

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SESSION 2017

H

3

HOUSE BILL 138  
Second Edition Engrossed 3/23/17  
Senate Judiciary Committee Substitute Adopted 6/14/17

Short Title: Revise Gang Laws.

(Public)

Sponsors:

Referred to:

February 21, 2017

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
2 AN ACT TO STANDARDIZE CRITERIA FOR CLASSIFICATION OF CRIMINAL GANG  
3 MEMBERSHIP, CREATE A SENTENCING ENHANCEMENT FOR CERTAIN  
4 CRIMES PERPETRATED BY GANG MEMBERS, AND INCREASE THE PENALTIES  
5 FOR CERTAIN GANG-RELATED OFFENSES.

6 Whereas, the General Assembly finds that it is the right of every person to be secure  
7 and protected from fear, intimidation, and physical harm caused by the activities of criminal  
8 gangs; and

9 Whereas, the General Assembly also recognizes the constitutional right of every  
10 citizen to harbor and express beliefs on any lawful subject whatsoever and to lawfully associate  
11 with others who share similar beliefs; and

12 Whereas, the General Assembly finds a need for enhanced punishment of criminal  
13 gang activity to afford adequate protection of the people of North Carolina from the harms  
14 caused by criminal gangs; and

15 Whereas, it is the intent of the General Assembly to outlaw certain conduct  
16 associated with the existence and proliferation of criminal gangs and provide enhanced criminal  
17 penalties when crimes are committed in the course of criminal gang activity; Now, therefore,  
18 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

19 **SECTION 1.** G.S. 14-50.16 is repealed.

20 **SECTION 2.** The title for Article 13A of Chapter 14 of the General Statutes reads  
21 as rewritten:

22 "North Carolina ~~Street~~Criminal Gang Suppression Act."

23 **SECTION 3.** G.S. 14-50.15 reads as rewritten:

24 "**§ 14-50.15. Short title.**

25 This Article shall be known and may be cited as the "North Carolina ~~Street~~Criminal Gang  
26 Suppression Act."

27 **SECTION 4.** Article 13A of Chapter 14 of the General Statutes is amended by  
28 adding a new section to read:

29 "**§ 14-50.16A. Criminal gang activity.**

30 Definitions. – The following definitions apply in this Article:

31 (1) Criminal gang. – Any ongoing organization, association, or group of three or  
32 more persons, whether formal or informal, that (i) has as one of its primary  
33 activities the commission of criminal or delinquent acts and (ii) shares a  
34 common name, identification, signs, symbols, tattoos, graffiti, attire, or other  
35 distinguishing characteristics, including common activities, customs, or



1 behaviors. The term shall not include three or more persons associated in  
2 fact, whether formal or informal, who are not engaged in criminal gang  
3 activity.

4 (2) Criminal gang activity. – The commission of, attempted commission of, or  
5 solicitation, coercion, or intimidation of another person to commit (i) any  
6 offense under Article 5 of Chapter 90 of the General Statutes or (ii) any  
7 offense under Chapter 14 of the General Statutes except Article 9, 22A, 40,  
8 46, or 59 thereof, and further excepting G.S. 14-82, 14-145, 14-183, 14-184,  
9 14-186, 14-190.9, 14-247, 14-248, or 14-313 thereof, and either of the  
10 following conditions is met:

11 a. The offense is committed with the intent to benefit, promote, or  
12 further the interests of a criminal gang or for the purposes of  
13 increasing a person's own standing or position within a criminal  
14 gang.

15 b. The participants in the offense are identified as criminal gang  
16 members acting individually or collectively to further any criminal  
17 purpose of a criminal gang.

18 (3) Criminal gang leader or organizer. – Any criminal gang member who acts in  
19 any position of management with regard to the criminal gang and who meets  
20 two or more of the following criteria:

21 a. Exercises decision-making authority over matters regarding a  
22 criminal gang.

23 b. Participates in the direction, planning, organizing, or commission of  
24 criminal gang activity.

25 c. Recruits other gang members.

26 d. Receives a larger portion of the proceeds of criminal gang activity.

27 e. Exercises control and authority over other criminal gang members.

28 (4) Criminal gang member. – Any person who meets three or more of the  
29 following criteria:

30 a. The person admits to being a member of a criminal gang.

31 b. The person is identified as a criminal gang member by a reliable  
32 source, including a parent or a guardian.

33 c. The person has been previously involved in criminal gang activity.

34 d. The person has adopted symbols, hand signs, or graffiti associated  
35 with a criminal gang.

36 e. The person has adopted the display of colors or the style of dress  
37 associated with a criminal gang.

38 f. The person is in possession of or linked to a criminal gang by  
39 physical evidence, including photographs, ledgers, rosters, written or  
40 electronic communications, or membership documents.

41 g. The person has tattoos or markings associated with a criminal gang.

42 h. The person has adopted language or terminology associated with a  
43 criminal gang.

44 i. The person appears in any form of social media to promote a  
45 criminal gang."

46 **SECTION 5.** Article 81B of Chapter 15A of the General Statutes is amended by  
47 adding a new section to read:

48 **"§ 15A-1340.16E. Enhanced sentence for offenses committed by criminal gang members**  
49 **as a part of criminal gang activity.**

50 (a) Except as otherwise provided in subsection (b) of this section, if a person is  
51 convicted of any felony other than a Class A, B1, or B2 felony, and it is found that the offense

1 was committed as part of criminal gang activity as defined in G.S. 14-50.16A(2), then the  
2 person shall be sentenced at a felony class level one class higher than the principal felony for  
3 which the person was convicted.

4 (b) If subsection (a) of this section applies and the person is found to be a criminal gang  
5 leader or organizer as defined in G.S. 14-50.16A(3), the person shall be sentenced at a felony  
6 class level two classes higher than the principal felony for which the person was convicted.

7 (c) No defendant sentenced pursuant to this section shall be sentenced at a level higher  
8 than a Class C felony. Any sentence imposed under this section shall run consecutively with  
9 and shall commence at the expiration of any sentence being served by the person sentenced  
10 under this section.

11 (d) An indictment or information for the felony shall allege in that indictment or  
12 information the facts that qualify the offense for an enhancement under this section. One  
13 pleading is sufficient for all felonies that are tried at a single trial.

14 (e) The State shall prove the issues set out under subsection (a) or (b) of this section  
15 beyond a reasonable doubt. The issues shall be proven and found in the same manner as  
16 provided for aggravating factors in G.S. 15A-1340.16(a1), (a2), or (a3) as applicable.

17 (f) This section shall not apply to any gang offense included under Article 13A of  
18 Chapter 14 of the General Statutes."

19 **SECTION 6.** G.S. 14-34.9 reads as rewritten:

20 **"§ 14-34.9. Discharging a firearm from within an enclosure.**

21 Unless covered under some other provision of law providing greater punishment, any  
22 person who willfully or wantonly discharges or attempts to discharge a firearm, as a part of a  
23 ~~pattern of criminal street gang activity,~~ criminal gang activity, from within any building,  
24 structure, motor vehicle, or other conveyance, erection, or enclosure toward a person or persons  
25 not within that enclosure shall be punished as a Class E felon."

26 **SECTION 7.** G.S. 14-50.17 reads as rewritten:

27 **"§ 14-50.17. Soliciting; encouraging participation.**

28 (a) It is unlawful for any person to cause, encourage, solicit, or coerce a person 16 years  
29 of age or older to participate in criminal ~~street-gang~~ activity.

30 (b) A violation of this section is a Class H felony."

31 **SECTION 8.** G.S. 14-50.18 reads as rewritten:

32 **"§ 14-50.18. Soliciting; encouraging participation; minor.**

33 (a) It is unlawful for any person to cause, encourage, solicit, or coerce a person under  
34 16 years of age to participate in criminal ~~street-gang~~ activity.

35 (b) A violation of this section is a Class F felony.

36 (c) Nothing in this section shall preclude a person who commits a violation of this  
37 section from criminal culpability for the underlying offense committed by the minor under any  
38 other provision of law."

39 **SECTION 9.** G.S. 14-50.19 reads as rewritten:

40 **"§ 14-50.19. ~~Threats-Intimidation to deter from gang withdrawal.~~**

41 (a) It is unlawful for any person to communicate a threat of injury to a person, or to  
42 damage the property of another, with the intent to deter a person from assisting another to  
43 withdraw from membership in a criminal ~~street-gang~~.

44 (a1) It is unlawful for any person to injure a person with the intent to deter a person from  
45 assisting another to withdraw from membership in a criminal gang.

46 (b) A violation of subsection (a) of this section is a Class H-felony-G felony. A  
47 violation of subsection (a1) of this section is a Class F felony."

48 **SECTION 10.** G.S. 14-50.20 reads as rewritten:

49 **"§ 14-50.20. ~~Threats of punishment or retaliation.~~Punishment or retaliation for gang**  
50 **withdrawal.**

1 (a) It is unlawful for any person to communicate a threat of injury to a person, or to  
2 damage the property of another, as punishment or retaliation against a person for having  
3 withdrawn from a criminal ~~street-gang~~.

4 (a1) It is unlawful for any person to injure a person as punishment or retaliation against  
5 a person for having withdrawn from a criminal gang.

6 (b) A violation of subsection (a) of this section is a Class H ~~felony~~-G felony. A  
7 violation of subsection (a1) of this section is a Class F felony."

8 **SECTION 11.** G.S. 14-50.22 reads as rewritten:

9 **"§ 14-50.22. Enhanced offense for misdemeanor criminal gang activity.**

10 A person age 15 or older who is convicted of a misdemeanor offense that is committed for  
11 the benefit of, at the direction of, or in association with, any criminal ~~street-gang~~ is guilty of an  
12 offense that is one class higher than the offense committed. A Class A1 misdemeanor shall be  
13 enhanced to a Class I felony under this section."

14 **SECTION 12.** G.S. 14-50.23 reads as rewritten:

15 **"§ 14-50.23. Contraband, seizure, and forfeiture.**

16 (a) All property of every kind used or intended for use in the course of, derived from, or  
17 realized through criminal ~~street-gang activity or a pattern of criminal street-gang activity~~ is  
18 subject to the seizure and forfeiture provisions of G.S. 14-2.3.

19 (b) In any action under this section, the court may enter a restraining order in  
20 connection with any interest that is subject to forfeiture.

21 (c) Innocent Activities. – The provisions of this section shall not apply to property used  
22 for criminal ~~street-gang activity~~ where the owner or person who has legal possession of the  
23 property does not have actual knowledge that the property is being used for criminal ~~street-gang~~  
24 activity."

25 **SECTION 13.** G.S. 14-50.25 reads as rewritten:

26 **"§ 14-50.25. Reports of disposition; criminal ~~street-gang activity~~.**

27 When a defendant is found guilty of a criminal offense, other than an offense under  
28 G.S. 14-50.16 through G.S. 14-50.20, the presiding judge shall determine whether the offense  
29 involved criminal ~~street-gang activity~~. If the judge so determines, then the judge shall indicate  
30 on the form reflecting the judgment that the offense involved criminal ~~street-gang activity~~. The  
31 clerk of court shall ensure that the official record of the defendant's conviction includes a  
32 notation of the court's determination."

33 **SECTION 14.** The title for Article 13B of Chapter 14 of the General Statutes reads  
34 as rewritten:

35 "North Carolina ~~Street~~Criminal Gang Nuisance Abatement Act."

36 **SECTION 15.** G.S. 14-50.42 reads as rewritten:

37 **"§ 14-50.42. Real property used by criminal ~~street-gangs~~ declared a public nuisance:**  
38 **abatement.**

39 (a) Public Nuisance. – Any real property that is erected, established, maintained,  
40 owned, leased, or used by any criminal ~~street-gang~~ for the purpose of conducting criminal ~~street~~  
41 gang activity, as defined in ~~G.S. 14-50.16(e)~~,G.S. 14-50.16A(2), shall constitute a public  
42 nuisance and may be abated as provided by and subject to the provisions of Article 1 of  
43 Chapter 19 of the General Statutes.

44 Proof that criminal gang activity by a criminal gang member is regularly committed at any  
45 real property or proof that the real property is regularly used for engaging in criminal gang  
46 activity by a criminal gang member is prima facie evidence that the owner or person who has  
47 legal possession of the real property knowingly permitted the act. For purposes of this section,  
48 the term "regularly" means at least five times in a period of not more than 12 months.

49 (b) Innocent Activities. – The provisions of this section shall not apply to real property  
50 used for criminal ~~street-gang activity~~ where the owner or person who has legal possession of  
51 the real property does not have actual knowledge that the real property is being used for

1 criminal ~~street~~-gang activity or the owner is being coerced into allowing the property to be used  
 2 for criminal ~~street~~-gang activity. Evidence that the defendant knew, or by the exercise of due  
 3 diligence should have known, of the criminal gang activity constitutes proof of actual  
 4 knowledge."

5 **SECTION 16.** G.S. 14-50.43 reads as rewritten:

6 "**§ 14-50.43. Street gangs**~~Criminal gangs~~ **declared a public nuisance.**

7 (a) A ~~street~~criminal gang, as defined in ~~G.S. 14-50.16(b)~~,G.S. 14-50.16A(a), that  
 8 regularly engages in criminal ~~street~~-gang activities,~~—activity,~~ as defined in  
 9 ~~G.S. 14-50.16(e)~~,G.S. 14-50.16A(2), constitutes a public nuisance. For the purposes of this  
 10 section, the term "regularly" means at least five times in a period of not more than 12 months.

11 (b) Any person who regularly associates with others to engage in criminal ~~street~~-gang  
 12 activity, as defined in ~~G.S. 14-50.16(e)~~,G.S. 14-50.16A(2), may be made a defendant in a suit,  
 13 brought pursuant to Chapter 19 of the General Statutes, to abate any public nuisance resulting  
 14 from criminal ~~street~~-gang activity.

15 (c) If the court finds that a public nuisance exists under this section, the court may enter  
 16 an order enjoining the defendant in the suit from engaging in criminal ~~street~~-gang activities and  
 17 impose other reasonable requirements to prevent the defendant or a gang from engaging in  
 18 future criminal ~~street~~-gang activities.

19 (d) An order entered under this section shall expire ~~one year~~three years after entry  
 20 unless extended by the court for good cause established by the plaintiff after a hearing. The  
 21 order may be modified, rescinded, or vacated at any time prior to its expiration date upon the  
 22 motion of any party if it appears to the court that one or more of the defendants is no longer  
 23 engaging in criminal ~~street~~-gang activities."

24 **SECTION 17.** G.S. 15A-1340.16(d) reads as rewritten:

25 "**§ 15A-1340.16. Aggravated and mitigated sentences.**

26 ...

27 (d) Aggravating Factors. – The following are aggravating factors:

28 ...

29 (2a) The offense was committed for the benefit of, or at the direction of, any  
 30 criminal ~~street-gang~~gang as defined by G.S. 14-50.16A(1), with the specific  
 31 intent to promote, further, or assist in any criminal conduct by gang  
 32 members, and the defendant was not charged with committing a conspiracy.  
 33 ~~A "criminal street gang" means any ongoing organization, association, or~~  
 34 ~~group of three or more persons, whether formal or informal, having as one of~~  
 35 ~~its primary activities the commission of felony or violent misdemeanor~~  
 36 ~~offenses, or delinquent acts that would be felonies or violent misdemeanors~~  
 37 ~~if committed by an adult, and having a common name or common~~  
 38 ~~identifying sign, colors, or symbols.~~

39 ...."

40 **SECTION 18.** G.S. 15A-1343(b1) reads as rewritten:

41 "**§ 15A-1343. Conditions of probation.**

42 ...

43 (b1) Special Conditions. – In addition to the regular conditions of probation specified in  
 44 subsection (b), the court may, as a condition of probation, require that during the probation the  
 45 defendant comply with one or more of the following special conditions:

46 ...

47 (9b) Any or all of the following conditions relating to ~~street~~criminal gangs as  
 48 defined in ~~G.S. 14-50.16(b)~~:G.S. 14-50.16A(1):

49 a. Not knowingly associate with any known ~~street~~criminal gang  
 50 members and not knowingly be present at or frequent any place or

- 1 location where ~~street~~criminal gangs gather or where ~~street~~criminal
- 2 gang activity is known to occur.
- 3 b. Not wear clothes, jewelry, signs, symbols, or any paraphernalia
- 4 readily identifiable as associated with or used by a ~~street~~criminal
- 5 gang.
- 6 c. Not initiate or participate in any contact with any individual who was
- 7 or may be a witness against or victim of the defendant or the
- 8 defendant's ~~street~~criminal gang.

9 ...."

10 **SECTION 19.** G.S. 15A-533(e) reads as rewritten:

11 "§ 15A-533. **Right to pretrial release in capital and noncapital cases.**

12 ...

13 (e) There shall be a rebuttable presumption that no condition of release will reasonably  
14 assure the appearance of the person as required and the safety of the community, if a judicial  
15 official finds all of the following:

- 16 (1) There is reasonable cause to believe that the person committed an offense for
- 17 the benefit of, at the direction of, or in association with, any criminal ~~street~~criminal
- 18 gang, as defined in ~~G.S. 14-50.16~~G.S. 14-50.16A(1).
- 19 (2) The offense described in subdivision (1) of this subsection was committed
- 20 while the person was on pretrial release for another ~~offense; and~~offense.
- 21 (3) The person (i) has been previously convicted of an offense described in
- 22 ~~G.S. 14-50.16 through G.S. 14-50.20~~G.S. 14-50.16 through G.S. 14-50.20
- 23 or (ii) has been convicted of a criminal offense and received an enhanced
- 24 sentence for that offense pursuant to G.S. 15A-1340.16E, and not more than
- 25 five years has elapsed since the date of conviction or the person's release for
- 26 the offense, whichever is later."

27 **SECTION 20.** This act becomes effective December 1, 2017, and applies to  
28 offenses committed on or after that date.