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SESSION 1993

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SENATE BILL 860  
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Short Title: Criminal Investigative Records.

(Public)

Sponsors:

Referred to:

April 14, 1993

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
2 AN ACT TO CLARIFY THE PUBLIC RECORDS LAW WITH RESPECT TO  
3 CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIVE RECORDS.

4 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

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

7 **"§ 132-1.4. Criminal investigations; intelligence information records.**

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

14 (b) As used in this section:

15 (1) 'Records of criminal investigations' means all records or any  
16 information that pertains to a person or group of persons that is  
17 compiled by public law enforcement agencies for the purpose of  
18 attempting to prevent or solve violations of the law, including  
19 information derived from witnesses, laboratory tests, surveillance,  
20 investigators, confidential informants, photographs, and  
21 measurements.

- 1           (2) 'Records of criminal intelligence information' means records or  
2 information that pertain to a person or group of persons that is  
3 compiled by a public law enforcement agency in an effort to  
4 anticipate, prevent, or monitor possible violations of the law.
- 5           (3) 'Public law enforcement agency' means a municipal police department,  
6 a county police department, a sheriff's department, a company police  
7 agency commissioned by the Attorney General pursuant to G.S. 74E-1,  
8 et seq., and any State or local agency, force, department, or unit  
9 responsible for investigating, preventing, or solving violations of the  
10 law.
- 11           (4) 'Violations of the law' means crimes and offenses that are prosecutable  
12 in the criminal courts in this State or the United States and infractions  
13 as defined in G.S. 14-3.1.
- 14           (5) 'Complaining witness' means an alleged victim or other person who  
15 reports a violation or apparent violation of the law to a public law  
16 enforcement agency.

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

- 20           (1) The time, date, location, and nature of a violation or apparent violation  
21 of the law reported to a public law enforcement agency.
- 22           (2) The name, sex, age, address, employment, and alleged violation of law  
23 of a person arrested, charged, or indicted.
- 24           (3) The circumstances surrounding an arrest, including the time and place  
25 of the arrest, whether the arrest involved resistance, possession or use  
26 of weapons, or pursuit, and a description of any items seized in  
27 connection with the arrest.
- 28           (4) The contents of '911' and other emergency telephone calls received by  
29 or on behalf of public law enforcement agencies, except for such  
30 contents that reveal the name, address, telephone number, or other  
31 information that may identify the caller, victim, or witness.
- 32           (5) The contents of communications between or among employees of  
33 public law enforcement agencies that are broadcast over the public  
34 airways.
- 35           (6) The name, sex, age, and address of a complaining witness.

36       (d) A public law enforcement agency may temporarily withhold the name or  
37 address of a complaining witness if release of the information is reasonably likely to  
38 pose a threat to the mental health, physical health, or personal safety of the complaining  
39 witness or materially compromise a continuing or future criminal investigation or  
40 criminal intelligence operation. Information temporarily withheld under this subsection  
41 shall be made available for release to the public in accordance with G.S. 132-6 as soon  
42 as the circumstances that justify withholding it cease to exist. Any person denied access  
43 to information withheld under this subsection may apply to a court of competent  
44 jurisdiction for an order compelling disclosure of the information. In such action, the

1 court shall balance the interests of the public in disclosure against the interests of the  
2 law enforcement agency and the alleged victim in withholding the information. Actions  
3 brought pursuant to this subsection shall be set down for immediate hearing, and  
4 subsequent proceedings in such actions shall be accorded priority by the trial and  
5 appellate courts.

6 (e) If a public law enforcement agency believes that release of information that is  
7 a public record under subdivisions (c)(1) through (c)(5) of this section will jeopardize  
8 the right of the State to prosecute a defendant or the right of a defendant to receive a fair  
9 trial or will undermine an ongoing or future investigation, it may seek an order from a  
10 court of competent jurisdiction to prevent disclosure of the information. In such action  
11 the law enforcement agency shall have the burden of showing by a preponderance of the  
12 evidence that disclosure of the information in question will jeopardize the right of the  
13 State to prosecute a defendant or the right of a defendant to receive a fair trial or will  
14 undermine an ongoing or future investigation. Actions brought pursuant to this  
15 subsection shall be set down for immediate hearing, and subsequent proceedings in such  
16 actions shall be accorded priority by the trial and appellate courts.

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

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

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

29 (1) Information that would not be required to be disclosed under Chapter  
30 15A of the General Statutes; or

31 (2) Information that is reasonably likely to identify a confidential  
32 informant.

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

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

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

1 (l) Records of investigations of alleged child abuse shall be governed by G.S.  
2 7A-675."

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

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

11 In all cases where the cost is assessed against the defendant and paid by him, there  
12 shall be assessed in the bill of cost, mileage and witness fees to the Director and any of  
13 his assistants who are witnesses in cases arising in courts of this State. The fees so  
14 assessed, charged and collected shall be forwarded by the clerks of the court to the  
15 Treasurer of the State of North Carolina, and there credited to the Bureau of  
16 Identification and Investigation Fund."

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