdivisions by ~~order~~request of governor or order of the legislative audit and fiscal review committee, upon petition, or upon request of the state court administrator.

1. The state auditor, by duly appointed deputy auditors or other authorized agents, shall audit or review the books, records, and financial accounts of any political subdivision when ordered by the ~~governor or the legislative audit and fiscal review committee~~. The state auditor, by duly appointed auditors or other authorized agents, may audit or review the books, records, and financial accounts of any political subdivisions when requested by the ~~governor~~, requested by the governing board, or upon petition of at least thirty-five percent of the qualified electors of any political subdivision enumerated in section 54-10-14 voting for the office of governor at the preceding general election or, in the case of school districts, upon petition of at least thirty-five percent of the qualified electors voting at the preceding school board election, or upon the request of the state court administrator with respect to clerk of district court services provided by a county in accordance with chapter 27-05.2. Fees for the audits must be paid in accordance with the provisions of section 54-10-14.
2. If an audit is ordered due to financial irregularities or allegations of embezzlement, the governor may suspend an elected or appointed school board member from the individual's duties if the governor determines suspension is in the best interest of the state pending the results of the audit. If the governor suspends an elected or appointed school board member, the governor immediately shall provide notice to the school board with which the suspended member serves. Within five days of receiving notice, the school board shall appoint an individual to replace the suspended member to serve during the pendency of the audit. The governor shall consult with the superintendent of public instruction in determining whether suspension of a member of a school board is in the best interest of the state.

SECTION 4. AMENDMENT. Section 54-10-27 of the North Dakota Century Code is amended and reenacted as follows:

54-10-27. Occupational and professional boards - Audits and reports.

The governing board of any occupational or professional board shall provide for an audit once every two years by a certified public accountant or licensed public accountant. The accountant conducting the audit shall submit the audit report to the state auditor's office. If the report is in the form and style prescribed by the state auditor, the state auditor may not audit that board. An occupational or professional board may request the state auditor to conduct its audit, and if the state auditor agrees to conduct the audit, the state auditor shall deposit the fees charged to the occupational or professional board into the state auditor operating account. Instead of providing for an audit every two years, an occupational or professional board that has less than two hundred thousand dollars of annual receipts may submit an annual report to the state auditor. The report must contain the information required by the state auditor. The state auditor also may make any additional examination or audit determined necessary in addition to the annual report. When a report is not filed, the state auditor may charge the occupational or professional board an amount equal to the fair value of the additional examination or audit and any other services rendered. The state auditor may charge an occupational or professional board a fee not to exceed ~~eighty-six~~ninety dollars an hour for the costs of reviewing the annual report.

SECTION 5. RETROACTIVE APPLICATION. This Act applies retroactively to cases arising after January 1, 2022.

President of the Senate

Speaker of the House

Secretary of the Senate

Chief Clerk of the House

This certifies that the within bill originated in the Senate of the Sixty-eighth Legislative Assembly of North Dakota and is known on the records of that body as Senate Bill No. 2180.

Senate Vote: Yeas 47 Nays 0 Absent 0

House Vote: Yeas 89 Nays 4 Absent 1

Secretary of the Senate

Received by the Governor at _____ M. on _____, 2023.

Approved at _____ M. on _____, 2023.

Governor

Filed in this office this _____ day of _____, 2023,
at _____ o'clock _____ M.

Secretary of State