

Responses to Survey - Board of Public Accountants

Total responses: 70 (of which 5 out of state)

<p>Highest Compliment</p>	<p>Ability to monitor on behalf of licensees - 38 Ability to keep profession from criticism because of bad actors - 12 Other: - Ability to keep professionals abreast of changes in practice. --Handle the annual permit process efficiently. -- On the whole, believe the board has served the public and profession very well. -- Does a good job of monitoring the profession</p>
<p>Biggest Complaint</p>	<p>Licensing fees too high - 8 Lack of Information - 5 Board's response to unlicensed practice - 2 Licensing renewal timelines too strict - 2 Regulations too strict - 1 None - 38 Other:-- Board doesn't deal with activities by unlicensed individuals doing what we need a license for -- Board's inability/unwillingness to act upon complaints made against a licensee. -- I think mandatory licensure is immoral. -- I don't know enough of what they do to really complain. -- Feel the board treats me like a second-class citizen. -- Meaningless rules and regulations, often appear self-serving to the licensing boards. Silly rules designed solely to justify the licensing board's existence -- Fees too high for certificate maintenance by someone not a resident. -- Should raise the fees every few years rather than just doubling them once a decade. -- Often times they are really nit picky about the items they deal with. Really a waste of everyone's time. Not protecting the public. -- Not enough information provided to the Public as to when and why licensing is revoked or sanctions applied. -- Inability to accurately track CPE reporting -- Licensing fees not being spent by the state, difficulty in contacting state employee responsible (calls go to voice mail), does not aggressively seek out violations (ie appropriate disclosure when a commission or finder's fee is taken), and does not require malpractice insurance as a prerequisite to licensure. -- The cost of maintaining a licensing office/board far outweighs any perceived benefits of the licensing board. -- Timing of reporting, relicensing difficult - reporting requirements during tax season is inconsiderate -- Inefficiencies in the processes and understaffing -- Need online cpe tracking</p>
<p>Other reasons the board is important : - Retains a good reputation in the field of public accounting. Keeps professionals accountable for high standards and ethical performance. Without a licensing board, I believe the value of a CPA license in the State of Montana would diminish. Licensed CPAs are regarded as highly ethical and trustworthy. The licensing board actively reviews our licensing requirements and imposes changes as needed to ensure Montana CPA's are held to the highest standards. These types of professionals are valuable to the legislature, the business community and to Montana consumers.- Board protects profession and people living in our state. -- The issues of the profession are so vast and ever-changing, and the services of accounting licensees touch such a variety of constituents, the Board is necessary in keeping abreast of those issues and providing information and guidance to licensees and protection to the public. -- Holds practitioners accountable and helps the public understand the parameters of the practitioner. -- Ensuring that those who provide attestation services are competent. -- The board's base education/knowledge requirements and continuing education requirements ensure that a CPA is more respected than "tax mill tax preparers". Skills should be differentiated - otherwise no one has a clue what caliber of accountant they are dealing with. The Board ensures that those held out to be a CPA meet a minimum skill and knowledge set, which is invaluable to Montana citizens. Television ads seen every year do not indicate that the "tax mill" tax preparer often has minimal at best knowledge and experience. -- Keeps our profession accountable to the highest standards. -- The "CPA" designation presents to the public that standards have been met and the person has the knowledge and ethics to be counted on to provide quality accounting services. -- Board protects the public, which in turn protects the profession.-- It creates some state jobs. -- Maintains high standards for profession. -- People rely on their accountants' ethics and integrity. The Board helps maintain this trust. -- Having an independent licensing board validates the profession. The overview process enhances our profession.</p>	

Other reasons board important (continued): -- The board monitors continuing education (120 hours every 3 years for accountants) and has a practice monitoring program where financial statements are reviewed every third year for compliance with professional standards. That review is very thorough. I now am peer reviewed and the board will not directly review my statements. It helps keep standards high and police the few bad actors who give the profession a bad name and reduce public confidence in CPA-prepared financial info. -- Since the licensing board is for public accountants only, and can be familiar with the profession and its requirements, it is less bureaucratic than a state agency that may not be up to date with the changes in the profession, and it can address both practitioner issues and concerns of the public. There is also an educational component for the licensees by interaction with a board of professionals and peers in adhering to professional standards as well as the licensing component. -- Protects the public from bad apples that get into the profession, monitors compliance of maintaining proficiency and professional standards, and keeps Montana up to date with changes on the national level, i.e. uniform accountancy act, reciprocity. -- Makes sure that those licensed as CPAs live up to the expectations for those in the profession. -- The board can keep you from accountants that are unscrupulous or do not have sufficient knowledge to practice.--Self oversight can be highly effective in keeping licensees current, knowledgeable and working within a professional ethics code that is valuable to those seeking their services. -- Makes certain that only qualified individuals are providing Auditing services. -- Users of public accounting services need to know that they are getting people qualified to perform the services they are providing. Because of the requirements to have attest services performed by CPAs, if we had no licensing board, many of these services could not be provided by in-state accountants and businesses would be forced to seek out-of-state providers.

Public Health -

Public Welfare - 34*

Public Safety - 3

None of these- 17

All or combination - 11

*I don't see much of the "protecting the public welfare" side of things, but probably if the Board weren't there, we might have a bigger problem with those type issues. I wonder if the State Society couldn't serve the same purpose though, and they have an incentive to keep their reputation clean.

Scope of Practice:

Too Narrow - 4

Too Broad - 2

Just Right - 57

Problems with own or other professions' scope of practice - None with own profession = 63

-- **Comment regarding too broad a scope:** Many tasks and professional services fall under the umbrella of professional accounting. Covers too many areas.
 -- **Comments regarding too narrow a scope:** --CPA's are highly regulated for their financial statements, yet other accountants seem to not be... Board should regulate that non-licensed preparers of financials are penalized for holding themselves out to be capable of preparing a true compilation or more. --Board does not regulate unlicensed tax preparers and/or bookkeepers -- CPAs whose only practice consists of serving small (1-2 owner) businesses are held to the same standards as those who serve large publicly held entities. These standards are too onerous and do not serve the small business owner or the small practitioner well. I am encouraged to see that these standards are changing (slowly). -- Unable to provide advise on an ethics problem when calling the ethics committee.
 -- **Comment regarding just right:** Board does a good job of licensing professionals and monitoring continuing education. The Board monitors those areas where outside review is important, ie ethical standards, professional standards and continuing education. These reviews are important to insure a high standard of work product and conduct in the profession.

What laws/regulations have caused the most problems? None = 9

--The law that created the Board. There is a lot of duplication between the Montana Board of Public Accountants and the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA). Granted there is no requirement that all CPAs be members of the AICPA, but I see more disciplinary actions coming out of the AICPA than the Board of Public Accountants. Overall, I do not see a need to have a professional licensing board. I have seen no benefit to the existing licensing board or its office.-- Peer review for CPAS solely involved in private practice. -- I have seen where the State Department of Admin has overstepped their boundaries and told CPAs they couldn't perform audits in the governmental area, because the auditor had a clean peer review with comments. The Dept of Admin felt like the auditor should have no comments in order to perform audits of local governments. I have also seen where the Dept of Admin controls the number of contracts an auditor may have by not approving contracts. In general the state Department of Admin oversteps its authority. -- Reciprocity between states would be very helpful for CPAs who move or have clients in more than the state they reside in. -- peer review/ financial statement presentation, CPE audit requirements. -- Not renewing or submitting information on time results in huge penalties. A day late with a form and the penalty is over \$100.

What laws/regulations have caused the most problems? (continued) -- Restricting the Board's ability to use their funds for the benefit of the profession through lack of funds. The Board would be better served to not fall completely under a governmental agency.

<p>Consumer complaint filed?</p>	<p>No = 57 Yes = 3 Board was effective = 1 (Referencing Insurance Dept not Board) Board was not effective = 3 Dropped the matter = 2 Other: I filed an ethics complaint about an attorney and the "board" accepted a fraud-filled affidavit from the unethical lawyer as "true"</p>
<p>Nonlicensee comments (~8 out-of-state)</p>	<p>Saying Board of Public Accountants: Necessary for Public Health - 14 , Public Safety - 5, Public Welfare - 7 All or a combination - 35</p>

3 board members/former board members

3 persons with fine/disciplinary action; 2 called before screening panel whose cases dismissed (one of these noted that if you do professional work the board leaves you alone); 1 called before screening panel who didn't answer any other questions. 1 ordered to do continuing education, 1 put on probation.