

§ 7A-45.4. Designation of complex business cases.

(a) Any party may designate as a mandatory complex business case an action that involves a material issue related to any of the following:

- (1) 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, including disputes arising under Chapters 55, 55A, 55B, 57D, and 59 of the General Statutes.
- (2) Disputes involving securities, including disputes arising under Chapter 78A of the General Statutes.
- (3) Disputes involving antitrust law, including disputes arising under Chapter 75 of the General Statutes that do not arise solely under G.S. 75-1.1 or Article 2 of Chapter 75 of the General Statutes.
- (4) Disputes involving trademark law, including disputes arising under Chapter 80 of the General Statutes.
- (5) 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.
- (6), (7) Repealed by Session Laws 2014-102, s. 3, effective October 1, 2014.
- (8) Disputes involving trade secrets, including disputes arising under Article 24 of Chapter 66 of the General Statutes.
- (9) Contract disputes in which all of the following conditions are met:
 - a. At least one plaintiff and at least one defendant is a corporation, partnership, or limited liability company, including any entity authorized to transact business in North Carolina under Chapter 55, 55A, 55B, 57D, or 59 of the General Statutes.
 - b. The complaint asserts a claim for breach of contract or seeks a declaration of rights, status, or other legal relations under a contract.
 - c. The amount in controversy computed in accordance with G.S. 7A-243 is at least one million dollars (\$1,000,000).
 - d. All parties consent to the designation.

(b) The following actions shall be designated as mandatory complex business cases:

- (1) 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, shall be designated as a mandatory complex business case by the petitioner or plaintiff.
- (2) An action described in subdivision (1), (2), (3), (4), (5), or (8) of subsection (a) of this section in which the amount in controversy computed in accordance with G.S. 7A-243 is at least five million dollars (\$5,000,000) shall be designated as a mandatory complex business case by the party whose pleading caused the amount in controversy to equal or exceed five million dollars (\$5,000,000).
- (3) Repealed by Session Laws 2015-119, s. 6, effective June 29, 2015, and applicable to any action filed on or after that date.
- (4) 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.

(c) **(Effective until contingency met – see note)** A party designating an action as a mandatory complex business case shall file a Notice of Designation in the Superior Court in which the action has been filed, shall contemporaneously serve the notice on each opposing party or counsel and on the Special Superior Court Judge for Complex Business Cases who is then the Chief Business Court Judge, and shall contemporaneously send a copy of the notice by e-mail to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court for approval of the designation of the action as a mandatory complex business case. The Notice of Designation shall, in good faith and based on information reasonably available, succinctly state the basis of the designation and include a certificate by or on behalf of the designating party that the civil action meets the criteria for designation as a mandatory complex business case pursuant to subsection (a) or (b) of this section.

(c) **(Effective once contingency met – see note)** A party designating an action as a mandatory complex business case shall file a Notice of Designation in the action pursuant to G.S. 1-81.2. The Notice of Designation shall, in good faith and based on information reasonably available, succinctly state the basis of the designation and include a certificate by or on behalf of the designating party that the civil action meets the criteria for designation as a mandatory complex business case pursuant to subsection (a) or (b) of this section. The Notice of Designation shall identify the county of origin, which is the county in which the matter is pending at the time the Notice of Designation is filed or, if filed contemporaneously with the initiation of the case, the county in which the plaintiff asserts the trial of the matter would be proper under Article 7 of Chapter 1 of the General Statutes.

(d) The Notice of Designation shall be filed:

- (1) By the plaintiff, the third-party plaintiff, or the petitioner for judicial review contemporaneously with the filing of the complaint, third-party complaint, or the petition for judicial review in the action.
- (2) By any intervenor when the intervenor files a motion for permission to intervene in the action.
- (3) By any defendant or any other party within 30 days of receipt of service of the pleading seeking relief from the defendant or party.
- (4) By any party whose pleading caused the amount in controversy computed in accordance with G.S. 7A-243 to equal or exceed five million dollars (\$5,000,000) contemporaneously with the filing of that pleading.
- (5) In the case of an action described in subdivision (4) of subsection (b) of this section, by the debtor, any person with a lien on receivership property, or any creditor of the debtor.

(e) **(Effective until contingency met – see note)** Within 30 days after service of the Notice of Designation, any other party may, in good faith, file and serve an opposition to the designation of the action as a mandatory complex business case. The opposition to the designation of the action shall assert all grounds on which the party opposing designation objects to the designation, and any grounds not asserted shall be deemed conclusively waived. Within 30 days after the entry of an order staying a pending action pursuant to subsection (g) of this section, any party opposing the stay shall file an objection with the Business Court asserting all grounds on which the party objects to the case proceeding in the Business Court, and any grounds not

asserted shall be deemed conclusively waived. Based on the opposition or on its own motion, the Business Court Judge shall rule by written order on the opposition or objection and determine whether the action should be designated as a mandatory complex business case. If a party disagrees with the decision, the party may appeal in accordance with G.S. 7A-27(a).

(e) **(Effective once contingency met – see note)** Within 30 days after service of the Notice of Designation, any other party may, in good faith, file and serve an opposition to the designation of the action as a mandatory complex business case. The opposition to the designation of the action shall assert all grounds on which the party opposing designation objects to the designation, and any grounds not asserted shall be deemed conclusively waived. Within 30 days after the entry of an order staying a pending action pursuant to subsection (g) of this section, any party opposing the stay shall file an objection with the Business Court asserting all grounds on which the party objects to the case proceeding in the Business Court, and any grounds not asserted shall be deemed conclusively waived. Based on the opposition or on its own motion, the Chief Business Court Judge shall rule by written order on the opposition or objection and determine whether the action should be designated as a mandatory complex business case. If a party disagrees with the decision, the party may appeal in accordance with G.S. 7A-27(a).

(f) **(Effective until contingency met – see note)** Once a designation is filed under subsection (d) of this section, and after preliminary approval by the Chief Justice, a case shall be designated and administered a complex business case. All proceedings in the action shall be before the Business Court Judge to whom it has been assigned unless and until an order has been entered under subsection (e) of this section ordering that the case not be designated a mandatory complex business case or the Chief Justice revokes approval. If complex business case status is revoked or denied, the action shall be treated as any other civil action, unless it is designated as an exceptional civil case or a discretionary complex business case pursuant to Rule 2.1 of the General Rules of Practice for the Superior and District Courts.

(f) **(Effective once contingency met – see note)** Once a designation is filed under subsection (d) of this section, a case shall be designated and administered a complex business case unless and until an order has been entered under subsection (e) of this section ordering that the case not be designated a mandatory complex business case. Except for execution proceedings pursuant to Articles 28 through 32 of Chapter 1 of the General Statutes, all proceedings in the action shall be before the Business Court Judge to whom it has been assigned. If complex business case status is revoked or denied, the action shall be treated as any other civil action, unless it is designated as an exceptional civil case or a discretionary complex business case pursuant to the General Rules of Practice for the Superior and District Courts.

(g) If an action required to be designated as a mandatory complex business case pursuant to subsection (b) of this section is not so designated, the Superior Court in which the action has been filed shall, by order entered sua sponte, stay the action until it has been designated as a mandatory complex business case by the party required to do so in accordance with subsection (b) of this section.

(h) Nothing in this section is intended to permit actions for personal injury grounded in tort to be designated as mandatory complex business cases or to confer, enlarge, or diminish the subject matter jurisdiction of any court. (2005-425, s. 2; 2007-491, s. 4; 2014-102, s. 3; 2015-119, s. 6; 2016-91, s. 2; 2020-75, s. 3(a); 2024-33, s. 3(b).)