

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
1993 SESSION

CHAPTER 461
SENATE BILL 860

AN ACT TO CLARIFY THE PUBLIC RECORDS LAW WITH RESPECT TO
CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIVE RECORDS.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

Section 1. Chapter 132 of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new section to read:

"§ 132-1.4. Criminal investigations; intelligence information records.

(a) Records of criminal investigations conducted by public law enforcement agencies or records of criminal intelligence information compiled by public law enforcement agencies are not public records as defined by G.S. 132-1. Records of criminal investigations conducted by public law enforcement agencies or records of criminal intelligence information may be released by order of a court of competent jurisdiction.

(b) As used in this section:

- (1) 'Records of criminal investigations' means all records or any information that pertains to a person or group of persons that is compiled by public law enforcement agencies for the purpose of attempting to prevent or solve violations of the law, including information derived from witnesses, laboratory tests, surveillance, investigators, confidential informants, photographs, and measurements.
- (2) 'Records of criminal intelligence information' means records or information that pertain to a person or group of persons that is compiled by a public law enforcement agency in an effort to anticipate, prevent, or monitor possible violations of the law.
- (3) 'Public law enforcement agency' means a municipal police department, a county police department, a sheriff's department, a company police agency commissioned by the Attorney General pursuant to G.S. 74E-1, et seq., and any State or local agency, force, department, or unit responsible for investigating, preventing, or solving violations of the law.
- (4) 'Violations of the law' means crimes and offenses that are prosecutable in the criminal courts in this State or the United States and infractions as defined in G.S. 14-3.1.

(5) 'Complaining witness' means an alleged victim or other person who reports a violation or apparent violation of the law to a public law enforcement agency.

(c) Notwithstanding the provisions of this section, and unless otherwise prohibited by law, the following information shall be public records within the meaning of G.S. 132-1.

(1) The time, date, location, and nature of a violation or apparent violation of the law reported to a public law enforcement agency.

(2) The name, sex, age, address, employment, and alleged violation of law of a person arrested, charged, or indicted.

(3) The circumstances surrounding an arrest, including the time and place of the arrest, whether the arrest involved resistance, possession or use of weapons, or pursuit, and a description of any items seized in connection with the arrest.

(4) The contents of '911' and other emergency telephone calls received by or on behalf of public law enforcement agencies, except for such contents that reveal the name, address, telephone number, or other information that may identify the caller, victim, or witness.

(5) The contents of communications between or among employees of public law enforcement agencies that are broadcast over the public airways.

(6) The name, sex, age, and address of a complaining witness.

(d) A public law enforcement agency shall temporarily withhold the name or address of a complaining witness if release of the information is reasonably likely to pose a threat to the mental health, physical health, or personal safety of the complaining witness or materially compromise a continuing or future criminal investigation or criminal intelligence operation. Information temporarily withheld under this subsection shall be made available for release to the public in accordance with G.S. 132-6 as soon as the circumstances that justify withholding it cease to exist. Any person denied access to information withheld under this subsection may apply to a court of competent jurisdiction for an order compelling disclosure of the information. In such action, the court shall balance the interests of the public in disclosure against the interests of the law enforcement agency and the alleged victim in withholding the information. Actions brought pursuant to this subsection shall be set down for immediate hearing, and subsequent proceedings in such actions shall be accorded priority by the trial and appellate courts.

(e) If a public law enforcement agency believes that release of information that is a public record under subdivisions (c)(1) through (c)(5) of this section will jeopardize the right of the State to prosecute a defendant or the right of a defendant to receive a fair trial or will undermine an ongoing or future investigation, it may seek an order from a court of competent jurisdiction to prevent disclosure of the information. In such action the law enforcement agency shall have the burden of showing by a preponderance of the evidence that disclosure of the information in question will jeopardize the right of the State to prosecute a defendant or the right of a defendant to receive a fair trial or will

undermine an ongoing or future investigation. Actions brought pursuant to this subsection shall be set down for immediate hearing, and subsequent proceedings in such actions shall be accorded priority by the trial and appellate courts.

(f) Nothing in this section shall be construed as authorizing any public law enforcement agency to prohibit or prevent another public agency having custody of a public record from permitting the inspection, examination, or copying of such public record in compliance with G.S. 132-6. The use of a public record in connection with a criminal investigation or the gathering of criminal intelligence shall not affect its status as a public record.

(g) Disclosure of records of criminal investigations and criminal intelligence information that have been transmitted to a district attorney or other attorney authorized to prosecute a violation of law shall be governed by this section and Chapter 15A of the General Statutes.

(h) Nothing in this section shall be construed as requiring law enforcement agencies to disclose the following:

- (1) Information that would not be required to be disclosed under Chapter 15A of the General Statutes; or
- (2) Information that is reasonably likely to identify a confidential informant.

(i) Law enforcement agencies shall not be required to maintain any tape recordings of '911' or other communications for more than 30 days from the time of the call, unless a court of competent jurisdiction orders a portion sealed.

(j) When information that is not a public record under the provisions of this section is deleted from a document, tape recording, or other record, the law enforcement agency shall make clear that a deletion has been made. Nothing in this subsection shall authorize the destruction of the original record.

(k) The following court records are public records and may be withheld only when sealed by court order: arrest and search warrants that have been returned by law enforcement agencies, indictments, criminal summons, and nontestimonial identification orders.

(l) Records of investigations of alleged child abuse shall be governed by G.S. 7A-675."

Sec. 2. G.S. 114-15 and reads as rewritten:

~~"All records and evidence collected and compiled by the Director of the Bureau and his assistants shall not be considered public records within the meaning of G.S. 132-1, and following, of the General Statutes of North Carolina and may be made available to the public only upon an order of a court of competent jurisdiction. Provided that, all All~~ records and evidence collected and compiled by the Director of the Bureau and his assistants shall, upon request, be made available to the district attorney of any district if the same concerns persons or investigations in his district.

In all cases where the cost is assessed against the defendant and paid by him, there shall be assessed in the bill of cost, mileage and witness fees to the Director and any of his assistants who are witnesses in cases arising in courts of this State. The fees so assessed, charged and collected shall be forwarded by the clerks of the court to the

Treasurer of the State of North Carolina, and there credited to the Bureau of Identification and Investigation Fund."

Sec. 3. This act is effective October 1, 1993.

In the General Assembly read three times and ratified this the 23rd day of July, 1993.

Dennis A. Wicker
President of the Senate

Daniel Blue, Jr.
Speaker of the House of Representatives