

Article 53B
Firearm Regulation.

§ 14-409.39. Definitions.

The following definitions apply in this Article:

- (1) Dealer. – Any person licensed as a dealer pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 921, et seq., or G.S. 105-80.
- (2) Firearm. – A handgun, shotgun, or rifle which expels a projectile by action of an explosion.
- (3) Handgun. – A pistol, revolver, or other gun that has a short stock and is designed to be held and fired by the use of a single hand. (1995 (Reg. Sess., 1996), c. 727, s. 1.)

§ 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.

(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.

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

(f) Nothing contained in this section prohibits municipalities or counties from application of their authority under G.S. 153A-129, 160A-189, 14-269, 14-269.2, 14-269.3, 14-269.4, 14-277.2, 14-415.11, 14-415.23, including prohibiting the possession of firearms in public-owned buildings, on the grounds or parking areas of those buildings, or in public parks or recreation areas, except nothing in this subsection shall prohibit a person from storing a firearm within a motor

vehicle while the vehicle is on these grounds or areas. Nothing contained in this section prohibits municipalities or counties from exercising powers provided by law in states of emergency declared under Article 1A of Chapter 166A of the General Statutes.

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

(h) A person adversely affected by any ordinance, rule, or regulation promulgated or caused to be enforced by any county or municipality in violation of this section may bring an action for declaratory and injunctive relief and for actual damages arising from the violation. The court shall award the prevailing party in an action brought under this subsection reasonable attorneys' fees and court costs as authorized by law. (1995 (Reg. Sess., 1996), c. 727, s. 1; 2002-77, s. 1; 2012-12, s. 2(z); 2015-195, s. 12.)

§ 14-409.41. Chief law enforcement officer certification; certain firearms.

(a) Definitions. – The following definitions apply in this section:

- (1) Certification. – The participation and assent of the chief law enforcement officer necessary under federal law for the approval of the application to transfer or make a firearm.
- (2) Chief law enforcement officer. – Any official that the United States Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, or any successor agency, has identified by regulation or otherwise as eligible to provide any required certification for the transfer or making of a firearm.
- (3) Firearm. – Any firearm that meets the definition of firearm in 26 U.S.C. § 5845.

(b) When a chief law enforcement officer's certification is required by federal law or regulation for the transfer or making of a firearm, the chief law enforcement officer shall, within 15 days of receipt of a request for certification, provide the certification if the applicant is not prohibited by State or federal law from receiving or possessing the firearm and is not the subject of a proceeding that could result in the applicant being prohibited by State or federal law from receiving or possessing the firearm. If the chief law enforcement officer is unable to make a certification as required by this section, the chief law enforcement officer shall provide the applicant with a written notification of the denial and the reason for the denial.

Nothing in this section shall require a chief law enforcement officer to make a certification the chief law enforcement officer knows to be untrue, but the chief law enforcement officer may not refuse to provide certification based on a generalized objection to private persons or entities making, possessing, or receiving firearms or any certain type of firearm the possession of which is not prohibited by law.

(c) An applicant whose request for certification is denied may appeal the decision of the chief law enforcement officer to the district court of the district in which the request for certification was made. The court shall make a de novo review of the chief law enforcement officer's decision to deny the certification. If the court finds that the applicant is not prohibited by State or federal law from receiving or possessing the firearm, is not the subject of a proceeding that could result in the applicant being prohibited by State or federal law from receiving or possessing the firearm, and that no substantial evidence supports the chief law enforcement officer's determination that the chief law enforcement officer cannot truthfully make the certification, the court shall order the chief law enforcement officer to issue the certification and award court costs and reasonable attorneys' fees to the applicant.

(d) Chief law enforcement officers and their employees who act in good faith are immune from liability arising from any act or omission in making a certification as required by this section. (2015-195, s. 13.)

§ 14-409.42. Restoration process to remove mental commitment bar.

(a) Any individual over the age of 18 may petition for the removal of the disabilities pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 922(d)(4) and (g)(4), G.S. 14-415.3, and G.S. 14-415.12 arising out of a determination or finding required to be transmitted to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System by subdivisions (1) through (6) of subsection (a) of G.S. 14-409.43. The individual may file the petition with a district court judge upon the expiration of any current inpatient or outpatient commitment.

(b) The petition must be filed in the district court of the county where the respondent was the subject of the most recent judicial determination or finding or in the district court of the county of the petitioner's residence. The clerk of court upon receipt of the petition shall schedule a hearing using the regularly scheduled commitment court time and provide notice of the hearing to the petitioner and the attorney who represented the State in the underlying case, or that attorney's successor. Copies of the petition must be served on the director of the relevant inpatient or outpatient treatment facility and the district attorney in the petitioner's current county of residence.

(c) The burden is on the petitioner to establish by a preponderance of the evidence that the petitioner will not be likely to act in a manner dangerous to public safety and that the granting of the relief would not be contrary to the public interest. The district attorney shall present any and all relevant information to the contrary. For these purposes, the district attorney may access and use any and all mental health records, juvenile records, and criminal history of the petitioner wherever maintained. The applicant must sign a release for the district attorney to receive any mental health records of the applicant. This hearing shall be closed to the public, unless the court finds that the public interest would be better served by conducting the hearing in public. If the court determines the hearing should be open to the public, upon motion by the petitioner, the court may allow for the in camera inspection of any mental health records. The court may allow the use of the record but shall restrict it from public disclosure, unless it finds that the public interest would be better served by making the record public. The district court shall enter an order that the petitioner is or is not likely to act in a manner dangerous to public safety and that the granting of the relief would or would not be contrary to the public interest. The court shall include in its order the specific findings of fact on which it bases its decision. In making its determination, the court shall consider the circumstances regarding the firearm disabilities from which relief is sought, the petitioner's mental health and criminal history records, the petitioner's reputation, developed at a minimum through character witness statements, testimony, or other character evidence, and any changes in the

petitioner's condition or circumstances since the original determination or finding relevant to the relief sought. The decision of the district court may be appealed to the superior court for a hearing de novo. After a denial by the superior court, the applicant must wait a minimum of one year before reapplying. Attorneys designated by the Attorney General shall be available to represent the State, or assist in the representation of the State, in a restoration proceeding when requested to do so by a district attorney and approved by the Attorney General. An attorney so designated shall have all the powers of the district attorney under this section.

(d) Upon a judicial determination to grant a petition under this section, the clerk of superior court in the county where the petition was granted shall forward the order to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) for updating of the respondent's record. (2008-210, s. 2; 2013-369, s. 9; 2015-195, ss. 11(b), (m).)

§ 14-409.43. Reporting of certain disqualifiers to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS).

(a) Excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays, not later than 48 hours after receiving notice of any of the following judicial determinations or findings, the clerk of superior court in the county where the determination or finding was made shall work through the Administrative Office of the Courts to cause a record of the determination or finding to be transmitted to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS):

- (1) A determination that an individual shall be involuntarily committed to a facility for inpatient mental health treatment upon a finding that the individual is mentally ill and a danger to self or others.
- (2) A determination that an individual shall be involuntarily committed to a facility for outpatient mental health treatment upon a finding that the individual is mentally ill and, based on the individual's treatment history, in need of treatment in order to prevent further disability or deterioration that would predictably result in a danger to self or others.
- (3) A determination that an individual shall be involuntarily committed to a facility for substance abuse treatment upon a finding that the individual is a substance abuser and a danger to self or others.
- (4) A finding that an individual is not guilty by reason of insanity.
- (5) A finding that an individual is mentally incompetent to proceed to criminal trial.
- (6) A finding that an individual lacks the capacity to manage the individual's own affairs due to marked subnormal intelligence or mental illness, incompetency, condition, or disease.
- (7) A determination to grant a petition to an individual for the removal of disabilities pursuant to G.S. 14-409.42 or any applicable federal law.

The 48-hour period for transmitting a record of a judicial determination or finding to the NICS under subsection (a) of this section begins upon receipt by the clerk of a copy of the judicial determination or finding. The Administrative Office of the Courts shall adopt rules to require clerks of court to transmit information to the NICS in a uniform manner.

(b) Excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays, not later than 48 hours after receiving notice of the issuance of a felony warrant, indictment, criminal summons, or order for arrest, the Administrative Office of the Courts shall transmit any unserved felony warrants, indictments, criminal summons, or order for arrests to the NCIC (or National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS)).

(c) Excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays, not later than 48 hours after service by the sheriff of an order issued by a judge pursuant to Chapter 50B of the General Statutes and pursuant to G.S. 50B-3(d) the sheriff shall cause a record of the order to be transmitted to the National Instant Criminal Information System. (2015-195, s. 11(d).)

§ 14-409.44: Reserved for future codification purposes.