

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2011

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HOUSE BILL 27*
Committee Substitute Favorable 2/9/11

Short Title: Forensic Sciences Act.

(Public)

Sponsors:

Referred to:

February 2, 2011

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT TO (1) CREATE THE NORTH CAROLINA FORENSIC SCIENCE ADVISORY BOARD, (2) ENCOURAGE EFFORTS TO ELIMINATE SOURCES OF HUMAN ERROR IN FORENSIC EXAMINATIONS, (3) REQUIRE CERTIFICATION OF FORENSIC SCIENCE PROFESSIONALS, (4) RENAME THE STATE BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION LABORATORY AS THE NORTH CAROLINA STATE CRIME LABORATORY, (5) CREATE THE POSITION OF OMBUDSMAN TO ENSURE THAT THE BEST FORENSIC PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES ARE UTILIZED IN THE STATE CRIME LABORATORY, (6) CLARIFY STATUTES THAT ALLOW FOR THE ADMISSIBILITY OF FORENSIC ANALYSES INTO EVIDENCE, (7) CLARIFY THE STATE'S OBLIGATION TO DISCLOSE TO THE DEFENDANT ALL INFORMATION RELATING TO THE TESTING OR EXAMINATION OF EVIDENCE AND TO PENALIZE OMISSION OR MISREPRESENTATION RELATING TO DISCLOSURE, AND (8) CLARIFY THAT STATE CRIME LABORATORY PERSONNEL SERVE THE PUBLIC AND THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM, AS RECOMMENDED BY THE JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE PRESERVATION OF BIOLOGICAL EVIDENCE, AND TO PROVIDE THAT THE ACT SHALL BE ENTITLED "THE FORENSIC SCIENCES ACT OF 2011."

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1. This act shall be known as "The Forensic Sciences Act of 2011."

SECTION 2. Article 4 of Chapter 114 of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new section to read:

"§ 114-16.1. Forensic Science Advisory Board.

(a) Creation and Membership. – The North Carolina Forensic Science Advisory Board (Board) is hereby established as an advisory board within the Department of Justice. The Board shall consist of 16 members, consisting of the State Crime Laboratory Director, and 15 members appointed by the Attorney General as follows:

- (1) A forensic scientist or any other person with an advanced degree who has received substantial education, training, or experience in the subject of laboratory standards or quality assurance regulation and monitoring.
- (2) The Chief Medical Examiner of the State.
- (3) A forensic scientist with an advanced degree who has received substantial education, training, or experience in the discipline of molecular biology.
- (4) A forensic scientist with an advanced degree who has experience in the discipline of population genetics.
- (5) A scientist with an advanced degree who has experience in the discipline of forensic chemistry.



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- 1 (6) A scientist with an advanced degree who has experience in the discipline of
2 forensic biology.
- 3 (7) A forensic scientist or any other person with an advanced degree who has
4 received substantial education, training, or experience in the discipline of
5 trace evidence.
- 6 (8) A scientist with a doctoral degree who has experience in the discipline of
7 forensic toxicology and is certified by the American Board of Forensic
8 Toxicologists.
- 9 (9) A member of the International Association for Identification.
- 10 (10) A member of the Association of Firearms and Toolmark Examiners.
- 11 (11) A member of the International Association for Chemical Testing.
- 12 (12) A director of a private or federal forensic laboratory located in the State.
- 13 (13) A member of the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors.
- 14 (14) A member of the Academy of Forensic Sciences.
- 15 (15) A member of the American Statistical Association.

16 A chairman shall be elected from among the members appointed, and staff shall be
17 provided by the Department of Justice.

18 (b) Meetings. – The Board shall meet quarterly and at such other times and places as it
19 determines. Members of the Board cannot designate a proxy to vote in their absence.

20 (c) Terms. – Members of the Board initially appointed shall serve the following terms:
21 four members shall serve a term of one year; four members shall serve a term of two years; and
22 four members shall serve a term of four years. Thereafter, all appointments shall be for a term
23 of four years. A vacancy other than by expiration of term shall be filled by the Attorney
24 General for the unexpired term. Members of the Board cannot designate a proxy to vote in their
25 absence.

26 (d) Expenses. – Members of the Board shall be paid reasonable and necessary expenses
27 incurred in the performance of their duties. Members of the Board who are State officers or
28 employees shall receive no compensation for serving on the Board but may be reimbursed for
29 their expenses in accordance with G.S. 138-6. Members of the Board who are full-time salaried
30 public officers or employees other than State officers or employees shall receive no
31 compensation for serving on the Board but may be reimbursed for their expenses in accordance
32 with G.S. 138-5(b). All other members of the Board may receive compensation and
33 reimbursement for expenses in accordance with G.S. 138-5.

34 (e) Functions. – The Board may review State Crime Laboratory operations and make
35 recommendations concerning the services furnished to user agencies. The Board shall review
36 and make recommendations as necessary to the Laboratory Director concerning any of the
37 following:

- 38 (1) New scientific programs, protocols, and methods of testing.
- 39 (2) Plans for the implementation of new programs; sustaining existing programs
40 and improving upon them where possible; and the elimination of programs
41 which are no longer needed.
- 42 (3) Protocols for testing and examination methods and guidelines for the
43 presentation of results in court.
- 44 (4) Qualification standards for the various forensic scientists of the Laboratory.

45 (f) Review Process. – Upon request of the Laboratory Director, the Board shall review
46 analytical work, reports, and conclusions of scientists employed by the Laboratory. Records
47 reviewed by this Board retain their confidential status and continue to be considered records of
48 a criminal investigation as defined in G.S. 132-1.4. These records shall be reviewed only in a
49 closed session meeting pursuant to G.S. 143-318.11 of the Board, and each member of the
50 Board shall, prior to receiving any documents to review, sign a confidentiality agreement
51 agreeing to maintain the confidentiality of and not to disclose the documents nor the contents of

1 the documents reviewed. The Board shall recommend to the Laboratory a review process to use
2 when there is a request that the Laboratory retest or reexamine evidence that has been
3 previously examined by the Laboratory."

4 **SECTION 3.** The State Bureau of Investigation (SBI) shall encourage and seek
5 collaborative opportunities and grant funds for research programs, in association whenever
6 possible with the university system or independent nationally recognized forensic institutions,
7 on human observer bias and sources of human error in forensic examinations. Such programs
8 might include studies to determine the effects of contextual bias in forensic practice (e.g.,
9 studies to determine whether and to what extent the results of forensic analysis are influenced
10 by knowledge regarding the background of the suspect and the investigator's theory of the
11 case). In addition, research on sources of human error should be closely linked with research
12 conducted to quantify and characterize the amount of error. Based on the results of these
13 studies, and in consultation with the North Carolina Forensic Sciences Advisory Board, the
14 North Carolina State Crime Laboratory should develop standard operating procedures (that will
15 lay the foundation for model protocols) to minimize, to the extent possible, potential bias and
16 sources of human error in forensic science. These standard operating procedures should apply
17 to all forensic analyses that may be used in litigation.

18 **SECTION 4.** Individual certification of forensic science professionals at the State
19 Crime Laboratory shall be mandatory as soon as practicable, but no later than June 1, 2012,
20 unless not available consistent with international and ISO standards. All such forensic science
21 professionals shall have access to the certification process.

22 **SECTION 5.** The Revisor of Statutes shall replace the name of the State Bureau of
23 Investigation Laboratory, or any other name which is identified with the State Bureau of
24 Investigation Laboratory, with the name "North Carolina State Crime Laboratory" wherever
25 first used in a statute or session law and with "State Crime Laboratory" at each subsequent
26 location in the statute or session law.

27 **SECTION 6.** The position of ombudsman is created in the North Carolina State
28 Crime Laboratory within the North Carolina Department of Justice. The primary purpose of
29 this position shall be to work with defense counsel, prosecutorial agencies, criminal justice
30 system stakeholders, law enforcement officials, and the general public to ensure all processes,
31 procedures, practices, and protocols at the Laboratory are consistent with State and federal law,
32 best forensic law practices, and in the best interests of justice in this State. The ombudsman
33 shall mediate complaints brought to the attention of the ombudsman between the SBI and
34 defense counsel, prosecutorial agencies, law enforcement agencies, and the general public. The
35 ombudsman shall ensure all criminal justice stakeholders and the general public are aware of
36 the availability, responsibilities, and role of the ombudsman and shall regularly attend meetings
37 of the Conferences of the District Attorneys, District and Superior Court Judges, Public
38 Defenders, the Advocates for Justice, and Bar Criminal Law Sections. The ombudsman shall
39 make recommendations on a regular basis to the Director of the State Crime Laboratory,
40 Director of the SBI, and Attorney General of North Carolina as to policies, procedures,
41 practices, and training of employees needed at the Laboratory to ensure compliance with State
42 and federal law, best forensic law practices, and to resolve any meritorious systemic complaints
43 received by the ombudsman.

44 **SECTION 6A.** The funds for the position of ombudsman created in Section 6 of
45 this act shall be provided by the Department of Justice from other funds appropriated to the
46 Department, and from other grants or funding that are available from other sources.

47 **SECTION 7.** G.S. 8-58.20 reads as rewritten:

48 "**§ 8-58.20. Forensic analysis admissible as evidence.**

49 (a) In any criminal prosecution, a laboratory report of a written forensic analysis,
50 including an analysis of the defendant's DNA, or a forensic sample alleged to be the defendant's
51 DNA, as that term is defined in G.S. 15A-266.2(2), that states the results of the analysis and

1 that is signed and sworn to by the person performing the analysis may be admissible in
2 evidence without the testimony of the analyst who prepared the report in accordance with the
3 requirements of this section.

4 (b) A forensic analysis, to be admissible under this section, shall be performed ~~in~~
5 ~~accordance with rules or procedures adopted by the State Bureau of Investigation, or by another~~
6 ~~laboratory accredited by the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors/Laboratory~~
7 ~~Accreditation Board (ASCLD/LAB) by a laboratory that is accredited by an accrediting body~~
8 ~~that requires conformance to forensic specific requirements and which is a signatory to the~~
9 ~~International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC) Mutual Recognition Arrangement~~
10 ~~For Testing~~ for the submission, identification, analysis, and storage of forensic analyses. The
11 analyses of DNA samples and typing results of DNA samples shall be performed ~~in accordance~~
12 ~~with the rules or procedures of the State Bureau of Investigation or other~~
13 ~~ASCLD/LAB accredited laboratory. by a laboratory that is accredited by an accrediting body~~
14 ~~that requires conformance to forensic specific requirements and which is a signatory to the~~
15 ~~International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC) Mutual Recognition Arrangement~~
16 ~~For Testing.~~

17 (c) The analyst who analyzes the forensic sample and signs the report shall complete an
18 affidavit on a form developed by the State Bureau of Investigation. In the affidavit, the analyst
19 shall state (i) that the person is qualified by education, training, and experience to perform the
20 analysis, (ii) the name and location of the laboratory where the analysis was performed, and
21 (iii) that performing the analysis is part of that person's regular duties. The analyst shall also
22 aver in the affidavit that the tests were performed pursuant to the ~~ASCLD/LAB accrediting~~
23 ~~body's standards~~ for that discipline and that the evidence was handled in accordance with
24 established and accepted procedures while in the custody of the laboratory. The affidavit shall
25 be sufficient to constitute prima facie evidence regarding the person's qualifications. The
26 analyst shall attach the affidavit to the laboratory report and shall provide the affidavit to the
27 investigating officer and the district attorney in the prosecutorial district in which the criminal
28 charges are pending. An affidavit by a forensic analyst sworn to and properly executed before
29 an official authorized to administer oaths is admissible in evidence without further
30 authentication in any criminal proceeding with respect to the forensic analysis administered and
31 the procedures followed.

32"

33 **SECTION 8.** G.S. 20-139.1(c2) reads as rewritten:

34 "(c2) A chemical analysis of blood or urine, to be admissible under this section, shall be
35 performed ~~in accordance with rules or procedures adopted by the State Bureau of Investigation,~~
36 ~~or by another laboratory accredited by the American Society of Crime Laboratory~~
37 ~~Directors/Laboratory Accreditation Board (ASCLD/LAB) by a laboratory that is accredited by~~
38 ~~an accrediting body that requires conformance to forensic specific requirements and which is a~~
39 ~~signatory to the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC) Mutual~~
40 ~~Recognition Arrangement For Testing~~ for the submission, identification, analysis, and storage
41 of forensic analyses."

42 **SECTION 9.** G.S. 15A-903 reads as rewritten:

43 **"§ 15A-903. Disclosure of evidence by the State – Information subject to disclosure.**

44 (a) Upon motion of the defendant, the court must order the State to:

45 (1) Make available to the defendant the complete files of all law enforcement
46 and prosecutorial agencies involved in the investigation of the crimes
47 committed or the prosecution of the defendant.

48 a. The term "file" includes the defendant's statements, the codefendants'
49 statements, witness statements, investigating officers' notes, results of
50 tests and examinations, or any other matter or evidence obtained
51 during the investigation of the offenses alleged to have been

1 committed by the defendant. When any matter or evidence is
2 submitted for testing or examination, in addition to any test or
3 examination results, all other data, calculations, or writings of any
4 kind shall be made available to the defendant, including, but not
5 limited to, preliminary test or screening results and bench notes.

6 b. The term "prosecutorial agency" includes any public or private entity
7 that obtains information on behalf of a law enforcement agency or
8 prosecutor in connection with the investigation of the crimes
9 committed or the prosecution of the defendant.

10 c. Oral statements shall be in written or recorded form, except that oral
11 statements made by a witness to a prosecuting attorney outside the
12 presence of a law enforcement officer or investigatorial assistant
13 shall not be required to be in written or recorded form unless there is
14 significantly new or different information in the oral statement from
15 a prior statement made by the witness.

16 d. The defendant shall have the right to inspect and copy or photograph
17 any materials contained therein and, under appropriate safeguards, to
18 inspect, examine, and test any physical evidence or sample contained
19 therein.

20 (2) Give notice to the defendant of any expert witnesses that the State
21 reasonably expects to call as a witness at trial. Each such witness shall
22 prepare, and the State shall furnish to the defendant, a report of the results of
23 any examinations or tests conducted by the expert. The State shall also
24 furnish to the defendant the expert's curriculum vitae, the expert's opinion,
25 and the underlying basis for that opinion. The State shall give the notice and
26 furnish the materials required by this subsection within a reasonable time
27 prior to trial, as specified by the court.

28 (3) Give the defendant, at the beginning of jury selection, a written list of the
29 names of all other witnesses whom the State reasonably expects to call
30 during the trial. Names of witnesses shall not be subject to disclosure if the
31 State certifies in writing and under seal to the court that to do so may subject
32 the witnesses or others to physical or substantial economic harm or coercion,
33 or that there is other particularized, compelling need not to disclose. If there
34 are witnesses that the State did not reasonably expect to call at the time of
35 the provision of the witness list, and as a result are not listed, the court upon
36 a good faith showing shall allow the witnesses to be called. Additionally, in
37 the interest of justice, the court may in its discretion permit any undisclosed
38 witness to testify.

39 (b) If the State voluntarily provides disclosure under G.S. 15A-902(a), the disclosure
40 shall be to the same extent as required by subsection (a) of this section.

41 (c) Upon request by the State, a law enforcement or prosecutorial agency shall make
42 available to the State a complete copy of the complete files related to the investigation of the
43 crimes committed or the prosecution of the defendant for compliance with this section and any
44 disclosure under G.S. 15A-902(a). All public and private entities that obtain such information
45 shall ensure that all subsection (a)(1) material is fully disclosed to the referring prosecutorial
46 agency for disclosure to the defendant.

47 (d) A willful omission or misrepresentation by any person in connection with this
48 section constitutes an obstruction of justice and is punishable as provided by law."

49 **SECTION 10.** G.S. 114-16 reads as rewritten:

50 **"§ 114-16. Laboratory and clinical facilities; employment of criminologists; services of**
51 **scientists, etc., employed by State; radio system.**

1 In the said Bureau there shall be provided laboratory facilities for the analysis of evidences
2 of crime, including the determination of presence, quantity and character of poisons, the
3 character of bloodstains, microscopic and other examination material associated with the
4 commission of crime, examination and analysis of projectiles of ballistic imprints and records
5 which might lead to the determination or identification of criminals, the examination and
6 identification of fingerprints, and other evidence leading to the identification, apprehension, or
7 conviction of criminals. A sufficient number of persons skilled in such matters shall be
8 employed to render a reasonable service to the ~~prosecuting officers of the State public and the~~
9 criminal justice system in the discharge of their duties. In the personnel of the Bureau shall be
10 included a sufficient number of persons of training and skill in the investigation of crime and in
11 the preparation of evidence as to be of service to local enforcement officers, under the direction
12 of the Governor, in criminal matters of major importance.

13 The laboratory and clinical facilities of the institutions of the State, both educational and
14 departmental, shall be made available to the Bureau, and scientists and doctors now working
15 for the State through its institutions and departments may be called upon by the Governor to aid
16 the Bureau in the evaluation, preparation, and preservation of evidence in which scientific
17 methods are employed, and a reasonable fee may be allowed by the Governor for such service.

18 The State radio system shall be made available to the Bureau for use in its work."

19 **SECTION 11.** Sections 1 through 5 and 7 through 11 are effective when this act
20 becomes law, and Section 6 becomes effective July 1, 2011. Nothing in this act is intended to
21 amend or modify either the statutory or common law applicable to discovery in criminal cases
22 which was applicable prior to the effective date of this act. Prosecutions for offenses
23 committed before the effective date of this act are not abated or affected by this act, and the
24 statutes that would be applicable but for this act remain applicable to those prosecutions.