

**Fifty-sixth Legislative Assembly, State of North Dakota, begun in the
Capitol in the City of Bismarck, on Tuesday, the fifth day of January,
one thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine**

SENATE BILL NO. 2393
(Senator Lindaas)

AN ACT to amend and reenact section 28-32-12.1 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to ex parte communications between an agency head and the agency head's litigation attorney.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NORTH DAKOTA:

SECTION 1. AMENDMENT. Section 28-32-12.1 of the 1997 Supplement to the North Dakota Century Code is amended and reenacted as follows:

28-32-12.1. Ex parte communications.

1. Except as provided in ~~subsection~~ subsections 2 and 4 or unless required for the disposition of ex parte matters specifically authorized by another statute, an agency head or hearing officer in an adjudicative proceeding may not communicate, directly or indirectly, regarding any issue in the proceeding, while the proceeding is pending, with any party, with any person who has a direct or indirect interest in the outcome of the proceeding, with any other person allowed to participate in the proceeding, or with any person who presided at a previous stage of the proceeding, without notice and opportunity for all parties to participate in the communication.
2. When more than one person is the hearing officer in an adjudicative proceeding, those persons may communicate with each other regarding a matter pending before the panel. An agency head or hearing officer may communicate with or receive aid from staff assistants if the assistants do not furnish, augment, diminish, or modify the evidence in the record.
3. ~~Unless~~ Except as provided in subsection 4 or unless required for the disposition of ex parte matters specifically authorized by statute, no party to an adjudicative proceeding, no person who has a direct or indirect interest in the outcome of the proceeding, no person allowed to participate in the proceeding, and no person who presided at a previous stage in the proceeding may communicate directly or indirectly in connection with any issue in that proceeding, while the proceeding is pending, with any agency head or hearing officer in the proceeding without notice and opportunity for all parties to participate in the communication.
4. In an adjudicative proceeding conducted by a hearing officer other than the agency head, counsel for the administrative agency and the agency head, without notice and opportunity for all parties to participate, may communicate and consult regarding the status of the adjudicative proceeding, discovery, settlement, litigation decisions, and other matters commonly communicated between attorney and client, to permit the agency head to make informed decisions. This subsection does not apply after recommended findings of fact, conclusions of law, and orders have been issued, except counsel for the administrative agency and the agency head may communicate regarding settlement and negotiation after recommended findings of fact, conclusions of law, and orders have been issued.
5. If, before being assigned, designated, or appointed to preside in an adjudicative proceeding, a person receives an ex parte communication of a type that could not properly be received while presiding, the person, promptly after being assigned, designated, or appointed, shall disclose the communication in the manner prescribed in subsection 5 6.
5. 6. An agency head or hearing officer in an adjudicative proceeding who receives an ex parte communication in violation of this section shall place on the record of the pending matter

all written communications received, all written responses to the communications, or a memorandum stating the substance of all oral communications received, all responses made, and the identity of each person from whom the person received an ex parte oral communication, and shall advise all parties, interested persons, and other persons allowed to participate that these matters have been placed on the record. Any person desiring to rebut the ex parte communication must be allowed to do so, upon requesting the opportunity for rebuttal. A request for rebuttal must be made within ten days after notice of the communication.

- ~~6.~~ 7. If necessary to eliminate the effect of an ex parte communication received in violation of this section, an agency head or hearing officer in an adjudicative proceeding who receives the communication may be disqualified, upon good cause being shown in writing to the hearing officer or to the agency. The portions of the record pertaining to the communication may be sealed by protective order issued by the agency.
- ~~7.~~ 8. The agency shall, and any party may, report any willful violation of this section to the appropriate authorities for any disciplinary proceedings provided by law. In addition, an administrative agency may, by rule, provide for appropriate sanctions, including default, for any violations of this section.
- ~~8.~~ 9. Nothing in this section prohibits a member of the general public, not acting on behalf or at the request of any party, from communicating with an agency in cases of general interest. The agency shall disclose such written communications in adjudicative proceedings.

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 Fifty-sixth Legislative Assembly of North Dakota and is known on the records of that body as Senate Bill No. 2393.

Senate Vote: Yeas 48 Nays 0 Absent 1

House Vote: Yeas 82 Nays 9 Absent 7

Secretary of the Senate

Received by the Governor at _____ M. on _____, 1999.

Approved at _____ M. on _____, 1999.

Governor

Filed in this office this _____ day of _____, 1999,

at _____ o'clock _____ M.

Secretary of State