



# SENATE BILL 648: AOC Agency Requests.

2025-2026 General Assembly

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<b>Committee:</b>	Senate Rules and Operations of the Senate	<b>Date:</b>	April 30, 2025
<b>Introduced by:</b>	Sens. B. Newton, Britt, Daniel	<b>Prepared by:</b>	Michael Johnston
<b>Analysis of:</b>	Second Edition		Staff Attorney

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**OVERVIEW:** *Senate Bill 648 would do the following:*

- *Add High Point University School of Law to the recipient list of State appellate division reports.*
- *Modify provisions affecting judicially managed accountability and recovery courts.*
- *Prohibit use of modified Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) forms without proper notice.*
- *Repeal requirements of public notice of a name change at the courthouse before applying for a name change.*
- *Modify provisions related to guardianship for incompetent persons.*
- *Modify provisions related to the estate of a decedent.*
- *Clarify the jurisdiction of superior court judges assigned to a specific case.*
- *Modify provisions related to service of process for domestic violence protective order proceedings.*
- *Modify provisions related to juvenile custody.*
- *Authorize the clerk of court to send commitment orders to certain persons.*
- *Modify mediated settlement procedures in superior court and district court.*
- *Modify Rule of Civil Procedure 63.*
- *Modify special registration plates for superior court judges.*
- *Modify the law governing electronic signatures of court documents.*
- *Modify the disciplinary jurisdiction of the North Carolina State Bar.*
- *Prescribe rules governing training and educational material provided to jurors.*
- *Modify the law regarding reporting of trials.*
- *Clarify that retirement is a reason for unavailability for judicial settlements.*
- *Modify provisions regarding State Business Courts and Business Court Judges.*
- *Grant the AOC Director authority to create official emblems of the judicial branch.*
- *Clarify the AOC Director's authority to establish the number of magistrates within a county.*
- *Modify procedures for the disbursement of expenses of the Judicial Department.*

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## CURRENT LAW & BILL ANALYSIS:

**Section 1** would modify G.S. 7A-343.1 to add High Point University School of Law to the list of educational institutions that receive State appellate division reports from AOC.

**Section 2** would (i) make a technical correction to G.S. 7A-801 and (ii) clarify that Article 62 of Chapter 7A of the General Statutes applies to local judicially managed accountability and recovery courts regardless of funding source.

Section 2 would become effective August 1, 2025.

**Section 3** would prohibit modification of AOC forms in a manner that maintains the appearance that the form was promulgated by AOC and would require that any attorney or party who modifies an AOC form clearly notate how the form was modified.

Section 3 would become effective when it becomes law and would apply to modified forms used on or after that date.

**Section 4** would repeal the requirement in G.S. 101-2 that an individual applying for a name change must give public notice of the name change application at the courthouse.

Section 4 would become effective December 1, 2025, and would apply to all applications for a name change pursuant to Chapter 101 of the General Statutes filed on or after that date.

**Section 5** would modify guardianship provisions in Chapter 35A of the General Statutes, including which guardians would be required to provide a bond, the process for the acknowledgement and approval a bond, which financial reports must be provided to the clerk, and termination of the guardianship.

Section 5 would become effective December 1, 2025.

**Section 6** would do the following:

- Clarify terminology in G.S. 29-30 and Article 2A of Chapter 28A of the General Statutes.
- Extend the timeframe for implied renunciation of the role of executor pursuant to G.S. 28A-5-1.
- Clarify accounting processes pursuant to G.S. 28A-21-3.
- Clarify the requirements for a petition for summary administration under Article 28 of Chapter 28A of the General Statutes.
- Clarify the process for transferring ownership of a decedent's vehicle pursuant to G.S. 20-77(b).
- Modify procedures for a living individual to file a will with the clerk pursuant to G.S. 31-11.

Section 6 would become effective December 1, 2025.

**Section 7** would clarify the jurisdiction of superior court judges assigned to a specific case.

**Section 8** would remove a cross-reference from G.S. 28C-10.

**Section 9** would modify when a clerk or magistrate must effect service of process through a law enforcement agency under Chapter 50B of the General Statutes, which governs domestic violence protective orders.

Section 9 would become effective December 1, 2025, and would apply to service of process occurring on or after that date.

**Section 10** would do the following:

- Add "indictment" and "information" to the charging documents referenced in G.S. 7B-1903.

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- Update G.S. 7B-1904 in light of the removal process in G.S. 15A-960.
- Modify the process for release of an obligor from a juvenile's bond in the event of remand or removal to juvenile court.

Section 10 would become effective December 1, 2025, and would apply to proceedings occurring on or after that date.

**Section 11** would modify G.S. 122C-271(b)(2) and G.S. 122C-287(1) to authorize the clerk of court to send a copy of the commitment order to the treating physician or center and other responsible persons.

Section 11 would become effective when it becomes law and would apply to orders issued on or after that date.

**Section 11.1** would modify mediated settlement procedures in superior court and district court. Specifically, evidence from mediated settlement conferences pursuant to G.S. 7A-38.1, G.S. 7A-38.3B, G.S. 7A-38.3D, and G.S. 7A-38.4A would be admissible in proceedings for abuse, neglect, or dependency of a juvenile or proceedings for abuse, neglect, or exploitation of an adult.

**Section 11.2** would clarify that the senior resident superior court judge can act pursuant to Rule of Civil Procedure 63 in the event of disability of another judge.

**Section 11.3** would make various changes to the special registration plates available to superior court judges, including allowing registration plates issued to certain senior resident superior court judges to have the letter associated with that judge's district on the registration plate.

**Section 11.4** would allow the chief district court judge and senior resident superior court judge of their respective districts to establish rules to allow for the court's manual signature on certain documents to be filed by the court if a party requests the court's manual signature. Where manual signatures would be permitted, the party obtaining the court's manual signature would be responsible for filing the executed document with the clerk.

**Section 11.5** would clarify and expand the disciplinary jurisdiction of the North Carolina State Bar to include any attorney admitted to practice law in this State, any attorney admitted for limited practice under G.S. 84-4.1, and any attorney not admitted to practice law in this State who renders or offers to render any legal services in this State.

**Section 11.6** would require AOC to prescribe rules for any training or educational material provided to jurors and would prohibit the court from providing jurors with any training or educational material not allowed under AOC rules.

Section 11.6 would become effective December 1, 2025, and would apply to training or educational material provided on or after that date.

**Section 11.7** would modify G.S. 7A-95(c) to provide that except for original stenomask audio files and audio files of digital recording technicians, audio recordings created by court reporters would not be public records and could be disclosed to the parties or the public only to the extent allowed by a court order for good cause shown.

**Section 12** would clarify that proceedings for judicial settlement of the record under G.S. 1-283 would be governed by the rules of appellate procedure in the event that the judge is unavailable due to retirement.

Section 12 would become effective when it becomes law and would apply to actions taken on or after that date.

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**Section 13** would clarify who may serve as a Business Court Judge and which cases can be designated as complex business cases.

Section 13 would become effective December 1, 2025, and would apply to judges designated and proceedings held on or after that date.

**Section 14** would grant the AOC Director authority to create official emblems of the judicial branch.

**Section 15** would clarify the AOC Director's authority to establish the number of magistrates within a county above the minimum number required for that county.

**Section 16** would modify the procedures for the disbursement of expenses of the Judicial Department.

**Section 17** would create a severability clause providing that if any section or provision of the act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, it would not affect the validity of the act as a whole or any other part of the act.

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** Except as otherwise provided, this bill would become effective when it becomes law.