

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA

EXTRA SESSION 1994

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HOUSE BILL 7
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Senate Appropriations Committee Substitute Adopted 3/9/94

Short Title: Felony to Possess Cocaine.

(Public)

Sponsors:

Referred to:

February 8, 1994

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT TO REPEAL THE PROVISION IN THE STRUCTURED SENTENCING ACT THAT WOULD HAVE PROVIDED THAT POSSESSION OF LESS THAN ONE GRAM OF COCAINE WAS NOT A FELONY AND TO PROVIDE FOR DEFERRED PROCEEDINGS AND EXPUNCTION OF RECORDS FOR FIRST-TIME SIMPLE POSSESSION OF LESS THAN ONE GRAM OF COCAINE.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

Section 1. Section 1358.1 of Chapter 539 of the 1993 Session Laws is repealed.

Sec. 1.1. G.S. 90-96 reads as rewritten:

"§ 90-96. Conditional discharge and expunction of records for first offense.

(a) Whenever any person who has not previously been convicted of any offense under this Article or under any statute of the United States or any state relating to those substances included in Article 5 or 5A of Chapter 90 or to that paraphernalia included in Article 5B of Chapter 90 pleads guilty to or is found guilty of (i) a misdemeanor under this Article by possessing a controlled substance included within Schedules II through VI of this ~~Article~~, Article or by possessing drug paraphernalia as prohibited by G.S. 90-113.21, or (ii) a felony under G.S. 90-95(a)(3) by possessing less than one gram of cocaine, the court may, without entering a judgment of guilt and with the consent of such person, defer further proceedings and place him on probation upon such reasonable terms and conditions as it may require. Notwithstanding the provisions of G.S. 15A-1342(c) or any other statute or law, probation may be imposed under this section for an

1 offense under this Article for which the prescribed punishment includes only a fine. To
2 fulfill the terms and conditions of probation the court may allow the defendant to
3 participate in a drug education program approved for this purpose by the Department of
4 Human Resources. Upon violation of a term or condition, the court may enter an
5 adjudication of guilt and proceed as otherwise provided. Upon fulfillment of the terms
6 and conditions, the court shall discharge such person and dismiss the proceedings
7 against him. Discharge and dismissal under this section shall be without court
8 adjudication of guilt and shall not be deemed a conviction for purposes of this section or
9 for purposes of disqualifications or disabilities imposed by law upon conviction of a
10 crime including the additional penalties imposed for second or subsequent convictions
11 under this Article. Discharge and dismissal under this section or G.S. 90-113.14 may
12 occur only once with respect to any person. Disposition of a case to determine discharge
13 and dismissal under this section at the district court division of the General Court of
14 Justice shall be final for the purpose of appeal. Prior to taking any action to discharge
15 and dismiss under this section the court shall make a finding that the defendant has no
16 record of previous convictions under the 'North Carolina Controlled Substances Act',
17 Article 5, Chapter 90, the 'North Carolina Toxic Vapors Act', Article 5A, Chapter 90, or
18 the 'Drug Paraphernalia Act', Article 5B, Chapter 90.

19 (a1) Upon the first conviction only of any offense included in G.S. 90-95(a)(3) or
20 G.S. 90-113.21 and subject to the provisions of this subsection (a1), the court may place
21 defendant on probation under this section for an offense under this Article including an
22 offense for which the prescribed punishment includes only a fine. The probation, if
23 imposed, shall be for not less than one year and shall contain a minimum condition that
24 the defendant who was found guilty or pleads guilty enroll in and successfully complete,
25 within 150 days of the date of the imposition of said probation, the program of
26 instruction at the drug education school approved by the Department of Human
27 Resources pursuant to G.S. 90-96.01. The court may impose probation that does not
28 contain a condition that defendant successfully complete the program of instruction at a
29 drug education school if:

- 30 (1) There is no drug education school within a reasonable distance of the
31 defendant's residence; or
- 32 (2) There are specific, extenuating circumstances which make it likely that
33 defendant will not benefit from the program of instruction.

34 The court shall enter such specific findings in the record; provided that in the case of
35 subdivision (2) above, such findings shall include the specific, extenuating
36 circumstances which make it likely that the defendant will not benefit from the program
37 of instruction.

38 For the purposes of determining whether the conviction is a first conviction or
39 whether a person has already had discharge and dismissal, no prior offense occurring
40 more than seven years before the date of the current offense shall be considered. In
41 addition, convictions for violations of a provision of G.S. 90-95(a)(1) or 90-95(a)(2) or
42 90-95(a)(3), or 90-113.10, or 90-113.11, or 90-113.12, or 90-113.21 shall be considered
43 previous convictions.

1 Failure to complete successfully an approved program of instruction at a drug
2 education school shall constitute grounds to revoke probation and deny application for
3 expunction of all recordation of defendant's arrest, indictment, or information, trial,
4 finding of guilty, and dismissal and discharge pursuant to this section. For purposes of
5 this subsection, the phrase 'failure to complete successfully the prescribed program of
6 instruction at a drug education school' includes failure to attend scheduled classes
7 without a valid excuse, failure to complete the course within 150 days of imposition of
8 probation, willful failure to pay the required fee for the course, or any other manner in
9 which the person fails to complete the course successfully. The instructor of the course
10 to which a person is assigned shall report any failure of a person to complete
11 successfully the program of instruction to the court which imposed probation. Upon
12 receipt of the instructor's report that the person failed to complete the program
13 successfully, the court shall revoke probation and/or deny application for expunction of
14 all recordation of defendant's arrest, indictment, or information, trial, finding of guilty,
15 and dismissal and discharge pursuant to this section. A person may obtain a hearing
16 before the court of original jurisdiction prior to revocation of probation or denial of
17 application for expunction.

18 This subsection is supplemental and in addition to existing law and shall not be
19 construed so as to repeal any existing provision contained in the General Statutes of
20 North Carolina.

21 (b) Upon the dismissal of such person, and discharge of the proceedings against
22 him under subsection (a) of this section, such person, if he were not over 21 years of age
23 at the time of the offense, may apply to the court for an order to expunge from all
24 official records (other than the confidential file to be retained by the Administrative
25 Office of the Courts under subsection (c)) all recordation relating to his arrest,
26 indictment or information, trial, finding of guilty, and dismissal and discharge pursuant
27 to this section. The applicant shall attach to the application the following:

- 28 (1) An affidavit by the applicant that he has been of good behavior during
29 the period of probation since the decision to defer further proceedings
30 on the ~~misdemeanor~~-offense in question and has not been convicted of
31 any felony, or misdemeanor, other than a traffic violation, under the
32 laws of the United States or the laws of this State or any other state;
- 33 (2) Verified affidavits by two persons who are not related to the applicant
34 or to each other by blood or marriage, that they know the character and
35 reputation of the petitioner in the community in which he lives, and
36 that his character and reputation are good;
- 37 (3) Affidavits of the clerk of superior court, chief of police, where
38 appropriate, and sheriff of the county in which the petitioner was
39 convicted, and, if different, the county of which the petitioner is a
40 resident, showing that the applicant has not been convicted of a felony
41 or misdemeanor other than a traffic violation under the laws of this
42 State at any time prior to the conviction for the ~~misdemeanor~~-offense in
43 question or during the period of probation following the decision to
44 defer further proceedings on the ~~misdemeanor~~-offense in question.

1 The judge to whom the petition is presented is authorized to call upon a probation
2 officer for any additional investigation or verification of the petitioner's conduct during
3 the probationary period deemed desirable.

4 If the court determines, after hearing, that such person was dismissed and the
5 proceedings against him discharged and that he was not over 21 years of age at the time
6 of the offense, it shall enter such order. The effect of such order shall be to restore such
7 person in the contemplation of the law to the status he occupied before such arrest or
8 indictment or information. No person as to whom such order was entered shall be held
9 thereafter under any provision of any law to be guilty of perjury or otherwise giving a
10 false statement by reason of his failures to recite or acknowledge such arrest, or
11 indictment or information, or trial in response to any inquiry made of him for any
12 purpose.

13 The court shall also order that said conviction and the records relating thereto be
14 expunged from the records of the court, and direct all law-enforcement agencies bearing
15 records of the same to expunge their records of the conviction. The clerk shall forward a
16 certified copy of the order to the sheriff, chief of police or other arresting agency, as
17 appropriate, and the sheriff, chief of police or other arresting agency, as appropriate,
18 shall forward such order to the State Bureau of Investigation with a form supplied by
19 the State Bureau of Investigation. The State Bureau of Investigation shall forward the
20 court order in like manner to the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

21 (c) The clerk of superior court in each county in North Carolina shall, as soon as
22 practicable after each term of court in his county, file with the Administrative Office of
23 the Courts the names of those persons granted a conditional discharge under the
24 provisions of this Article, and the Administrative Office of the Courts shall maintain a
25 confidential file containing the names of persons granted conditional discharges. The
26 information contained in the file shall be disclosed only to Judges of the General Court
27 of Justice of North Carolina for the purpose of ascertaining whether any person charged
28 with an offense under this Article has been previously granted a conditional discharge.

29 (d) Whenever any person is charged with a misdemeanor under this Article by
30 possessing a controlled substance included within Schedules II through VI of this
31 ~~Article, Article~~ or a felony under G.S. 90-95(a)(3) by possessing less than one gram of
32 cocaine, upon dismissal by the State of the charges against him, upon entry of a **nolle**
33 **prosequi**, or upon a finding of not guilty or other adjudication of innocence, such
34 person may apply to the court for an order to expunge from all official records all
35 recordation relating to his arrest, indictment or information, or trial. If the court
36 determines, after hearing that such person was not over 21 years of age at the time any
37 of the proceedings against him occurred, it shall enter such order. No person as to whom
38 such order has been entered shall be held thereafter under any provision of any law to be
39 guilty of perjury or otherwise giving a false statement by reason of his failures to recite
40 or acknowledge such arrest, or indictment or information, or trial in response to any
41 inquiry made of him for any purpose.

42 (e) Whenever any person who has not previously been convicted of an offense
43 under this Article or under any statute of the United States or any state relating to
44 controlled substances included in any schedule of this Article or to that paraphernalia

1 included in Article 5B of Chapter 90 pleads guilty to or has been found guilty of (i) a
2 misdemeanor under this Article by possessing a controlled substance included within
3 Schedules II through VI of this Article, or by possessing drug paraphernalia as
4 prohibited by G.S. 90-113.21, or (ii) a felony under G.S. 90-95(a)(3) by possessing less
5 than one gram of cocaine, the court may, upon application of the person not sooner than
6 12 months after conviction, order cancellation of the judgment of conviction and
7 expunction of the records of his arrest, indictment, or information, trial and conviction.
8 A conviction in which the judgment of conviction has been cancelled and the records
9 expunged pursuant to this section shall not be thereafter deemed a conviction for
10 purposes of this section or for purposes of disqualifications or liabilities imposed by law
11 upon conviction of a crime including the additional penalties imposed for second or
12 subsequent convictions of this Article. Cancellation and expunction under this section
13 may occur only once with respect to any person. Disposition of a case under this section
14 at the district court division of the General Court of Justice shall be final for the purpose
15 of appeal.

16 The granting of an application filed under this section shall cause the issue of an
17 order to expunge from all official records (other than the confidential file to be retained
18 by the Administrative Office of the Courts under subsection (c)) all recordation relating
19 to the petitioner's arrest, indictment, or information, trial, finding of guilty, judgment of
20 conviction, cancellation of the judgment, and expunction of records pursuant to this
21 section.

22 The judge to whom the petition is presented is authorized to call upon a probation
23 officer for additional investigation or verification of the petitioner's conduct since
24 conviction. If the court determines that the petitioner was convicted of (i) a
25 misdemeanor under this Article for possessing a controlled substance included within
26 Schedules II through VI of this Article, or for possessing drug paraphernalia as
27 prohibited in G.S. 90-113.21, or a (ii) felony under G.S. 90-95(a)(3) for possession of
28 less than one gram of cocaine, that he was not over 21 years of age at the time of the
29 offense, that he has been of good behavior since his conviction, that he has successfully
30 completed a drug education program approved for this purpose by the Department of
31 Human Resources, and that he has not been convicted of a felony or misdemeanor other
32 than a traffic violation under the laws of this State at any time prior to or since the
33 conviction for the ~~misdemeanor~~ offense in question, it shall enter an order of expunction
34 of the petitioner's court record. The effect of such order shall be to restore the petitioner
35 in the contemplation of the law to the status he occupied before arrest or indictment or
36 information or conviction. No person as to whom such order was entered shall be held
37 thereafter under any provision of any law to be guilty of perjury or otherwise giving a
38 false statement by reason of his failures to recite or acknowledge such arrest, or
39 indictment or information, or conviction, or trial in response to any inquiry made of him
40 for any purpose. The judge may waive the condition that the petitioner attend the drug
41 education school if the judge makes a specific finding that there was no drug education
42 school within a reasonable distance of the defendant's residence or that there were
43 specific extenuating circumstances which made it likely that the petitioner would not
44 benefit from the program of instruction.

1 The court shall also order that all law-enforcement agencies bearing records of the
2 conviction and records relating thereto to expunge their records of the conviction. The
3 clerk shall forward a certified copy of the order to the sheriff, chief of police, or other
4 arresting agency, as appropriate, and the arresting agency shall forward the order to the
5 State Bureau of Investigation with a form supplied by the State Bureau of Investigation.
6 The State Bureau of Investigation shall forward the court order in like manner to the
7 Federal Bureau of Investigation.

8 The clerk of superior court in each county in North Carolina shall, as soon as
9 practicable after each term of court in his county, file with the Administrative Office of
10 the Courts the names of those persons whose judgments of convictions have been
11 cancelled and expunged under the provisions of this Article, and the Administrative
12 Office of the Courts shall maintain a confidential file containing the names of persons
13 whose judgments of convictions have been cancelled and expunged. The information
14 contained in the file shall be disclosed only to judges of the General Court of Justice of
15 North Carolina for the purpose of ascertaining whether any person charged with an
16 offense under this Article has been previously granted cancellation and expunction of a
17 judgment of conviction pursuant to the terms of this Article."

18 Sec. 2. This act becomes effective May 1, 1994.