WEST VIRGINIA CODE: §30-18-3

§30-18-3. Application requirements for a license to conduct the private investigation business.

(a) To be licensed to be a private detective, a private investigator or to operate a private detective or investigative firm, each applicant shall file an application with the Secretary of State in a manner or method authorized and in such form as the secretary may prescribe.

(b) On the application each applicant shall provide the following information: The applicant's name, birth date, citizenship, physical description, military service, current residence, residences for the preceding seven years, qualifying education or experience, the location of each of his or her offices in this state, and any other information requested by the Secretary of State in order to comply with the requirements of this article.

(c) In the case of a corporation that is seeking a firm license, the application shall be signed by the president of such corporation and shall specify the name of the corporation, the date and place of its incorporation, the names and titles of all officers, the location of its principal place of business, and the name of the city, town or village, stating the street and number, and otherwise such apt description as will reasonably indicate the location. If the corporation has been incorporated in a state other than West Virginia, a certificate of good standing from the state of incorporation must accompany the application. This information must be provided in addition to that required to be provided by the applicant.

(d) The applicant shall provide:

(1) Information in the application about whether the applicant has ever been arrested for or convicted of any crime or wrongs, either done or threatened, against the government of the United States;

(2) Information about offenses against the laws of West Virginia or any state; and

(3) Any facts as may be required by the Secretary of State to show the good character, competency and integrity of the applicant.

To qualify for a firm license, the applicant shall provide such information for each person who will be authorized to conduct the private investigation business and for each officer, member, or partner of the firm.

(e) As part of the application, each applicant shall give the Secretary of State permission to review the records held by the West Virginia State Police for any convictions that may be on record for the applicant.

(f) For each applicant applying for a license, the application shall be accompanied by one recent full-face photograph.

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(g) For each applicant, the application shall be accompanied by:

(1) Character references from at least five reputable citizens. Each reference must have known the applicant for at least five years preceding the application. No reference may be connected to the applicant by blood or marriage. All references must have been written for the purpose of the application for a license to conduct the private investigation business; and

(2) A nonrefundable application processing service charge of $50, which shall be payable to the Secretary of State to offset the cost of license review and criminal investigation background report from the West Virginia State Police, along with a license fee of $100 if the applicant is an individual, or $200 if the applicant is a firm. The license fee shall be deposited to the General Revenue Fund and shall be refunded only if the license is denied.

(h) All applicants for private detective or private investigator licenses or for private investigation firm licenses shall file in the office of Secretary of State a surety bond or sufficient proof of liability insurance as required by the Secretary of State.

(i) If a surety bond is obtained in lieu of liability insurance, such bond shall:

(1) Be in the sum of $5,000 and conditioned upon the faithful and honest conduct of such business by such applicant;

(2) Be written by a company recognized and approved by the Insurance Commissioner of West Virginia and approved by the Attorney General of West Virginia with respect to its form;

(3) Be in favor of the State of West Virginia for any person who is damaged by any violation of this article. The bond must also be in favor of any person damaged by such a violation.

(j) Any person claiming against the bond required by subsection (i) of this section for a violation of this article may maintain an action at law against any licensed individual or firm and against the surety. The surety shall be liable only for damages awarded under §30-18-12 of this code and not the punitive damages permitted under that section. The aggregate liability of the surety to all persons damaged by a person or firm licensed under this article may not exceed the amount of the bond.

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