

Bio
James T. Ahler, CAE
CEO, NC Association of CPAs

Jim Ahler, CAE, has served over 25 years as Chief Executive Officer of the North Carolina Association of Certified Public Accountants, which represents over 13,000 CPAs. Jim works with a 19 member board of directors and 28 staff in Morrisville. Jim is one of the primary spokespersons for the NC Association. He serves as a registered lobbyist, speaking on behalf of the association at the NC General Assembly, NC Executive branch agencies, and with the NC delegation to the United States Congress. Jim annually provides Professional Issues Updates on current and emerging issues throughout the state in regional programs and statewide conferences. Jim liaises with the NC State Board of CPA Examiners on behalf of the membership.

Jim is currently serving on the AICPA Peer Review Board, which sets Peer Review standards. He is active in the CPA Society Executives Association (CPA/SEA), the national association of state CPA association executives. He is a Past President of the CPA Society Executives Association (CPA/SEA).

Prior to joining NCACPA in 1988, Jim was the Executive Director of the Kentucky State Board of Accountancy in Louisville. While in Kentucky, Jim was also active on various national committees of the National Association of State Boards of Accountancy (NASBA). He was a consultant to NASBA for strategic planning and committee management.

Jim is a Past President and active member of the Association Executives of North Carolina (AENC). Jim is an active participant in the Apex United Methodist Church, serving on their Finance Committee. He is also a Red Cross volunteer.

Jim is married and resides in Cary, NC. Jim has one daughter, Jennifer.

Kristin Walker
Senior Fiscal Analyst, NC General Assembly

Kristin Walker works as a Senior Fiscal Analyst for the North Carolina General Assembly. She is currently a member of the Senate Budget Development team within the Fiscal Research Division. Prior to this position, she served as team leader of the Natural and Economic Resources team at Fiscal. Kristin previously worked for the federal government at the National Science Foundation managing multi-million dollar grant programs in the social and behavioral sciences. She graduated with honors from the University of Michigan and obtained her Master of Public Policy degree from the Terry Sanford Institute at Duke University.

Rodney Bizzell
Principal Fiscal Analyst, Fiscal Research Division
North Carolina General Assembly

Bio:

Rodney Bizzell is a fiscal analyst with the Fiscal Research Division of the North Carolina General Assembly. In this role, Rodney assists with staffing the finance committees and several interim study committees. He estimates the impact of tax and finance legislation involving income tax, economic development incentives and property tax changes. He also develops educational presentations and documents summarizing tax legislation.

Before joining the North Carolina legislature in 2004, he worked for the City of Raleigh's budget office. He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Duke University and a Master of Public Administration from NC State University.

Biographical Information

North Carolina State Auditor Beth A. Wood, CPA

Beth Wood is beginning her second term as North Carolina's elected State Auditor. She is a Certified Public Accountant and long-time public servant with nearly 25 years of auditing experience.

Beth served in the State Auditor's Office for more than a decade before being elected into this position. Before joining the State Auditor's Office, she served in the State Treasurer's Office and in the private sector. She is the first woman elected to the position of State Auditor in North Carolina.

During her tenure, the office has performed audits that would help state leaders cope with the worst economic conditions since the Great Depression. Those audits have focused on contracting practices that favored vendors at the expense of taxpayers and changes in agency procedures that have saved the state hundreds of millions of dollars.

Beth's goals for her second term include producing audits that will help the governor and legislators streamline state government. Audit teams across the state are watching every area of state government for potential savings that help make the best use of taxpayer dollars.

Additionally, under her leadership during the next term, the office will perform follow-up audits, evaluate the use of best practices by state agencies and will work to attract and retain highly skilled auditors.

Michael East
Special Agent in Charge
North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation

SAC East graduated from Virginia Tech University in Blacksburg Virginia in 1987 with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in History and a minor in Political Science. In March 1988, SAC East was hired as a Drug Analyst in the Intelligence Section of the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation. In that capacity, SAC East worked on the first State Narcotic Investigative Grand Jury. In March 1991, SAC East was selected to attend the 22nd SBI Academy and eventually received his sworn Agent status in September 1991 upon graduation from the SBI Academy.

SAC East was then assigned as the resident Criminal Agent in Harnett County where he worked a variety of criminal cases including Homicide, Serial Rapist, State and Federal Narcotics Trafficking, Officer Involved Shootings, and Corruption. SAC East has either led or assisted in over 200 Homicide Investigations, and is the coordinator and instructor for the Homicide Block of Instruction at the SBI Academy. SAC East has also worked on the SBI's MUST Team (Murder Un-Solved Team), and has worked several cold case homicide investigations.

While working in the Capital District, SAC East began working with the United States Secret Service on numerous dignitary protection assignments. As a result, SAC East was chosen to develop and coordinate the security plan for the 100 year anniversary of flight at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina in December 2001. SAC East has also coordinated security for the 2000, 2004, and 2008 North Carolina Governors' Inaugurations. SAC East has also attended the United States Secret Service Schools for Dignitary Protection and Major Event Management. SAC East is also a guest instructor for the North Carolina Highway Patrol Executive Protection School.

In 1996 SAC East joined the SBI's Hostage Negotiation Team and became a crisis negotiator. SAC East has worked numerous hostage and barricaded suspect incidents. SAC East has attended the 2 week FBI Crisis Negotiation School in Quantico, Virginia. SAC East and the FBI conduct a week long Crisis Negotiation School at the North Carolina Justice Academy and since 2000; they have trained over 350 law enforcement officers to be Crisis Negotiators. SAC East travels around the state several times each year to conduct individual training classes for local, state and federal officers in the areas of Incident Command and Crisis Negotiation. SAC East is still assigned to the SBI's Crisis Negotiation Team and served as the Team Leader and Team Instructor. SAC East is also a state certified law enforcement instructor.

After September 11, 2001, SAC East served on a specialized unit with FBI that conducted surveillance on subjects with ties to terrorist organizations out of state. SAC East has also worked numerous Corruption investigations including the shutting down of the entire Spring Lake Police Department in 2008. In 2011, SAC East was promoted to the position of Special Agent in Charge of the Financial Crimes Unit in the Professional Standards Division of the SBI where he currently serves.

MICHAEL L. WALDEN
Distinguished Professor and Extension Economist, NC State University

Dr. Michael L. Walden is a William Neal Reynolds Distinguished Professor and Extension Economist in the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics at North Carolina State University, and a member of the Graduate Economics faculty with The Poole College of Management. His Ph.D. degree is from Cornell University and he has been at N.C. State since 1978. In fall, 2013, he is also an Adjunct Professor at Duke University.

Dr. Walden has teaching, research, and extension responsibilities at NCSU in the areas of consumer economics, economic outlook, and public policy. He has published eight books and over 250 articles and reports, including the book *North Carolina in the Connected Age*, published by the UNC Press. He has served on several local and state level commissions, including the Governor's Welfare Reform Task Force, the School Capital Construction Legislative Study Commission, and the Blue Ribbon Committee for the Future of Wake County. Recently he served on the staffs to the State and Local Fiscal Modernization Study Commission and the UNC Tomorrow Commission.

Dr. Walden can be frequently seen, heard, and read in the media. He has daily radio programs aired on stations around North Carolina for which he has won two national awards. He is often interviewed on local TV and radio news broadcasts, has appeared on *NBC*, *CBS*, *The Fox Report*, and the *Newshour With Jim Lehrer*, and is frequently quoted in such newspapers as *USA Today*, *The News and Observer*, *The Charlotte Observer*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The Washington Post*. His biweekly column, *You Decide*, is carried by over forty newspapers in the state. He has made over 2500 personal presentations.

Dr. Walden directs the semiannual economic forecast, *The North Carolina Economic Outlook*. He has won numerous academic and public awards, including the Champion-Tuck Award for Excellence in Broadcasting, and the UNC Board of Governor's Award for Excellence in Public Service in 2010. In 2013 he was made a member of the Order of the Long Leaf Pine.

Stephanie Spencer
Director of Relationship Management, First Data

Stephanie is a Director of Relationship Management for the Mid Market segment at First Data. She joined First Data in 2007 and has over ten years of banking experience in the areas of merchant services and treasury management.

First Data enables payments around the world every second of every day for more than 6 million merchant locations, thousands of card issuers and millions of consumers. As the recognized global payments processing leader, First Data makes those payment transactions secure, fast and easy, whether the choice of payment is by debit or credit card, gift card, check or mobile phone, online or at the checkout counter.

A native of Little Hocking Ohio, Stephanie holds a Bachelors of Science degree from Ohio University majoring in Communication.

Outside of work Stephanie enjoys exercising, golf, and the outdoors. She is active in her community and is a lifelong member of First Lutheran Church. Stephanie resides in Northeastern Tennessee with her husband and son.

Rhonda Kirk
Relationship Manager, First Data

Rhonda is a Relationship Manager for the Mid Market segment at First Data. She has served the First Data Merchant Services relationship exclusively for the past four and half years. She joined TeleCheck® in 1987 which was acquired by First Data and has over twenty six years of financial experience in the areas of merchant services.

A native of North Carolina, Rhonda holds a Bachelors of Science degree from Appalachian State University majoring in Business.

Outside of work Rhonda enjoys the outdoors, walking, reading, and spending time with family. She is active in her community and is a member of First United Methodist Church Matthews. Rhonda, a mother of two grown children and a grandmother of one, resides in Union County with her husband.

**Peter J. Ahearn Jr.
Special Agent, FBI**

Special Agent Peter J. Ahearn Jr. has been with the FBI since February 2009. After completing training at the FBI Academy in Quantico Virginia, SA Ahearn was assigned to the Cyber Crimes Squad in the Charlotte Division, Raleigh Resident Agency. SA Ahearn is currently investigating Cyber Crimes involving both criminal and national security related network intrusion events in and around North Carolina.

Prior to joining the FBI, SA Ahearn served as an Information Security Consultant in the private sector serving a multitude of federal government clients in the Washington DC area. SA Ahearn has extensive experience in the identification, investigation and resolution of Cyber related intrusions. Due to his expertise in intrusion matters, SA Ahearn was assigned to the FBI's Cyber Crimes Task Force where he is currently engaged in a multi-agency effort to resolve numerous complex and sophisticated computer and network intrusion matters.