NORTH CAROLINA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

LEGISLATIVE FISCAL NOTE

BILL NUMBER: H.B. 1429 (Proposed Senate Committee Substitute)

SHORT TITLE: Set Reg. Fees/Company Exams

SPONSOR(S):

FISCAL IMPACT						
Yes	(X)	No ()	No Estimate	Available ()		
(\$ Millions)						
<u>FY 1</u>	<u>998-99</u>	<u>FY 1999-00</u>	<u>FY 2000-01</u>	<u>FY 2001-02</u>	<u>FY 2002-03</u>	
REVENUES:						
Utilities Special Fund	8.34	(\$.51 millio	n increase over	r FY 1997-98)		
Insurance Regulatory Fund	19.20		on increase over	,		
General Fund						
Sec. of State Fees	.39	.59	.61	.64	.67	
DHHS Receipt - Autopsy	.30	.60	.60	.60	.60	
DENR Animal Systems	(.09)	(.25)	(.31)	(.34)	(.34)	
Insurance Exam Fees		\$	100,000 every	five years	. ,	
Water & Air Quality Accourt	t (Perm	it Fees)				
Fees Change Non-Animal	.35	.70	.70	.70	.70	
Fees Change Animal Systems	s <u>.14</u>	.38	.46	.50	50	
TOTAL W&A ACCT.	.49	1.08	1.16	1.20	1.20	
DENR Water System						
Contract Account	.04	.08	.08	.08	.08	
EXPENDITURES:						
General Fund						
DHHS - Autopsy Payments	.12	.24	.24	.24	.24	
Insurance Exam. Fees		Equal to	the cost of example	mination.		
DENR Special Funds						
Water & Air Quality Acct.	.49	1.08	1.16	1.20	1.20	
Water System Contract Acct.	.04	.08	.08	.08	.08	

Counties - Autopsy fees .78 1.57 1.57 1.57
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PRINCIPAL DEPARTMENT(S) &

PROGRAM(S) AFFECTED: Department of Insurance, North Carolina Utilities Commission and Public Staff, Department of the Secretary of State, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Environment and Natural Resources

EFFECTIVE DATE: Part I of this act (Public Utility Regulatory Fee) becomes effective July 1, 1998. Part II (Insurance Regulatory Charge) becomes effective January 1, 1998. Part III (Secretary of State fees), Part IV (Autopsy Fees), and Part V (Water Quality Fees) become effective January 1, 1999. Part VI becomes effective when the act becomes law.

BILL SUMMARY: This bill has several parts. Part I sets the percentage rate used in calculating the public utilities regulatory fee at 0.09% of each public utility's North Carolina revenues. Part II sets the insurance regulatory charge at 6% of the total insurance premiums tax liability. Part III increases several fees collected by the Secretary of State and creates a new fee for fairness hearings conducted by the Secretary of State. Part IV increases the fee paid by the state and counties for conducting an autopsy. Part V revises the schedule of permit fees under the Water Quality program and places the new fee schedule into the statutes. Part VI expands the types of records and assets an insurance company can maintain outside the state. The bill modifies the "Examination Law" to require the examined insurer to reimburse the Department of Insurance for the actual expenses related to the examination when 1) the insurer maintains part of its records or assets outside of the state, 2) the insurer requests an examination of its records or assets, or 3) the insurer is impaired, insolvent, or unlikely to meet their known financial obligations. The bill caps the reimbursement at \$100,000, unless the Insurance Commissioner and the insurer agree on a higher amount. This part of the bill also provides guidance to the Insurance Commissioner on the types of information used to determine minimum valuation reserves. The bill also instructs the Commissioner to conduct a regular examination of insurers at least once every five years. (Currently the statute requires an examination once every three years). The bill authorizes the Insurance Commissioner to adopt rules for audits and opinions that are substantially similar to the NAIC model rule, and lets the Commissioner change the Departments rules to reflect changes in the NAIC model rule. It also modifies the Commissioner's ability to adopt temporary rules.

ASSUMPTIONS AND METHODOLOGY:

Part I: Utilities Commission and Public Staff Fund

Part one of the bill sets the utilities regulatory fee at 0.09% of each public utilities' North Carolina jurisdictional revenues earned during each quarter that begins on or after July 1, 1998. (This maintains the current 0.09% rate set in fiscal year 1997-98.) The revenue generated from this fee supports the operations of the North Carolina Utilities Commission and Public Staff.

Per G.S. 62-302(b)(2), the percentage rate established by the General Assembly and assessed by the Commission "may not exceed the amount necessary to generate funds sufficient to defray the estimated cost of the operations of the Commission and Public Staff for the upcoming fiscal year, including a reasonable margin for a reserve fund." Combined operations of the Commission and the Public Staff in FY 1998-99 will require expenditures of not less than \$9,297,845. Revenues generated by the utilities regulatory fee will amount to \$8,340,000. The balance will be derived from other revenues generated by Commission fees and charges, or from the Accumulated Fee Margin Reserve Account.

The Utilities Commission indicates that the status of the Accumulated Fee Margin Reserve is as follows:

Balance as of 6/30/98	\$ 8,990,813
Add: Estimated Collections and Interest	
for FY 1998-99	\$ 9,356,285
Total Funds Available	\$18,347,098
Less: Estimated FY 1998-99 Expenditures	
Reimbursable from Fees	(\$9,297,845)*
Estimated Margin Reserve for Period	
Ending 6/30/99	\$ 9,049,253

* Not included in FY 1997-98 and 1998-99 are the estimated costs incurred by the Legislative Study Commission on the Future of Electric Service in North Carolina. Study Commission expenses are to be refunded from the Utilities Commission and Public Staff Fund (Chapter 483, Section 10.1, 1997 Session Laws). The amount is expected to be in excess of \$450,000.

Based on the projected Fee Margin Reserve, the fee of 0.09% should be sufficient to cover the operations of the Utilities Commission and Public Staff.

Part II: Insurance Regulatory Fund

Part two of the act sets the insurance regulatory charge effective for calendar year 1998 at 6.0%. (This is a decrease from the 8.75% rate established for calendar year 1997.) The charge is based on a percentage of a company's premiums tax liability for the taxable year. Every insurance company subject to the premiums tax levied under G.S. 105-228.5 must pay the insurance regulatory charge. The percentage rate, set annually, cannot exceed the rate necessary to generate funds sufficient to defray the estimated cost of operating the Department of Insurance for the upcoming year. The revenue collected from the charge is deposited into the Insurance Regulatory Fund invested with the State Treasurer and managed by the Office of State Budget and Management. Funds generated by the regulatory charge are used to reimburse the General Fund for the amount appropriated to the Department of Insurance.

	<u>FY 1996-97</u>	<u>FY 1997-98</u>	<u>FY 1998-99</u>
Estimated Gross Premiums Tax	\$208 mil.	\$207 mil.	\$320 mil.
Insurance Regulatory Charge	<u>x .075</u>	<u>x .0875</u>	<u>x. 060</u>

\$15.08 mil. \$18.11 mil. \$19.2 mil.

If the gross premiums tax continues to increase through calendar year 1998 then, it is possible the rate for 1999 could be less than the proposed 6.0% rate for 1998.

Part III: Secretary of State Fees

Notary Commissions (GS 10A-7)

The fee to obtain and to renew a notary commission is increased from \$25 to \$30. The Secretary of State reports annual average increases of 2.72% in the number of initial appointments over the past five fiscal years (from 93-94 to 97-98). Based on the FY 1997-98 figure of 14,147, the number of initial appointments for FY1998-99 through 2002-03 is projected using a 2.72% annual average increase. The numbers below represent the projected number of initial appointments in the out years.

<u>1998-99</u>	<u>1999-00</u>	<u>2000-01</u>	<u>2001-02</u>	<u>2002-03</u>
14,532	14,927	15,333	15,750	16,178

The additional revenue from the fee increase is calculated by multiplying the number of initial appointments (above) by the \$5 fee increase. The projected revenue by fiscal year appears below:

<u>1998-99</u>	<u>1999-00</u>	<u>2000-01</u>	<u>2001-02</u>	<u>2002-03</u>
\$72,660	\$74,635	\$76,665	\$78,750	\$80,890

The Secretary of State reports an annual average increase of 8.35% in the number of notary commission reappointments for the past five fiscal years (93-94 to 97-98). Relying on the FY 1997-98 figure of 19,937 reappointments, the number of reappointments for 1998-99 through 2002-03 is projected below:

<u>1998-99</u>	<u>1999-00</u>	<u>2000-01</u>	<u>2001-02</u>	<u>2002-03</u>
21,602	23,406	25,360	27,478	29,772

The additional revenue from the \$5 increase in the notary commission reappointment fee is shown below (by fiscal year).

<u>1998-99</u>	<u> 1999-00</u>	<u>2000-01</u>	<u>2001-02</u>	<u>2002-03</u>
\$108,010	\$117,030	\$126,800	\$137,390	\$148,860

The FY 1998-99 estimate shown reflects $\frac{1}{2}$ of the total potential revenue, as a result of the January 1999 effective date.

Registration (GS 78A-28(b) & 31(a))

The registration/filing fee for companies selling investment securities and mutual funds is set at a flat \$2,000 rate. The current fee is based on volume and is set at 1/10 of 1% of the maximum aggregate offering price, not to exceed \$1,600. The Secretary of State reports 550 initial mutual

fund registrations during the 1997 calendar year, and projects 650 such registrations for the 1998 calendar year. The projected 650 registrations x \$400 (the difference in the current maximum and the proposed \$2,000 fee) yields \$260,000 in additional revenues from the flat fee for FY 1999. The Secretary of State did not provide registration projections for the out years. Relying on the 1998 figure of 650 registrations, results in a stable estimate of \$260,000 in additional revenues from the increase for the 1998-99 to 2002-03 years.

Fairness Hearings (GS 78A-30(g))

The new fee for fairness hearings is based upon the time and expenses incurred by the Secretary of State staff. The fee shall be a minimum of \$500 and a maximum of \$5,000. The Director of the Securities Division of the Secretary of State conducts between 30-35 hearings annually. It takes the Director from a minimum of 5-6 hours to a maximum of between 18-20 hours to prepare for and conduct a hearing, and to generate a post-hearing Order. The Secretary of State recommends assessing a flat \$500 fee for all hearings, and \$200 per hour for all staff time devoted to a hearing in excess of five hours, up to a maximum of \$5,000.

Relying on the Department's reported experience above, 13 hours of staff time (the midpoint) is devoted to the average hearing. The expected revenue as a result of assessing fees for Fairness Hearings follows:

- 1.) Multiply the expected number of cases times the \$500 flat fee.
 - a.) Given the reported 30-35 hearings per year, 32.5 hearings (the midpoint) is projected for the out years.
 - b.) The \$500 fee multiplied by 32.5 yields \$16,250 in revenue from the flat fee.
- 2.) Multiply the \$200 hourly fee times the number of hours in excess of five.
 - a.) The average (or expected) 13 hours per hearing projected above is used to determine the number of hours in excess of five. On average, Secretary of State staff expends an extra eight hours (in excess of five) on individual hearings.
 - b.) The \$200 hourly fee times the eight hours (in excess of five) yields \$1,600 in revenue per hearing.
 - c.) The \$1,600 revenue per hearing times the expected 32.5 hearing yields \$52,000.
- 3.) Add the \$16,250 to the \$52,000 for a total of \$68,250 in revenue from Fairness Hearings fees.

Authentications (GS 147-37)

Document Certification Fees (Authentications and Apostilles) are increased from \$6.25 per document to \$10 per document. The Secretary of State reports that there were 5,359 total documents certified in FY 1996-97, 11,249 in FY 1997-98, and 13,200 projected for FY 1998-99. The Department experienced an annual average increase in document certifications of 64% for the past two fiscal years. The 17% increase from FY '97 to FY '98 appears to be a much more reliable measure of change than the 110% increase from FY '96 to FY '97. This note relies on the 17% increase to calculate a projected 15,444 document certifications for FY 1999. The 15,444 document certifications x \$3.75 (the difference in the fee) yields \$57,915 in additional

revenues from the fee for FY 1999. The additional revenue projections for the out years appear below:

<u>1998-99</u>	<u>1999-00</u>	<u>2000-01</u>	<u>2001-02</u>	<u>2002-03</u>
\$57,915	\$67,761	\$79,280	\$92,757	\$108,526

The total additional revenue resulting from Documentation Certification, Securities Registration, fairness hearings, and Notary Commission fee increases in the Department of the Secretary of State appear below:

	<u> 1998-99</u>	<u> 1999-00</u>	<u>2000-01</u>	<u>2001-02</u>	2002-03
Notary fees	\$135,503	\$191,665	\$203,465	\$216,140	\$229,750
Securities	173,342	260,000	260,000	260,000	260,000
Fairness hearings	45,502	68,250	68,250	68,250	68,250
Authentication	38,612	67,761	79,280	92,757	108,526
	\$392,959	\$587,676	\$610,995	\$637,147	\$666,526

The FY 1998-99 fiscal estimate listed in the chart has been adjusted for the January 1999 effective date.

Part IV: Autopsy Fees

Part IV increases the fee for autopsies from \$400 to \$1,000. According to the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, there are approximately 3,570 medical examiner autopsies performed each year. This number is expected to remain constant. Of the medical examiner autopsies performed each year, approximately 2,010 are performed by private contracted pathologists, 1,260 are performed at the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner in Chapel Hill, and 300 are performed at the Mecklenburg County Office. Payment for these autopsies is as follows:

- 402 paid by the state to private contracted pathologists
- 1,608 paid by the county to private contracted pathologists
- 1,008 paid by the county to the state
- 552 no payment, conducted by the state for the state
- 3,570 TOTAL AUTOPSIES PERFORMED

The increase in costs paid by the state to private contracted pathologists is computed below:

 $402 \text{ x} \quad \$400 = \$160,800 \\ -402 \text{ x} \$1,000 = \$402,000 \\ \$241,200$

The cost increase for the state of \$241,200 is offset by the autopsy fees paid to the state from the counties. When adjusted for the January effective date the actual expenditure estimate is \$120,600.

As shown above, the counties pay the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner for 1008 autopsies each year. The increased revenue to the state generated by a \$600 increase in the autopsy fee is \$604,800. When adjusted for the January 1999 effective date, the FY 1998-99 estimate for this item is \$302,400.

The increased cost for counties is \$1,569,600 a year based on a \$600 increase for the 2,616 autopsies the counties pay for each year. 1,608 autopsies are performed each year by private contracted pathologists and 1,008 autopsies are performed by the state. When adjusted for the January 1999 effective date, the FY 1998-99 expenditure is \$784,800.

Part V: Water Quality Fees

Funding for programs administered by the Water Quality Section in the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is provided through three sources: federal funds, state general fund appropriations, and permit fee receipts. In 1996 the Division of Water Quality projected a shortfall in water quality permit fee receipts. In response, the General Assembly appropriated \$1 million for the 1997-98 fiscal year in a special reserve fund to help offset any unrealized permit fee revenue and to allow for additional analysis of a variety of water quality funding issues. (Based on year to date actual collections, the Office of State Budget and Management does not expect the Division to draw funds from the reserve for the 1997-98 fiscal year). The Environmental Review Commission (ERC) created the Water Quality Funding Working Group comprising representatives of the regulated community to evaluate the state's water quality programs, funding sources and budgetary needs, as well as make recommendations to improve the current funding structure. Part V of this bill is a result of the working group's effort and is recommended by the ERC.

Focus on water quality funding needs has shifted from total budgetary requirements to determining an appropriate level of operating support, which includes data processing and communications, travel, supplies, equipment and other general operating expenses. The Water Quality Section's authorized budget, excluding pass-through grants and aid, for the 1997-98 fiscal year is approximately \$14.5 million. This aggregate amount is consistent with the Division's calculation of a "healthy budget." However, salary and fringes for personnel in the Water Quality Section account for over 80% of the total budget. According to the Division, additional operating support is needed by the Water Quality Section to carry out their statutory obligations. The additional revenue resulting from the fee increases proposed in this bill will be used primarily for operating expenses.

Part V of this bill revises the schedule of fees for water quality permits for non-animal facilities, animal waste management systems, and certification and training requirements. The new fee schedule is also being codified in the general statutes. The bill also provides that revenue generated by animal waste operations be credited to the Water and Air Quality Account, rather than the General Fund as required by current law.

The differences in the current permit fees (at the maximum compliance level) and the permit fees proposed in the legislation are shown in the chart below. The number of facilities in each category was provided by the Division of Water Quality, and shows the number of each type of

non-animal facility permitted in 1998. The Division assumes that the number of facilities in each non-animal category will remain relatively constant over time. The numbers given for animal waste management facilities represent the number of operations expected to be permitted annually, once all facilities are in the permitting system. The Division began permitting animal waste systems in January 1997 and plan to have all systems permitted by January 2002. The number of facilities, and the associated revenue streams, are then expected to remain relatively constant over time.

Activity	# of Facilities (co	Current Fees ompliance maximums)	Proposed Fees
Category A (subject to annual fees)			
Major Individual NPDES Permits	250	\$1,125	\$2,865
Minor Individual NPDES Permits	1,470	600	715
Single Family Residences	1,095	48	50
Stormwater & Wastewater Discharge			
General Permits	3,000	80	80
Recycle Systems	170	300	300
Major Nondischarge Permits	301	1,000	1,090
Minor Nondischarge Permits	334	600	675
Animal Waste Management			
Animal Permits (Small Operations)	295	\$50	\$50
Animal Permits (Medium Operations)	2106	100	150
Animal Permits (Large Operations)	565	200	300
Category B (subject to project and			
annual)			
Major Consent Special Orders	15	0	\$500
Minor Consent Special Orders	65	0	250
	45	400	400
Category C (application fees)			
Sewer Extensions	1000	\$400	\$400
State Stormwater	450	385	420
Water Quality Certifications - Major	375	0	475
Water Quality Certifications - Minor	375	0	200
Petroleum Contaminated Soils	30	400	400

Fee Change: Non-Animal Facilities: The change in Water Quality permit fees will alter revenue to the Division of Water Quality beginning in FY 1998-99. Using the above permit fees, and excluding the animal facilities, the total revenue generated from fees addressed in the bill will be approximately \$1.8 million in 1998-99. (This represents 6 months of the fiscal year. The annual total, as shown below, is \$3.6 million.). Because the statute sets the fees, and the number of facilities is constant, the revenue associated with non-animal facilities is expected to remain constant over time.

Category

Revenue Under Bill

Category A - Subject to Annual Fees (Does	\$2,666,590
not include animal permits in this category).	
Category B - Subject to Project and Annual	\$41,750
Fees.	
Category C - Application Fees.	\$854,125
TOTAL NON-ANIMAL FEES	\$3,562,465

In FY 1997-98 water quality permits are expected to generate \$2.8 million in revenues. The three year average revenue collected from water quality permits is \$2.9 million. This three year average is used as an approximation for future years. The Division believes that there will be no growth in non-animal permits in future years. Because of the effective date of the legislation, one-half of the three year average amount (\$1.45 million) is used to estimate the net revenue increase for FY 1998-99. As such, the net revenue gain associated with non-animal permits is estimated at \$350,000 in FY 1998-99, and \$700,000 in succeeding years. Under current law, non-animal system permit fees are placed in a special non-reverting Water and Air Quality Account within DENR.

Fee Change: Animal Facilities: The Division of Water Quality began permitting animal waste management facilities January 1997. The Division assumes that all animal waste systems will be "on line," paying annual permit fees, by January 2002. As such, approximately 20% of the total number of facilities (and their revenue) will be added each year. Because the legislation instructs the Division to permit the largest facilities first, and larger operations are required to pay higher fees, revenue growth slows as additional facilities are phased in each year. This note assumes calendar year revenue additions will be as follows: 23% in 1997, 22% in 1998, 20% in 1999, 20% in 2000, and 15% in 2001. After January 2002 the revenue is expected to remain constant under both the current system and the bill. Once 100% of the animal facilities are permitted, the bill will result in \$161,800 of additional revenue, when compared to the existing fee structure. In the interim years an adjustment is made to convert the calendar year figures to fiscal year estimates. The bill requires these funds to be credited to the non-reverting Water and Air Quality Account.

Actual	Current	Proposed	Change
FY 1996-7	\$ 38,910	\$ 57,517	\$ 18,607
FY 1997-8	\$ 115,039	\$ 170,051	\$ 55,012
FY 1998-9	\$ 186,093	\$ 275,083	\$ 88,990
FY 1999-0	\$ 253,763	\$ 375,113	\$ 121,350
FY 2000-1	\$ 312,974	\$ 462,639	\$ 149,665
FY 2001-2	\$ 338,350	\$ 500,150	\$ 161,800
FY 2002-3	\$ 338,350	\$ 500,150	\$ 161,800

Training and Certification: Currently the Division of Water Quality offers a number of training and certification programs, and charges a fee for their efforts. The working group recommended

that the fees associated with these training and certification activities be increased. The Division provided a 1998-99 estimate of the number of operators. The number of certification and training participants was then increased annually by the forecasted population growth rate (approximately 1%) to reflect expected growth in the program. The 1998-99 revenue projections for training and certification are as follows:

Fee Type	Existing Fee	Current Revenue	Proposed Fee	Proposed Revenue	Change
Examination Fees (non- animal)	\$75	\$237,300	\$85	\$268,940	\$31,640
Examination Fees (animal)	\$10	\$5,000	\$25	\$12,500	\$7,500
Renewal Fees (non-animal)	\$30	\$242,430	\$35	\$282,835	\$40,405
Renewal Fees (non-animal)	\$10	\$35,000	\$10	\$35,000	-
TOTAL		\$519,730		\$599,275	\$79,545

One-half of the \$79,545 is actually cited in the fiscal chart, as a result of the January effective date. These funds are credited to the non-reverting Water System Contract Account in the Department.

NOTE: Under current law revenue from animal waste system permits is credited to the General Fund. This bill revises the current practice by directing that the revenue be credited to the Water and Air Quality Account. This change will result in a revenue loss to the General Fund. The estimated reduction in General Fund revenue, as presented in this note, is based on the existing fee schedule, not the revised schedule being proposed. As mentioned above, the Division assumes that future permit revenue will remain constant since they do not expect significant changes at the federal level. However, it should be noted that any change in federal regulations will have an impact on North Carolina water quality permit revenue. These federal changes, in past years, have created a positive growth trend in permit revenue.

Part VI: Insurance Examination Fees/Regulations

The proposed act expands the types of records and assets an insurance company can maintain outside the State. Under G.S. 58-7-55, certain exemptions exist that allow a domestic insurance company to maintain financial and accounting records outside the State so long as a company makes a written request and the Commissioner approves.

In the event approval is given to a company to hold certain records and assets outside the State the Commissioner of Insurance can charge for the examination of records in certain circumstances. An insurance company can be required to pay up to \$100,000 of the Department's cost of examinations when the insurer maintains part of its records and or assets out of the State, when the insurer requests the Department examine its records, and when an

insurer's solvency is in question. The cost can exceed \$100,000 if the insurer and the Commissioner agree to a greater amount.

The Commissioner of Insurance is given the authority to regulate the issuance and sale of funding agreements in G.S. 58-7-16(f). Section 5 of this act, allows the Commissioner to use any relevant actuarial guidelines, regulations, interpretations or papers published by the Society of Actuaries or the American Academy of Actuaries in carrying out his authority to determine minimum valuation reserves to be maintained by the issuer.

The Department of Insurance does not expect many domestic companies to take advantage of this regulatory change except in certain circumstances. There is expected to be at least one that would be subject to this act within a three year period. Data provide by the Department of Insurance.

NOTE: Lengthening the maximum period between required examinations of insurance companies may have an impact on staffing and other Department of Insurance needs. However, the Department hopes to use this opportunity to pursue other matters such as participating in "foreign exams".

FISCAL RESEARCH DIVISION (733-4910)

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APPROVED BY: Tom Covington **DATE**: July 22, 1998

Official **Fiscal Research Division** Publication

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