

Illinois Board of Examiners  
Annual Report of Activity  
Fiscal Year 2023  
(July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023)  
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**Annual Report**  
**Illinois Board of Examiners**  
**FY23**

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# Illinois Board of Examiners

Mission: "To protect the public interest by providing qualified Certified Public Accountants through certification, and to provide quality service."

## I. The Agency

### A. Introduction

The Illinois Board of Examiners is a State of Illinois Agency created by the Illinois Public Accounting Act (225 ILCS 450/). The primary function of the Agency as stated in §450/2 of the Act is: "... *The Illinois Board of Examiners determines the qualifications of persons applying for certificates of Certified Public Accountant and makes rules for and conducts examinations for determining the qualifications.* "

The Board reviews the qualifications of candidates for the Uniform CPA Examination, as well as applications for reciprocal CPA certificates and Total Transfer of Credit from other jurisdictions. Over 100,000 Illinois Certified Public Accountant Certificates and Certificates of completion of education and examination requirements have been issued since 1903.

### B. Composition of the Board

§450/2 of the Act states: "*The Board shall consist of 11 examiners, including 2 public members. The remainder shall be certified public accountants in this State who have been residents of this State for at least 5 years immediately preceding their appointment, except that one shall be either a certified public accountant of the grade herein described or an attorney licensed and residing in this State and one shall be a certified public accountant who is an active or retired educator residing in this State.*" During Fiscal Year 2021, the period covered in this report, the board consisted of eleven appointed board members, including nine CPAs licensed/registered in the State of Illinois and two public members. Of the nine CPAs, two were educators and three were also attorneys licensed in the state of Illinois.

### C. Board Office

The Board of Examiners staff and administrative headquarters is located in Naperville, Illinois at 1120 E. Diehl Road, Suite 107 (Naperville campus building of Northern Illinois University). The staff consists of an Executive Director, Assistant Director of Certification, Business Manager, Network Manager and three certification specialists one of whom is an extra-help employee.

The Board communicates with the public and candidates through U.S. mail, electronic mail, direct mail projects, phone and its World Wide Web site on the Internet at [www.ilboe.org](http://www.ilboe.org). Among the materials available to download are the Application for the CPA Examination, Application for Reciprocal CPA Certificate, Application for Total Transfer of Credit, Pre-qualification Academic Credentials Evaluation Form, Change of Address Form, Request for Special Accommodations per the Americans with Disabilities Act and Request Form for CPA Certificate Verification. Additional links are provided to Internet sites related to CPA certification, testing protocol, state boards of accountancy, the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA), National Association of State Boards of Accountancy (NASBA), the Illinois CPA Society (ICPAS) and the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation (IDFPR).

## **D. Annual Report**

*Per the Act, "The Board shall make an annual report of its activities to the Governor and the Director. This report shall include a complete operating and financial statement covering its operations during the year, the number of examinations given, the pass/fail ratio for examinations, and any other information deemed appropriate. The Board shall have an audit of its books and accounts every 2 years by the Auditor General."*

The Auditor General performed a compliance examination of the Illinois Board of Examiners for the year ended June 30, 2019. The results of that audit showed the agency to have no material finding and that the agency was in compliance.

## **II. Historical Background**

### **History of Business - Certified Public Accounting in Illinois**

The Board of Examiners (BOE) awards a Certificate to candidates who have successfully met all educational and examination requirements for licensure in the state of Illinois including completion of "Professional Ethics: The AICPA's Comprehensive Course." The Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation, Division of Professional Regulation, Public Accountancy Section, regulates licensing of public accounting, continuing professional education and enforcement. One year of public accounting experience or its equivalent as defined in statute is required for the license to practice public accounting.

Beginning in 1903, the Board of Examiners had the responsibility of examining and certifying public accountants in the state of Illinois. At that time the Illinois Public Accounting Act gave authority to the University of Illinois (University) for the CPA examination and issuance of the CPA certificate. The administrative functions of the University under the Illinois Public Accounting Act were performed by a Committee on Accountancy, appointed by and responsible to the President of the University. The Board of Examiners, comprised of 5 members who were nominated by the President of the University and approved by the Board of Trustees, conducted the examination and approved the grades.

Effective January 1, 1994 legislation was enacted amending the Illinois Public Accounting Act. The Board of Examiners was enlarged from five members to nine and absorbed the duties of the former Committee on Accountancy. Effective July 2, 2004, the Board expanded again to eleven members, including two public members. An Executive Director and two Assistant Directors of the Board of Examiners perform administrative functions of the Board under the Illinois Public Accounting Act, as amended. In 1995, the Board entered into a fee agreement for services with the University for management, administrative, clerical, bookkeeping, auditing, legal and other services as the Board deems necessary and/or appropriate for its administration and operation. In July, 2013, they entered into a fee agreement for services with the Northern Illinois University for management, administrative, clerical, bookkeeping, auditing, legal and other services as the Board deems necessary and/or appropriate for its administration and operation.

The Board of Examiners is funded solely through application fees and fees for miscellaneous services. The Board receives no appropriated funds from the State of Illinois.

During the last fiscal year (2023), the Board of Examiners evaluated 15,064 domestic credentials for exam qualification. An additional 127 candidates applied for pre-evaluations. During fiscal year 2023, Illinois ranked fourth out of 55 jurisdictions in total number of candidates testing for the CPA examination. For fiscal year 2023, there were 2,908 candidates sitting for Illinois. Those candidates sat for a total of 6,685 sections with an overall pass rate of 57.19%. For FY 23, 1,763 candidates were certified.

### **III. Work of the Agency**

#### **A. Certification by Examination**

Any individual who wishes to be certified as a CPA in Illinois through examination must submit an application and fee to test to the Board of Examiners. All applicants must meet minimum educational requirements as stated in 225 ILCS 450/3, Illinois Public Accounting Act. Once eligibility is established, an approval letter is issued to the applicant and an Authorization to Test is sent to the National Candidate Database, which coordinates the computer-based testing. The testing year used to be divided into four testing quarters and candidates can test during the months of January-March 10, April-June 10, July-September 10, and October-December 10. However, we no longer have testing windows and instead candidates can test on-going throughout the year. The Uniform CPA examination is administered at authorized Prometric testing centers throughout the United States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam and approved testing centers in Asia, Europe, and the Middle East.

The AICPA develops and scores the exam. The Board of Examiners has the sole authority to approve and release scores to candidates and to issue certificates of completion of all education and examination requirements. Statistics for examination candidates are provided by the National Association of State Boards of Accountancy for the calendar year.

#### **B. Certification by Total Transfer of Credit**

Persons who have passed the entire examination as a CPA candidate from another jurisdiction may request transfer of those scores to Illinois and be issued an Illinois CPA certificate. All applicants must submit proof of academic eligibility and official CPA examination scores.

#### **C. Pre-Evaluations of Academic Eligibility**

Individuals planning to take the CPA examination at some point in the future may request the Board of Examiners establish academic eligibility to qualify to test. Upon submission of the evaluation form, fee and official academic credentials, the Board staff completes an evaluation of academic eligibility based on specific requirements as stated in 23 Illinois Administrative Code, Chapter VI, Section 1400.90, The Educational Requirement. The result of the evaluation is transmitted via mail to the applicant and is valid for a period of three years unless educational requirements are modified by statute during that time frame *and* the candidate has not taken the CPA examination.

#### **D. Miscellaneous transactions**

The Board receives many requests for services throughout the year. Among those requests processed are official certifications of valid CPA certificates and/or CPA examination score results; requests for candidate lists or statistics; duplicate CPA certificates; and statistical reports.

#### **E. Management responsibilities**

The Board of Examiners is in compliance with requirements relating to the obligation, expenditure and use of public funds, the collection of revenues and receipts and the handling of money or negotiable securities or other assets. The Board is responsible for establishing and maintaining effective internal controls and for compliance with laws, regulations, contracts and agreements.

#### **F. Agency Outreach**

In addition to the mandates of the agency listed above, the Board of Examiners has an extensive outreach in order to promote the Certified Public Accountant profession. The Director and senior level management speak to

accounting students at colleges and universities throughout Illinois as well as schools bordering Illinois that typically have accounting students intending to practice in Illinois. The purpose of these presentations is to not only promote the profession, but to provide information to the students on the process of applying for the CPA examinations, materials covered on the examinations, how to prepare for the examinations, what to expect at the examination test center, etc.

Additionally, the Executive Director and staff also work with various organizations to promote the CPA profession. These organizations include inner city high schools and not for profit organizations which encourage underserved and minority students to achieve at the highest level. Through these organizations, the staff of the agency is able to interact with students to encourage achievement while at the same time, promoting the CPA profession.

#### **IV. Offices of the Agency**

##### **Administrative Office**

The Board of Examiners staff and administrative headquarters is located in Naperville, Illinois at 1120 E. Diehl Road, Suite 107. The permanent staff consists of an Executive Director, Assistant Director of Certification, Business Manager, Network Manager and three certification specialists.

All Agency records are kept and maintained at the Administrative Office. Various materials prepared and/or maintained by this office include the Annual Report; statistical reports; Board Orientation Manual; Employee Manual; Operations Manual; Strategic Plan; application packets; information brochures; Regulations; Board meeting agendas, documents and minutes; archived records and CPA examination ledgers; financial records; educational credentials research library; purchasing records; and computer/network documentation.

The Board of Examiners' computer system utilizes three Compaq ML350 G10 Xeon Servers running Hyper-V Server 2019 as the virtualization host OS and a mix of Windows 2019, Windows 2012 and Windows 2008R2 in virtualized environment for the bulk of its work. All Servers are backed up locally and replicated off-site. The board operations runs on a candidates management system (VR) for internal use, and a public online system (VO) that provides services to current and prospect candidates. Both VR & VO are developed by Tyler Technologies and runs on JBoss & Wildfly application server platforms and Oracle 11 as the database server. The Board's email is cloud hosted by Microsoft's Office 365 and the public web server is designed and hosted by VisionFriendly.com. Annual penetration testing is conducted by a third-party firm to ensure continued document and data security.

#### **V. Personnel**

##### **Administrative Office**

Carlarta Ratchford, Executive Director  
Lianne Mace, Assistant Director for Certification  
Mary Fitzgerald, Business Operations (part time)  
Ric Rose, Network Manager

The above staff is supported by three certification specialists who perform all support services including mail processing, phone inquiries, email inquiries, application processing, data entry, general correspondence, cash receipts and score processing 1 of who also performs the domestic credentials analysts.

## VI. Board of Examiners

During fiscal year 2021, Governor Pritzker appointed six new members making this board one of the most diverse in the nation with six women and five men with five members ethnically diverse.

**Amanda Gavin, CPA, Chair**, is a graduate of Millikin University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Accounting and the University of Illinois with a Masters Degree in Business Administration. She is a Certified Public Accountant. Amanda began her career in public accounting at CliftonLarsonAllen, a top 10 accounting firm, where she started her career in audit and worked her way to Director of Federal Tax Solutions until 2014, when she joined Caterpillar Inc, a worldwide manufacturer of construction and mining equipment, diesel and natural gas engines, industrial gas turbines and diesel-electric locomotives. In addition to being a board member of the Illinois Board of Examiners, Amanda is an active member and former president of the Illinois CPA Society's Central Chapter, where she spearheaded a committee that founded an annual young professional's leadership conference in Central Illinois. Amanda is actively involved in her local community by volunteering her time to the Junior League of Peoria, Girl Scouts and leads a weekly women's life group. Amanda has been recognized among WEEK-TV's 25 Women in Leadership, 40 Leaders Under Forty, Illinois CPA Society Young Professional Leader and is a graduate of the Peoria Area Chamber of Commerce Community Leadership School.

**Martrice Caldwell, CPA, Vice-Chair**, is a lifelong Chicagoan that has built a career anchored in her passions and talents. After receiving her BS in Accountancy and Certificate of Accountancy from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, she passed the CPA exam in 2005 and obtained her license in 2006. Shortly thereafter, she started her career at PricewaterhouseCoopers' Private Company Services tax practice. Upon leaving public accounting, she began working in the not-for-profit sector as a Senior Accountant in the YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago's Government, Contracts and Grants Group for 7 years. She served as the accountant for YMCA-managed senior housing facilities and in that role performed month-end close, prepared and analyzed monthly financial statements and assisted with the external audit. Currently, she is the Senior Director of Accounting at OneGoal, an organization focused on ensuring every young person has an equitable opportunity to achieve their greatest postsecondary aspirations. Aside from overseeing the reporting of all regional and national revenues from the organization's development teams, she also leads the streamlined execution of month-end close and successfully managed OneGoal's ERP and expense reporting software transition. Martrice is currently a member of the Illinois CPA Society's endowment board.

**Brian Whitlock, CPA, JD.**, holds a B.A. from Northwestern University and both a J.D., with honors, and an L.L.M. in Taxation, with high honors, from the Illinois Institute of Technology/Chicago-Kent College of Law. Brian retired in 2016 as a Senior Tax Partner with Plante Moran, a Midwest regional certified public accounting firm. During his nearly 30 years with the predecessor firm, Blackman Kallick, Brian was the partner in charge of both Wealth Transfer Services and tax services related to the firm's Tax Exempt Organizations Group. Over the last thirty-nine years, Brian has practiced in both law firms and public accounting firms. His expertise focused on business succession planning, tax planning, and compliance issues related to high net worth individuals and their closely held businesses, as well as Exempt Organizations. For the past 12 years, Brian was an adjunct member of the faculty at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign where he taught in the Masters of Science in Taxation Program. Prior to that Brian taught at DePaul University in their Masters of Science in Taxation Program. He writes a quarterly column under the by-line "Untaxingly yours" in Taxes – The Tax Magazine published by the CCH division of Wolters Kluwer's. Brian is a Past Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Illinois CPA Society and earned the Lifetime Achievement Award of the Illinois CPA Society in 2014. He received the Austin Fleming Award from the Chicago Estate Planning Council in 2018. He is an active member of the American Bar Association; the Illinois State Bar Association; the Chicago Bar Association. He continues to be an active member of the AICPA where he serves on the Estate and Gift Tax Technical Review Panel. He is a frequent national speaker before professional groups. His straight-forward plain English speaking style makes complex topics understandable for both practitioners and clients.

**Annette O'Connor, CPA**, is a graduate of the University of Notre Dame having earned a Bachelors Degree in Business Administration in Accountancy. She is a Certified Public Accountant. Annette is Controller for Amsted

Industries which is a diversified global manufacturer of industrial components. Prior to joining Amsted in 2018, Annette was Vice President of Finance and Head of Internal Audit for RR Donnelley & Sons in Chicago. During her 15 years at RR Donnelley, Annette progressed through various financial roles with increasing responsibility including Investor Relations, Financial Planning & Analysis and Operations Finance. Annette began her career as an auditor with Ernst & Young LLP, then spent time at both McDonalds Corporation and Follett Corporation before a successful career at RR Donnelley. Annette is a former board member of the Illinois CPA Society and is a current member of the Chicago Finance Exchange.

**Stephen Bradley Danton, CPA, JD**--Brad obtained his Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Michigan, his Juris Doctorate from Michigan State University-DCL, and LLM in Taxation for Georgetown University. As a PwC Principal, Brad has 18 years of public accounting experience. He is the Mid-Central Region State and Local Tax Coordinator for PricewaterhouseCoopers' Indirect Tax practice. Although based in Chicago, Brad serves clients throughout the Midwest. Since joining PwC, he has served clients in all industries related to multi-state sales, use and excise tax matters. Brad also serves as faculty at the DePaul University School of Business as an instructor of State and Local Taxation and has published materials relating to state and local tax on-behalf of the American Bar Association, Michigan Association of Certified Public Accountants, and Michigan Bar Association. He also frequently serves as a speaker at industry events on tax matters.

**Thomas Homer, JD**, Public member, began his legal career in 1974 as a prosecutor in Lake County. He served two terms as the Fulton County Attorney and six terms as a member of the Illinois House of Representatives. He was elected to the Illinois Appellate Court in 1996 where he served until 2003, serving as the presiding justice for two one-year terms. From 2004 to 2014, Tom served as ethics advisor to the Illinois General Assembly during which he was recognized by the Illinois General Assembly for his integrity and ability (House Joint Resolution 142, 95th General Assembly). In March 2017, Governor Bruce Rauner appointed Tom to the Illinois Board of Examiners. Tom is the owner of the Homer Law Firm in Naperville, where his practice is concentrated in the areas of estate planning, probate, real estate, and civil mediation. As a Certified Financial Planner (CFP®), Tom also advises clients with respect to wealth accumulation and wealth preservation strategies.

**Luis Plascencia**, CPA manages his own CPA practice and teaches accounting and tax courses at the college level. Mr. Plascencia is a member of the faculty at Harold Washington College, one of the City Colleges of Chicago. Luis has served on multiple ICPAS Committees including serving as the Chairperson of the Tax Practice and Procedures Committee. Mr. Plascencia is a frequent speaker at various ICPAS continuing education events including the annual Summit and the annual Cannabis Industry Conference. Luis has also appeared as frequent guest on the Chicago Legal Clinic Immigration Issues Show where he discussed tax issues that affect immigrants. In 2018, Mr. Plascencia was recognized as Outstanding Educator by the Illinois CPA Society. Luis is an avid distance runner and cyclist. Luis has volunteered his time to Chicago Area Runners Association and is a frequent charity runner for the Organization for Autism Research.

**RoseAnn Abraham**, CPA, is a graduate of the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign with a Bachelors Degree in Accountancy. She is a CPA with nearly 20 years of public accounting experience and currently a partner at Baker Tilly US, LLP. With a focus on service and a passion for diversity, inclusion and equity, she is involved with various organizations. At Baker Tilly, RoseAnn leads one of its signature diversity and inclusion initiatives, SOAR (Supporting Opportunity, Advancement and Recognition for all). RoseAnn also serves on the boards of Step Up (Chicago Chapter) and Ascend (Midwest Chapter). She also serves on the Illinois CPA Society's Employee Benefit Plan Committee and its Conference Committee. A strong believer in the power of mentorship, through Step Up (suwn.org), she works to empower teen girls from under resourced communities to become confident, college bound, career-focused and ready to join the next generation of professional women. Through her involvement in Ascend, the largest non-profit Pan-Asian organization for business professionals in North America, she works to enhance the presence and influence of current and future Pan-Asian business leaders amplify the collective voice for Pan-Asian business communities.



**Maria de J Prado**, CPA, obtained a Bachelors Degree in Accounting from the University of Illinois at Chicago and holds a Certified Public Accountant license. Her greatest accomplishment in becoming a Certified Public Accountant was sharing the evening's recognition dinner with her now business Partner Hilda S. Renteria and both of their mothers in 1989. She began her professional career as an Auditor at First National Bank of Chicago (now JPMorgan Chase). In 1990 she co-founded Prado & Renteria CPAs where she now serves as Managing Partner. She has more than thirty years of management consulting, auditing and accounting experience in governmental, non-profit and commercial sectors. She is accountable for oversight of consulting engagements and provides the technical review function for the firm's audit and attestation services. In addition, she is accountable for overseeing consulting engagements including quality reviews of CPA firm audit reports, technical assistance for local governments and non-profit organizations and process improvement reviews. Maria recently served as the Interim CFO for Institute for Latino Progress, a Chicago-based Non-Profit Organization serving immigrant families. Maria is a member of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants and the Illinois CPA Society. She is a current member of the Nominating Committee for the Illinois CPA Society and previously served on its Board of Directors. She serves on Non-profit organization Boards including The Resurrection Project where she serves as the Finance Committee Chairperson. She previously served as the Treasurer for Chicago United, Inc. and as the Chairperson for the Board of Directors of the Illinois Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

**Sook Lee**, CPA, is a Director in the Disputes, Compliance & Investigations group for Stout, a global investment bank and advisory firm. She has over 18 years of experience providing forensic and litigation consulting and expert witness services to clients involved in fraud investigations and complex commercial disputes. She has provided expert deposition and testimony in state and probate court on issues pertaining to economic damages, business valuation, allegations of asset misappropriation and accounting irregularities. Her experience spans many sectors including professional services, financial services, securities, telecommunications, pharmaceutical, medical device, healthcare, private equity, insurance, construction and manufacturing. Prior to joining Stout, Ms. Lee provided financial modeling, accounting analysis as well as litigation, arbitration and expert testimony support to clients involved in complex commercial disputes, accounting malpractice claims, government investigations, general business disputes and tax controversy matters.

**Leilani Rodrigo**, CPA, has been with E.C. Ortiz & Co., LLP – now Roth & Co. LLP, for over 20 years. She specializes in providing financial audit, Single Audit (in accordance with the Uniform Guidance) and state compliance examination services to higher educational institutions, not-for-profit organizations and state and local governmental entities, while overseeing Roth& Co Illinois office's quality control monitoring. She has more than 25 years of experience providing accounting, assurance and business advisory services to private and governmental entities, not-for-profit organizations and small businesses. Prior to joining Roth&Co, she worked at SGV & Co. (Ernst & Young Philippines) and Team Energy Philippines. Leilani graduated with Academic Distinction from the Philippine School of Business Administration, receiving her Bachelor of Science in Accountancy. She is a Certified Public Accountant in the Philippines and in Illinois and is a member of both the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) and Illinois CPA Society (ICPAS). She serves as a member of the Governmental Executive Committee and the Chair of the CPA Exam Award Committee of the ICPAS. Leilani previously served as a member of the Government Conference Task Force of the ICPAS and as a member of the State of Illinois Local Government Advisory Board.

## **VII. FY 22 BOARD ACTIVITY**

In addition to routine board activity of reviewing transcripts, processing applications and certifying candidates for licensure once they successfully complete all examination requirements, the board staff was engaged in several outreach projects. One of the primary goals and activities of the board is to promote the CPA profession, not only to typical college and university students, but to high school, community college and underserved minority students as well. Board staff dedicated time and energy in working toward increasing awareness of the CPA profession and the need to address declining numbers due to the introduction of robotics and other AI programs.

While the national requirement for licensure remains at 150 semester hours of earned college coursework, most states have relaxed the requirement to begin sitting for the Uniform CPA examinations from 150 semester hours earned to 120 semester hours earned with a degree as well as other course specific requirements. The Board of Examiners, in concert with the Illinois CPA Society will implement a change to their Administrative Rules to allow a candidate/student to sit for the Uniform CPA examinations once they have attained 120 semester hours of earned credit including 24 hours of accounting with a course in Taxation and a course in Audit along with at least 12 business hours and a baccalaureate degree. This requirement becomes effective January 1, 2023. An Illinois candidate for certification must still have earned 150 semester hours, a degree and other specific course requirements.