



NCWQA Secures Changes to Reciprocity Statute to Ensure Adequate Staffing at Water and Sewer Treatment Facilities August 2022

During the 2022 General Assembly Session, the NCWQA successfully lobbied to amend the operator reciprocity statute via the omnibus appropriations and technical amendments bill ([HB 243](#)), to require that out-of-State water/sewer operators meeting education and experience requirements be given an equivalent North Carolina license compared to the license that operator holds in another state. The statute now prohibits NC from requiring an examination for water/sewer operators certified in other States seeking to obtain a license in NC. The amendment changes the current law from *allowing* the Board of Certification to issue a license without exam to *requiring* it (where the out-of-state operator has an equivalent credential to the license he/she is seeking in NC). This language also removes the requirement that the State that licensed the out-of-state operator seeking NC reciprocity has to give NC operators licenses without exam.

For those seeking operator reciprocity, Corey Basinger, Chair of the Water Pollution Control System Operators Certification Commission has suggested adding language requiring the person to provide evidence of understanding NC laws and rules governing their certification, **or** be required to test demonstrating that knowledge. As an alternative, Director Rogers proposed to have those operators seeking reciprocity be required to take a *continuing education* course on North Carolina laws and regulations for NC WWTPs. His reasoning being that such courses are only a couple hours long and are offered frequently and can be attended virtually. This is a fair compromise; any new out-of-state operator must be trained by the facility and take the CLEs.

This change is a big win for water and wastewater utilities across the State, as the statutory changes remove a critical obstacle to rebuilding staffing and makes it easier to attract out-of-state professionals.