

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA**  
**SESSION 2015**

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**SENATE BILL 394**

Short Title: Preemption Affirmation Act. (Public)

Sponsors: Senator Tarte (Primary Sponsor).

Referred to: Rules and Operations of the Senate.

March 25, 2015

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT TO ENSURE STATEWIDE UNIFORMITY OF FIREARMS LAWS.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

**SECTION 1.** G.S. 14-409.40 reads as rewritten:

**"§ 14-409.40. Statewide uniformity of local regulation.**

(a) It is declared by the General Assembly that the regulation of firearms is properly an issue of general, statewide concern, and that the entire field of regulation of firearms is preempted from regulation by local governments except as provided by this section.

(a1) The General Assembly further declares that the lawful design, marketing, manufacture, distribution, sale, or transfer of firearms or ammunition to the public is not an unreasonably dangerous activity and does not constitute a nuisance per se and furthermore, that it is the unlawful use of firearms and ammunition, rather than their lawful design, marketing, manufacture, distribution, sale, or transfer that is the proximate cause of injuries arising from their unlawful use. This subsection applies only to causes of action brought under subsection (g) of this section.

(a2) It is further the intent of this section to deter and prevent the violation of this section and the violation of rights protected under the Constitution and laws of this State related to firearms, ammunition, or components thereof, by the abuse of official authority that occurs when enactments are passed in violation of State law or under color of local or State authority.

(b) Unless otherwise permitted by statute, no county or municipality, by ordinance, resolution, or other enactment, shall regulate in any manner the possession, ownership, storage, transfer, sale, purchase, licensing, taxation, manufacture, transportation, or registration of firearms, firearms ammunition, components of firearms, dealers in firearms, or dealers in handgun components or parts.

(c) Notwithstanding subsection (b) of this section, a county or municipality, by zoning or other ordinance, may regulate or prohibit the sale of firearms at a location only if there is a lawful, general, similar regulation or prohibition of commercial activities at that location. Nothing in this subsection shall restrict the right of a county or municipality to adopt a general zoning plan that prohibits any commercial activity within a fixed distance of a school or other educational institution except with a special use permit issued for a commercial activity found not to pose a danger to the health, safety, or general welfare of persons attending the school or educational institution within the fixed distance.

(d) No county or municipality, by zoning or other ordinance, shall regulate in any manner firearms shows with regulations more stringent than those applying to shows of other types of items.



1 (e) A county or municipality may regulate the transport, carrying, or possession of  
2 firearms by employees of the local unit of government in the course of their employment with  
3 that local unit of government.

4 (f) Nothing contained in this section prohibits municipalities or counties from  
5 application of their authority under G.S. 153A-129, 160A-189, 14-269, 14-269.2, 14-269.3,  
6 14-269.4, 14-277.2, 14-415.11, 14-415.23, including prohibiting the possession of firearms in  
7 public-owned buildings, on the grounds or parking areas of those buildings, or in public parks  
8 or recreation areas, except nothing in this subsection shall prohibit a person from storing a  
9 firearm within a motor vehicle while the vehicle is on these grounds or areas. Nothing  
10 contained in this section prohibits municipalities or counties from exercising powers provided  
11 by law in states of emergency declared under Article 1A of Chapter 166A of the General  
12 Statutes.

13 (g) The authority to bring suit and the right to recover against any firearms or  
14 ammunition marketer, manufacturer, distributor, dealer, seller, or trade association by or on  
15 behalf of any governmental unit, created by or pursuant to an act of the General Assembly or  
16 the Constitution, or any department, agency, or authority thereof, for damages, abatement,  
17 injunctive relief, or any other remedy resulting from or relating to the lawful design, marketing,  
18 manufacture, distribution, sale, or transfer of firearms or ammunition to the public is reserved  
19 exclusively to the State. Any action brought by the State pursuant to this section shall be  
20 brought by the Attorney General on behalf of the State. This section shall not prohibit a  
21 political subdivision or local governmental unit from bringing an action against a firearms or  
22 ammunition marketer, manufacturer, distributor, dealer, seller, or trade association for breach  
23 of contract or warranty for defect of materials or workmanship as to firearms or ammunition  
24 purchased by the political subdivision or local governmental unit.

25 (h) A county or municipality that violates the General Assembly's exclusive authority to  
26 regulate firearms and ammunition as declared in subsection (a) of this section, by enacting or  
27 causing to be enforced any ordinance, rule, or regulation impinging upon the State's exclusive  
28 authority shall be liable as provided by this subsection.

29 (1) If a county or municipality violates this section, the court shall declare the  
30 improper ordinance, rule, or regulation invalid and shall issue a permanent  
31 injunction against the local government prohibiting it from enforcing the  
32 ordinance, rule, or regulation. It is no defense that in enacting the ordinance,  
33 rule, or regulation, the local government was acting in good faith or upon  
34 advice of counsel.

35 (2) If the court determines that a violation was knowing and willful, the court  
36 shall assess a civil fine of up to five thousand dollars (\$5,000) against the  
37 elected or appointed local government official or head of any other  
38 governmental entity under whose jurisdiction the violation occurred.

39 (3) Except as required by applicable law, public funds shall not be used to  
40 defend or reimburse the unlawful conduct of any person found to have  
41 knowingly and willfully violated this section.

42 (4) A knowing and willful violation of this section by a person acting in an  
43 official capacity for any county or municipality enacting or causing to be  
44 enforced an ordinance, rule, or regulation prohibited under subsection (a) of  
45 this section or otherwise under color of law shall be cause for termination of  
46 employment or contract or for removal from office by the Governor.

47 (5) A person or an organization whose membership is adversely affected by any  
48 ordinance, rule, or regulation promulgated or caused to be enforced in  
49 violation of this section may file suit against any county or municipality in  
50 any court of this State having jurisdiction over any defendant to the suit for  
51 declaratory and injunctive relief and for actual damages, as limited herein,

1                    caused by the violation. A court shall award the prevailing plaintiff in any  
2                    such suit all of the following:  
3                    a.        Reasonable attorneys' fees and costs in accordance with the laws of  
4                    this State, including a contingency fee multiplier as authorized by  
5                    law.  
6                    b.        The actual damages incurred, but not more than one hundred  
7                    thousand dollars (\$100,000).  
8                    c.        Punitive damages in the amount of not less than five thousand dollars  
9                    (\$5,000) and not more than one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000)  
10                   per violation.  
11                   d.        Interest on the sums awarded pursuant to this subsection shall accrue  
12                   at the legal rate from the date on which the suit was filed."

13                   **SECTION 2.** This act becomes effective December 1, 2015, and applies to  
14                   violations occurring on or after that date.