



REPORT ON NORTH CAROLINA BUSINESS COURT

N.C.G.S. 7A-343(8a)

REPORT PREPARED BY
NORTH CAROLINA ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS
FEBRUARY 1, 2026



About the North Carolina Judicial Branch

The mission of the North Carolina Judicial Branch is to protect and preserve the rights and liberties of all the people as guaranteed by the Constitutions and laws of the United States and North Carolina by providing a fair, independent and accessible forum for the just, timely and economical resolution of their legal affairs.

About the North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts

The mission of the North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts is to provide services to help North Carolina's unified court system operate more efficiently and effectively, taking into account each courthouse's diverse needs, caseloads, and available resources.

INTRODUCTION

N.C.G.S. 7A-343(8a) requires the Director of the North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts (“NCAOC”) to submit an annual report on the North Carolina Business Court. The statute specifically provides as follows:

(8a) Prepare and submit an annual report on the activities of each North Carolina business court site to the Chief Justice, the chairs of the House of Representatives Appropriations Committee on Justice and Public Safety and the Senate Appropriations Committee on Justice and Public Safety, the chairs of the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Justice and Public Safety, and to all other members of the General Assembly on February 1. The report shall include the following information for each business court site:

- a. The number of new, closed, and pending cases for the previous three years.
- b. The average age of pending cases.
- c. The number of motions pending over six months after being filed.
- d. The number of cases in which bench trials have been concluded for over six months without entry of judgment, including any accompanying explanation provided by the Business Court.

The report shall include an accounting of all business court activities for the previous fiscal year, including the itemized annual expenditures.

NCAOC submits this report in compliance with the legislative mandate for the period from January 1, 2025 through December 31, 2025.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE NORTH CAROLINA BUSINESS COURT

The North Carolina Business Court is an administrative division of the North Carolina General Court of Justice designed to provide a specialized forum for cases involving complex business issues.

G.S. 7A-45.4 governs the designation of Business Court cases. The statute provides that any party may designate as a mandatory complex business case an action that involves a material issue related to the following types of disputes:

- Disputes involving the law governing corporations, except charitable and religious organizations qualified under G.S. 55A-1-40(4) on the grounds of religious purpose, partnerships, and limited liability companies.
- Disputes involving securities.
- Disputes involving antitrust law.
- Disputes involving trademark law.
- Disputes involving the ownership, use, licensing, lease, installation, or performance of intellectual property, including computer software, software applications, information



technology and systems, data and data security, pharmaceuticals, biotechnology products, and bioscience technologies.

- Disputes involving trade secrets.
- Contract disputes in which specified statutory conditions are met.

In addition, the statute establishes six types of cases that must be designated as mandatory complex business cases:

- An action involving a material issue related to tax law that has been the subject of a contested tax case for which judicial review is requested under G.S. 105-241.16, or a civil action under G.S. 105-241.17 containing a constitutional challenge to a tax statute.
- An action described in subdivision (1), (2), (3), (4), (5), or (8) of subsection (a) of G.S. 7A-45.4 in which the amount in controversy computed in accordance with G.S. 7A-243 is at least five million dollars (\$5,000,000).
- An action in which a general receiver is sought to be appointed pursuant to [G.S. 1-507.24](#) for a debtor that is not an individual business debtor as defined in [G.S. 1-507.20](#) and has assets having a fair market value of not less than five million dollars (\$5,000,000), if the party making the designation is either (i) the debtor or (ii) one or more creditors or creditors' duly authorized representatives that assert a claim or claims against the debtor exceeding, in the aggregate, twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) that in each case is not contingent as to liability and is not the subject of a bona fide dispute as to liability or amount. Any creditor or creditor's duly authorized representative that is not a party to the action may join in the notice of designation with the same effect as if such joining creditor or creditor's representative were a party.
- An appeal of a decision of the North Carolina Oil and Gas Commission concerning trade secret or confidential information as provided in N.C.G.S. § 113-391.1.

In addition to the foregoing bases for designation to the Business Court, the Chief Justice may also designate any case or group of cases as "complex business" consistent with Rules 2.1 and 2.2 of the General Rules of Practice for the Superior and District Courts.

Most cases referred to the Business Court in calendar year 2025 involved the law governing corporations, partnerships, and limited liability companies. **Table 1** below identifies the statutory basis appearing in the parties' Notices of Designation for cases newly designated to the Business Court in 2025 and the frequency of each type of designated dispute.



Table 1. Dispute Types Pursuant to G.S. 7A-45.4 Appearing in Parties' Notices of Designation for Cases Designated to the Business Court in Calendar Year 2025

Material Issue	Frequency*
(a)(1). Corporations, Partnerships, LLCs	86
(a)(2). Securities	10
(a)(3). Antitrust	3
(a)(4). Trademark	8
(a)(5). Intellectual Property	32
(a)(8). Trade Secrets	30
(a)(9). Contract Dispute over \$1 million	13
(b)(1). Contested Tax Case	0
(b)(1). Constitutional Challenge Tax Case	0
(b)(2). Controversy over \$5 million	13
(b)(4). General Receiver over \$5 million	0
(b)(5). Oil and Gas Commission Appeal	0

*A party's Notice of Designation may indicate more than one dispute type.

Once a case is designated as a complex business case under G.S. 7A-45.4 after preliminary approval by the Chief Justice, all proceedings in the action are heard before the Business Court judge to whom it has been assigned. The Chief Justice has discretion to assign other exceptional cases to the Business Court under Rule 2.1 of the General Rules of Practice and Procedure for the Superior and District Courts. When necessary, Business Court judges may be called upon in their capacity as judges of the superior court division to handle cases or court sessions in addition to their regular Business Court caseloads.

As of December 31, 2025, there were six active Business Court judges maintaining chambers in Charlotte, Greensboro, Raleigh, and Winston-Salem: Michael L. Robinson, Chief Business Court Judge (Wake Forest University School of Law), Adam M. Conrad (Mecklenburg County Courthouse), Julianna Theall Earp (Elon University School of Law), Mark A. Davis (Wake County Courthouse), A. Todd Brown (Mecklenburg County Courthouse), and Matthew T. Houston (Wake County Courthouse). Two judges have continually maintained chambers in Mecklenburg County since January 1, 2017, and in Wake County since February 17, 2025.

An early leader in electronic filing since 1996, the North Carolina Business Court launched a web-based filing system in June 2017 that provides improved functionality and features for attorneys, filers, and judicial staff. The interface delivers a modern and user-friendly experience, features new search capabilities, and provides public access to case information online. The new system also provides a browser-based case management system with workflow queues and judicial tools to aid the Business Court judges, their judicial staffs, and the parties in managing cases from filing through resolution. The system streamlines judicial processes and the dissemination of filings, orders, and opinions.



Case Statistics

The Number of New, Closed, and Pending Cases for the Previous Three Years

There were **233** cases pending in the Business Court as of December 31, 2025 (207 when counting a consolidated group of cases as one case). Of those **233** cases, **192** were assigned to the Business Court as mandatory complex business cases designated pursuant to G.S. 7A-45.4. The Chief Justice designated **29** cases as complex business cases and **12** cases as exceptional cases in the Chief Justice's discretion under Rule 2.1 of the General Rules of Practice for the Superior and District Courts. A case assigned as an exceptional case under 2.1 of the General Rules of Practice is counted as a pending Business Court case when it is aligned, or formally consolidated, with a pending mandatory or Rules 2.1-2.2 complex business case.

Table 2 represents the number of new, closed, and pending cases in the Business Court as of December 31 in 2025, 2024, and 2023 in the counties in which the Business Court maintains chambers. For purposes of this report, "Pending Cases" include all cases, without regard to the year in which the case was first designated to the Business Court. "New Cases" include all cases designated to the Business Court in the year reported. "Closed Cases" include all cases closed during each year. The "Mecklenburg A" and "Mecklenburg B" designations reflect that two judges have continually maintained chambers in Mecklenburg County since January 1, 2017. The "Wake A" and "Wake B" designations reflect that two judges have continually maintained chambers in Wake County since February 17, 2025.

Table 2. Pending, New, and Closed Cases in Business Court by Court Location of Business Court Cases (Calendar Years 2025 - 2023)*

Calendar Year	Court	Pending Cases	New Cases	Closed Cases
<hr/>				
2025	Forsyth	55 (47)	43 (39)	44
2025	Guilford	20 (19)	19	18 (17)
2025	Mecklenburg A	50 (40)	28	20 (18)
2025	Mecklenburg B	37 (35)	26	28
2025	Wake A	46 (41)	32	26
2025	Wake B	25	31	20 (19)
2025	Statewide	233 (207)	179 (175)	156 (152)
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2024	Forsyth	50 (47)	30	26
2024	Guilford	38 (36)	29	20
2024	Mecklenburg A	41 (29)	33	23
2024	Mecklenburg B	42	23	30
2024	Wake	35	23	23 (22)
2024	Statewide	206 (189)	138	122 (121)
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2023	Forsyth	41 (40)	23	21
2023	Guilford	32	22	24



2023	Mecklenburg A	43 (32)	19	19
2023	Mecklenburg B	38	18	18
2023	Wake	35 (34)	19	21
2023	Statewide	189 (176)	101	103

* Parenthetical figures represent when a consolidated group of cases is counted as one case.

Average Age of Pending Cases

As of December 31, 2025, **37** of the Business Court's **233** pending cases were subject to stay, appeal, alternative dispute resolution, or in inactive status. The average age of pending cases not subject to stay, appeal, alternative dispute resolution, or in inactive status ("active cases") was **673** days, with a median age of **303** days. The average age of all pending cases was **756** days, with a median age of **359** days. The duration of a case may be affected by multiple stays or appeals throughout the life of the case. Case age is based upon the date on which the case was designated a Business Court case or assigned to a Business Court judge.

Table 3 offers additional information for pending and active cases during calendar year 2025 by location.

Table 3. Pending, Active, New, and Closed Cases, and Average Age (Calendar Year 2025)*

LOCATION	Pending Cases	Active Cases	New Cases	Closed Cases	Average Age Pending (days)	Average Age Active (days)
Forsyth	55 (47)	38 (33)	43 (39)	44	763	457
Guilford	20 (19)	18	19	18 (17)	618	589
Mecklenburg A	50 (40)	49 (39)	28	20 (18)	1,440	1,411
Mecklenburg B	37 (35)	29	26	28	596	511
Wake A	46 (41)	40 (35)	32	26	474	371
Wake B	25	22	31	20 (19)	235	237
Statewide	233 (207)	196 (176)	179 (175)	156 (152)	756	673

* Parenthetical figures represent when a consolidated group of cases is counted as one case.

Motions Pending More than Six Months

As of December 31, 2025, a total of **36** motions filed prior to July 1, 2025 remained pending in **16** cases or groups of related cases. **Table 4** below reflects, as of December 31, 2025, the number of motions pending more than six months by location.

Table 4. Motions Pending More than Six Months by Court Location (as of December 31, 2025)

LOCATION	NUMBER OF MOTIONS	MOTIONS IN CASES PREVIOUSLY STAYED	CASES WITH PENDING MOTIONS
Forsyth	19	19	6
Guilford	0	0	0
Mecklenburg A	3	1	2



Mecklenburg B	3	3	2
Wake A	11	11	6
Wake B	0	0	0
Statewide	36	34	16

Thirty-four of the motions pending more than six months were in cases that had been formally or informally stayed at some stage because of appeal, bankruptcy, reported settlement, extended or supplemental briefing schedules prior to hearing oral argument, or other reasons associated with case management. Business Court motions are subject to a briefing schedule that must be completed before a motion is ready to be heard, and in many instances, a motion is not ready to be heard and ruled upon with the required written opinion within six months of filing. In several instances, the complexity of the issues and the number of counsel involved make it difficult to schedule a hearing within six months of a motion's filing.

In 2025, the Business Court issued **77** written opinions on motions and other matters, many involving issues of first impression. Consequently, these written opinions regularly represent a significant percentage of the opinions reported in *North Carolina Lawyers' Weekly*'s semiannual summary of most significant cases, and several widely read legal blogs often focus on the Business Court's decisions. Business Court judges also regularly prepare written, substantive orders that are not issued as written opinions for publication, some of which appear on the Court's website as Orders of Significance. The Business Court issued **97** Orders of Significance in 2025.

In December 2021, the Court initiated a bimonthly email bulletin containing links to the opinions and Orders of Significance issued in the preceding two weeks. The bulletin currently has over **1,360** subscribers.

Bench Trials with No Entry of Judgment after Six Months

During calendar year 2025, the Business Court judges in Business Court cases conducted **no** jury trials, **2** bench trials, **210** conferences, and heard **302** motions. On occasion, the Administrative Office of the Courts requests that Business Court Judges preside over sessions of General Superior Court. During 2025, the Business Court judges held **78** General Superior Court sessions (each session may include hearings in cases from more than one county), including **5** bench trials and **9** jury trials.

As of December 31, 2025, there were **no** Business Court cases in which entry of judgment in a bench trial had been pending for more than six months.

EXPENDITURES

Expenditures for the Business Court for FY 2024-2025 were \$3,476,781. The table below sets forth the expenditures.



Table 5. Business Court Expenditures for FY 2024-2025 by County

Court Location	Expenditures
Guilford	622,567
Forsyth	772,459
Mecklenburg	1,244,647
Wake	837,108
Statewide	3,476,781

SUMMARY

The North Carolina Business Court provides a specialized forum for cases involving complex and significant business issues. Because a single Business Court judge typically oversees all aspects of the case from the time of designation through trial or other resolution, the Business Court offers efficiencies and expertise necessary for the timely resolution of complex business disputes in North Carolina.



Appendix

Appendix A

Pending Case Distribution by County (as of December 31, 2025)

Appendix B

New Cases Assigned to Business Court by County (Calendar Year 2025)



Appendix A – Pending Case Distribution by County (as of December 31, 2025)

COUNTY	PENDING CASES
Alamance	1
Ashe	1
Avery	1
Beaufort	1
Buncombe	14
Cabarrus	2
Caldwell	1
Carteret	1
Catawba	1
Cleveland	2
Craven	1
Cumberland	5
Dare	1
Durham	8
Forsyth	11
Franklin	2
Gaston	6
Graham	1
Guilford	22
Haywood	1
Henderson	1
Iredell	4

COUNTY	PENDING CASES
Jackson	1
Johnston	3
Lee	1
Lenoir	1
Lincoln	1
Mecklenburg	56
Moore	1
Nash	2
New Hanover	9
Onslow	1
Orange	7
Pitt	1
Polk	1
Randolph	3
Robeson	1
Rockingham	1
Rowan	2
Union	6
Wake	43
Wilkes	4
TOTAL	233 cases in 42 counties



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Appendix B – New Cases Assigned to Business Court by County (Calendar Year 2025)

COUNTY	CASES ASSIGNED IN 2025
Alamance	2
Ashe	1
Avery	1
Beaufort	1
Brunswick	1
Buncombe	13
Cabarrus	2
Carteret	1
Catawba	1
Cleveland	1
Craven	1
Cumberland	2
Dare	1
Davidson	1
Durham	8
Forsyth	7
Franklin	1
Gaston	4
Guilford	11
Iredell	2
Jackson	1
Johnston	3

COUNTY	CASES ASSIGNED IN 2025
Lee	1
McDowell	1
Mecklenburg	44
Moore	1
Nash	1
New Hanover	7
Onslow	1
Orange	6
Pitt	3
Polk	1
Randolph	3
Robeson	1
Rowan	2
Sampson	1
Stanly	1
Transylvania	1
Union	5
Wake	32
Wilkes	1
TOTAL	179 cases in 41 counties



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