

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA

SESSION 1989

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HOUSE BILL 2284\*

Short Title: Sentencing Commission Act.

(Public)

Sponsors: Representatives Barnes; Albertson, Anderson, Barnhill, Beall, Beard, Blue, Bowman, Burke, Chapin, Colton, J. Crawford, N. Crawford, Cunningham, Dawkins, Diamont, Easterling, B. Ethridge, Fitch, Fletcher, Foster, Fussell, Gibson, Gist, Greenwood, Hackney, Hall, Hardaway, Holt, Judy Hunt, H. Hunter, R. Hunter, Hurley, James, Jeralds, Kerr, Lilley, Lineberry, Lutz, Mercer, Michaux, Mills, Nesbitt, Payne, Perdue, Ramsey, Redwine, Stamey, Tart, S. Thompson, Warner, and Wicker.

Referred to: Judiciary.

June 4, 1990

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT TO CREATE A SENTENCING AND POLICY ADVISORY COMMISSION AND TO ESTABLISH A UNIFORM STANDARD FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE POLICY.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

Section 1. Chapter 164 of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new Article to read:

**“ARTICLE 4.**

**“SENTENCING COMMISSION.**

**“§ 164-35. Commission established.**

The North Carolina Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission is established. As used in this Article, the term "Commission" means the North Carolina Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission.

**“§ 164-36. Powers and duties.**

Sentences established for violations of the State's criminal laws should be based on the established purposes of our criminal justice and corrections systems. The Commission shall evaluate sentencing laws and policies in relationship to both the stated purposes of the criminal justice and corrections systems and the availability of sentencing options. The Commission shall make recommendations to the General

1 Assembly for the modification of sentencing laws and policies, and for the addition,  
2 deletion, or expansion of sentencing options as necessary to achieve policy goals.

3 **"§ 164-37. Membership; chairman; meetings; quorum.**

4 The Commission shall consist of 20 members as follows:

- 5 (1) The Chief Justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court shall  
6 appoint a sitting or former Justice or judge of the General Court of  
7 Justice, who shall serve as Chairman of the Commission;
- 8 (2) The Chief Judge of the North Carolina Court of Appeals, or  
9 another judge on the Court of Appeals, serving as his designee;
- 10 (3) The Secretary of Correction or his designee;
- 11 (4) The Chairman of the Parole Commission, or another parole  
12 commissioner serving as his designee;
- 13 (5) The President of the Conference of Superior Court Judges or  
14 his designee;
- 15 (6) The President of the District Court Judges Association or his designee;
- 16 (7) The President of the North Carolina Sheriff's Association or  
17 his designee;
- 18 (8) The President of the North Carolina Association of Chiefs of Police or  
19 his designee;
- 20 (9) One member of the public at large, who is not currently licensed to  
21 practice law in North Carolina, to be appointed by the Governor;
- 22 (10) One member of the House of Representatives, to be appointed by the  
23 Speaker of the House;
- 24 (11) One member of the Senate, to be appointed by the President Pro  
25 Tempore of the Senate;
- 26 (12) The President of the North Carolina Sentencing Alternatives  
27 Association or his designee;
- 28 (13) One representative of the business community, to be appointed by the  
29 North Carolina Retail Merchant's Association;
- 30 (14) A criminal defense attorney, who shall be the President of the North  
31 Carolina Trial Lawyers Association or his designee;
- 32 (15) The President of the Conference of District Attorneys or his  
33 designee;
- 34 (16) President of the North Carolina Victim Assistance Network or his  
35 designee;
- 36 (17) A rehabilitated former prison inmate, to be appointed by the Chairman  
37 of the Commission;
- 38 (18) The President of the North Carolina Association of County  
39 Commissioners or his designee;
- 40 (19) A representative of the academic community, with background in  
41 criminal justice or corrections policy, to be appointed by the President  
42 of The University of North Carolina;
- 43 (20) A member of the Attorney General's staff, to be appointed by the  
44 Attorney General.

1       The Commission shall have its initial meeting no later than September 1, 1990, at  
2 the call of the Chairman. The Commission shall meet a minimum of four regular  
3 meetings each year. The Commission may also hold special meetings at the call of the  
4 Chairman, or by any four members of the Commission, upon such notice and in such  
5 manner as may be fixed by the rules of the Commission. A majority of the members of  
6 the Commission shall constitute a quorum.

7 **"§ 164-38. Terms of members; compensation; expenses.**

8       The Commission members shall serve for a period of two years, unless they  
9 resign or are removed. Vacancies occurring before the expiration of a term shall be  
10 filled in the manner provided for the members first appointed. A member of the  
11 Commission may be removed only for disability, neglect of duty, incompetence, or  
12 malfeasance in office. Before removal, the member is entitled to a hearing.

13       The Commission members shall receive no salary for serving. All Commission  
14 members shall receive necessary subsistence and travel expenses in accordance with the  
15 provisions of G.S. 120-3.1, 138-5, and 138-6 as applicable.

16 **"§ 164-39. Executive director and other staff.**

17       The Commission shall employ an Executive Director from candidates presented  
18 to it by the Chairman and the Director of the Administrative Office of the Courts. The  
19 Executive Director shall have appropriate training and experience to assist the  
20 Commission in the performance of its duties. The Executive Director shall be  
21 responsible for compiling the work of the Commission and drafting suggested  
22 legislation incorporating the Commission's findings for submission to the General  
23 Assembly.

24       Subject to the approval of the Chairman, the Executive Director shall employ  
25 such other staff and shall contract for services as is necessary to assist the Commission  
26 in the performance of its duties, and as funds permit.

27       The Commission may, with the approval of the Legislative Services  
28 Commission, meet in the State Legislative Building or the Legislative Office Building,  
29 or may meet in an area provided by the Director of the Administrative Office of the  
30 Courts. Commission staff shall use office space provided by the Director of the  
31 Administrative Office of the Courts.

32 **"§ 164-40. Correction population simulation model.**

33       The Commission shall develop a correctional population simulation model, and  
34 shall have first priority to apply the model to a given fact situation, or theoretical change  
35 in the sentencing laws, when requested to do so by the Chairman, the Executive  
36 Director, or the Commission as a whole.

37       The Executive Director or the Chairman shall make the model available to  
38 respond to inquiries by any State legislator, or by the Secretary of the Department of  
39 Correction, in second priority to the work of the Commission.

40 **"§ 164-41. Classification of offenses - Ranges of punishment.**

41       (a) The Commission shall classify criminal offenses into felony and  
42 misdemeanor categories on the basis of their severity.

43       (b) In determining the proper category for each felony and misdemeanor, the  
44 Commission shall consider, to the extent that they have relevance, the following:

- 1           (1)    The nature and degree of harm likely to be caused by the offense,  
2                   including whether it involves property, irreplaceable property, a  
3                   person, number of persons, or a breach of the public trust;
- 4           (2)    The deterrent effect a particular classification may have on the  
5                   commission of the offense by others;
- 6           (3)    The current incidence of the offense in the State as a whole;
- 7           (4)    The rights of the victim.

8           (c) For each classification of felonies and misdemeanors formulated pursuant to  
9 subsection (b), the Commission shall assign a suggested range of punishment. The  
10 Commission shall take into consideration the current range of punishment for each  
11 offense.

12 **"§ 164-42. Sentencing Structures.**

13           (a) The Commission shall recommend structures for use by a sentencing court in  
14 determining the most appropriate sentence to be imposed in a criminal case, including:

- 15           (1)    Imposition of an active term of imprisonment;
- 16           (2)    Imposition of a term of probation;
- 17           (3)    Suspension of a sentence to imprisonment and imposition of probation  
18                   with conditions, including the appropriate probation option or options,  
19                   including house arrest, regular probation, intensive probation,  
20                   restitution, and community service;
- 21           (4)    Based upon the combination of offense and defendant characteristics  
22                   in each case, the presumptively appropriate length of a term of  
23                   probation, or a term of imprisonment;
- 24           (5)    Ordering multiple sentences to terms of imprisonment to run  
25                   concurrently or consecutively;
- 26           (6)    For a sentence to probation without a suspended sentence to  
27                   imprisonment, the maximum term of confinement to be imposed if the  
28                   defendant violates the conditions of probation.

29           (b) The sentencing structures shall be consistent with the goals, policies, and  
30 purposes of the criminal justice and corrections systems, as set forth in Sections 2 and 3  
31 of the Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission Act of 1990. As part of its work,  
32 the Commission shall offer recommendations for the incorporation of those sections  
33 into the sentencing laws of North Carolina. In formulating structures, the Commission  
34 also shall consider:

- 35           (1)    The nature and characteristics of the offense;
- 36           (2)    The severity of the offense in relation to other offenses;
- 37           (3)    The characteristics of the defendant that mitigate or aggravate the  
38                   seriousness of his criminal conduct and the punishment deserved  
39                   therefor;
- 40           (4)    The defendant's number of prior convictions;
- 41           (5)    The available resources and constitutional capacity of the Department  
42                   of Correction, local confinement facilities, and community-based  
43                   sanctions;
- 44           (6)    The rights of the victims;

1           (7) That felony offenders sentenced to an active term of imprisonment, or  
2 whose suspended sentence to imprisonment is activated, should serve a  
3 designated minimum percentage of their sentences before they are  
4 eligible for parole;

5           (8) That misdemeanor offenders sentenced to an active term of  
6 imprisonment, or whose suspended sentence to imprisonment is  
7 activated, should serve a designated minimum percentage of their  
8 sentence before they are eligible for parole.

9           (c) The Commission shall also consider the policy issues set forth in G.S. 164-  
10 42.1 in developing its sentencing structures.

11           (d) The Commission shall include with each set of sentencing structures a  
12 statement of its estimate of the effect of the sentencing structures on the Department of  
13 Correction and local facilities, both in terms of fiscal impact and on inmate population.

14 **"§ 164-42.1. Policy recommendations.**

15           Using the studies of the Special Committee on Prisons, the Governor's Crime  
16 Commission, and other analyses, the Commission shall:

17           (1) Determine the long-range needs of the criminal justice and corrections  
18 systems and recommend policy priorities for those systems;

19           (2) Determine the long-range information needs of the criminal justice and  
20 corrections systems and acquire that information as it becomes  
21 available;

22           (3) Identify critical problems in the criminal justice and corrections  
23 systems and recommend strategies to solve those problems;

24           (4) Assess the cost-effectiveness of the use of State and local funds in the  
25 criminal justice and corrections systems;

26           (5) Recommend the goals, priorities, and standards for the allocation of  
27 criminal justice and corrections funds;

28           (6) Recommend means to improve the deterrent and rehabilitative  
29 capabilities of the criminal justice and corrections systems;

30           (7) Propose plans, programs, and legislation for improving the  
31 effectiveness of the criminal justice and corrections systems;

32           (8) Determine the sentencing structures for parole decisions;

33           (9) Examine the impact of mandatory sentence lengths as opposed to the  
34 deterrent effect of minimum mandatory terms of imprisonment;

35           (10) Examine good time and gain time practices;

36           (11) Study the value of presentence reports;

37           (12) Consider the rehabilitative potential of the offender and the appropriate  
38 rehabilitative placement;

39           (13) Examine the impact of imprisonment on families of offenders; and

40           (14) Examine the impact of imprisonment on the ability of the offender to  
41 make restitution.

42 **"§ 164-42.2. Community corrections.**

43           The Commission shall recommend a comprehensive community corrections strategy  
44 and organizational structure for the State based upon the following:

- 1 (a) A review of existing community-based corrections programs in the State;  
2 (b) The identification of additional types of community corrections programs,  
3 including residential programs, necessary to create an effective continuum of  
4 corrections sanctions in North Carolina;  
5 (c) The identification of categories of offenders who would be eligible for  
6 sentencing to community corrections programs and the impact that the use of a  
7 comprehensive range of community-based sanctions would have on sentencing  
8 practices;  
9 (d) A form of State oversight and coordination to ensure that community  
10 corrections programs are coordinated in order to achieve maximum impact; and  
11 (e) A mechanism for State funding and local community participation in the  
12 operation and implementation of community corrections programs.

13 **"§ 164-43. Priority of duties; reports; continuing duties.**

14 (a) The Commission shall have two primary duties, and other secondary duties  
15 essential to accomplishing the primary ones. The Commission may establish  
16 subcommittees or advisory committees composed of Commission members to  
17 accomplish duties imposed by this Article.

18 It is the legislative intent that the Commission attach priority to accomplish the  
19 following primary duties:

- 20 (1) The classification of criminal offenses as described in § 164-41 and the  
21 formulation of sentencing structures as described in § 164-42; and  
22 (2) The formulation of proposals and recommendations as described in  
23 G.S. 164-42.1 and G.S. 164-42.2.

24 (b) The Commission shall report its findings and recommendations to the 1991  
25 General Assembly, 1991 Regular Session. The report shall describe the status of the  
26 Commission's work, and shall include any completed policy recommendations.

27 (c) The recommendations for the classification and ranges of punishment for  
28 felonies and misdemeanors, required by G.S. 164-41, and sentencing structures,  
29 established pursuant to G.S. 164-42, shall be submitted prior to the 1991 General  
30 Assembly, 1992 Regular Session.

31 (d) Once the primary duties of the Commission have been accomplished, it shall  
32 have the continuing duty to monitor and review the criminal justice and corrections  
33 systems in this State to insure that sentencing remains uniform and consistent, and that  
34 the goals and policies established by the State are being implemented by sentencing  
35 practices, and it shall recommend methods by which this ongoing work may be  
36 accomplished and by which the correctional population simulation model developed  
37 pursuant to G.S. 164-40 shall continue to be used by the State.

38 (e) Upon adoption of a system for the classification of offenses formulated  
39 pursuant to G.S. 164-41, the Commission or its successor shall review all proposed  
40 legislation which creates a new criminal offense, changes the classification of an  
41 offense, or changes the range of punishment for a particular classification, and shall  
42 make recommendations to the General Assembly.

43 (f) In the case of a new criminal offense, the Commission or its successor shall  
44 determine whether the proposal places the offense in the correct classification, based

1 upon the considerations and principles set out in G.S. 164-41. If the proposal does not  
2 assign the offense to a classification, it shall be the duty of the Commission or its  
3 successor to recommend the proper classification placement.

4 (g) In the case of proposed changes in the classification of an offense, or changes  
5 in the range of punishment for a classification, the Commission or its successor shall  
6 determine whether such a proposed change is consistent with the considerations and  
7 principles set out in G.S. 164-41, and shall report its findings to the General Assembly.

8 (h) The Commission or its successor shall meet within 10 days after the last day  
9 for filing general bills in the General Assembly for the purpose of reviewing bills as  
10 described in subsections (e), (f), and (g). The Commission or its successor shall include  
11 in its report on a bill an analysis based on an application of the correctional population  
12 simulation model to the provisions of the bill.

13 **"§ 164-44. Statistical information; financial or other aid.**

14 (a) The Commission shall have the secondary duty of collecting, developing, and  
15 maintaining statistical data relating to sentencing and corrections so that the primary  
16 duties of the Commission will be formulated using data that is valid, accurate, and  
17 relevant to this State. All State agencies shall provide data as it is requested by the  
18 Commission.

19 (b) The Commission shall have the authority to apply for, accept, and use any  
20 gifts, grants, or financial or other aid, in any form, from the federal government or any  
21 agency or instrumentality thereof, or from the State or from any other source including  
22 private associations, foundations, or corporations to accomplish any of the duties set out  
23 in this Chapter.

24 **"§ 164-45. Administrative direction and supervision.**

25 The Commission shall be administered under the direction and supervision of the  
26 Director of the Administrative Office of the Courts. The Commission shall exercise all  
27 of its prescribed statutory powers independently of the head of that Office, except that  
28 all management functions shall be performed under the direction and supervision of the  
29 Director of the Administrative Office of the Courts. 'Management functions,' as used in  
30 this section, means planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, and  
31 budgeting."

32 Sec. 2. It is the constitutional responsibility of the North Carolina judicial  
33 system to discover the truth, to the best of its ability, in every case before it and to  
34 establish whether the accused is guilty or not guilty. In those cases where the defendant  
35 is found guilty, the court shall dispense justice for the public, the victim, and the  
36 defendant through the judgment imposed.

37 Sec. 3. The following purposes and policies are hereby established:

- 38 (1) Protection of the public. Incarceration should be viewed by the court  
39 both as punishment and as a means of protecting the public.  
40 Limitations on the freedom of the offender and the appropriate level of  
41 custody should be dictated in the first instance by the nature of the  
42 offense, the violent character of the offender, the proclivity of the  
43 offender to engage in criminal conduct as demonstrated by his criminal  
44 record, and the sound judgment of the sentencing court after taking

- 1 into account all of the relevant aggravating and mitigating factors  
2 involved in the offenders' record of criminal conduct.
- 3 (2) Punishment of the offender. After the interests of public protection  
4 have been addressed, consideration should be given to restriction of  
5 the liberty of the offender in such manner and to such extent as is  
6 necessary to demonstrate clearly that the offender's conduct is  
7 unacceptable to society and to discourage a repetition of such conduct.  
8 In determining the appropriate punishment the court should consider a  
9 range of sanctions at the State or community level which may include  
10 incarceration, various degrees of restrictions on the offender's liberty  
11 including house arrest, various degrees of supervision, community  
12 penalties, community service, restitution/reparation, or fines.
- 13 (3) Rehabilitation of the offender. Every sentencing plan should consider  
14 treatment/rehabilitative needs of the offender to the extent that it  
15 addresses the cause of the criminal behavior and, therefore, might  
16 assist in correcting such behavior. The offender should be enrolled in  
17 a program of rehabilitation over a definite minimal period of time.  
18 The program of rehabilitation should involve work and recreation and  
19 may involve education, psychological or psychiatric counseling,  
20 treatment for alcohol or drug abuse and sexual aggression either within  
21 or without the prison walls as the individual case may indicate. The  
22 court may recommend remedies for alcoholism, substance abuse,  
23 mental illness, education and employment deficiencies, and may order  
24 community-based offenders to pay for such treatment to the extent the  
25 offender is able. Public institutions should respond to the court order  
26 at no cost to the indigent offender. Where treatment is not available  
27 from public institutions, the state should purchase appropriate  
28 treatment from the private sector.
- 29 (4) Restitution/Reparation. When appropriate, the sentencing plan should  
30 provide for restitution or reparation to the victim or victims, whether  
31 they be individual citizens, corporations, or society as a whole, to be  
32 paid as soon as practicable. Such restitution or reparation should  
33 include repayment for any property stolen or damaged, medical costs  
34 and lost wages of the victims, court costs and reasonable costs to cover  
35 pretrial detention, and/or restitution to the community through  
36 community service. In those cases where the offender can be punished  
37 and rehabilitated outside of prison without jeopardizing the security of  
38 the society at large in their persons or property, it is appropriate and  
39 encouraged that the offender pay his debt to society through a range of  
40 punishments which are alternative to incarceration. The court should  
41 order such supervision or restrictions as deemed necessary for the  
42 offender to comply with the restitution orders. Failure to comply  
43 should result in stricter measures.



1 (5) Work policy for offenders. It is the policy of this state that  
2 offenders should work when reasonably possible, either at jobs in the  
3 private sector to pay restitution and support their dependants, or at  
4 community service jobs that benefit the public, or at useful work  
5 while in prison or jail, or at educational or treatment endeavors as a  
6 part of a rehabilitation program. Offenders should be offered the  
7 opportunity to reduce the duration of their sentences by earning  
8 "time" credit for work endeavors in achieving vocational or  
9 educational skill levels. Prisoners who are able and do not work or  
10 who refuse to participate in treatment programs should be prohibited  
11 from enjoying privileges which may be provided to inmates beyond  
12 those required by law.

13 (6) Responsibility of Department of Correction. It is the goal of the North  
14 Carolina Department of Correction to provide adequate prison space to  
15 insure that those sentenced to prison will remain incarcerated until  
16 such time as they can be safely released, or until their active sentences  
17 are completed, and to provide community based supervision for those  
18 offenders selected for supervised probation and parole by the Courts  
19 and the Parole Commission.

20 It is the mission of the Department's Division of Prisons to provide  
21 housing, clothing, food, and medical care to its inmates, to maintain a  
22 safe and secure prison system, to keep accurate records, to offer job  
23 training, education, counseling, work and treatment programs deemed  
24 appropriate to monitor and advance the rehabilitative progress of its  
25 inmates, to provide a fair and orderly progression through custody  
26 levels, and to make data and recommendations regarding parole  
27 available to the Parole Commission. As an inmate demonstrates that  
28 he/she is no longer a threat to society, that the punishment has been  
29 effective and that a program of rehabilitation is showing progress, the  
30 inmate's level of custody may be commensurately reduced in an  
31 orderly progression through custody levels to parole and release from  
32 supervision.

33 It is the mission of the Department's Division of Adult Probation  
34 and Parole to receive convicted offenders selected by the Courts and  
35 the Parole Commission and to protect society through a coordinated  
36 program of community supervision which provides realistic  
37 opportunities for probationers and parolees to develop skills necessary  
38 to adjust to free society. As a probationer/parolee demonstrates that  
39 the supervision has been effective and that a community treatment  
40 program is showing progress, the level of supervision may be  
41 commensurately reduced in an orderly progression to prepare for  
42 release from supervision.

43 Sec. 4. The North Carolina Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, in  
44 performing its duties pursuant to Chapter 164, Article 4 of the General Statutes, shall

1 make recommendations consistent with the purposes and policies stated in Sections 2  
2 and 3 of this act. Sections 2 and 3 of this act are only for the purpose of providing  
3 policy guidance for the development of comprehensive criminal justice and corrections  
4 systems.

5           Sec. 5. The Substance Abuse Treatment in Prisons Study, established by  
6 Section 19.1 of Chapter 802 of the 1989 Session Laws, is transferred from the Special  
7 Committee on Prisons to the Mental Health Study Commission. The unexpended funds  
8 appropriated to the General Assembly for the 1989-90 fiscal year for the Substance  
9 Abuse Treatment in Prisons Study are transferred to the Department of Human  
10 Resources (Budget Code 14460 subhead 1110) to conduct the study. Of funds  
11 appropriated to the General Assembly for the 1989-90 fiscal year, there is transferred  
12 the sum of \$10,000 to the Department of Human Resources (Budget Code 14460  
13 subhead 1110) for the Mental Health Study Commission to conduct the Substance  
14 Abuse Treatment in Prisons Study for the 1990-91 fiscal year.

15           Any pending responsibilities of the Special Committee on Prisons, which  
16 terminates upon submission of its final report to the 1989 General Assembly, 1990  
17 Regular Session, shall be transferred to the Sentencing and Policy Advisory  
18 Commission upon the ratification of this act.

19           Sec. 6. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no State agencies,  
20 committees, or commissions, including the Governor's Crime Commission, may  
21 duplicate the statutorily-prescribed responsibilities of the Sentencing and Policy  
22 Advisory Commission.

23           Sec. 7. There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Administrative  
24 Office of the Courts the sum of \$550,000 for the 1990-91 fiscal year to implement the  
25 provisions of this act.

26           Sec. 8. This act shall be known as the "Sentencing and Policy Advisory  
27 Commission Act of 1990."

28           Sec. 9. This act is effective upon ratification, and shall expire July 1, 1992.