

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA

Session 2013

Legislative Incarceration Fiscal Note

(G.S. 120-36.7)

BILL NUMBER: Senate Bill 235 (First Edition)

SHORT TITLE: Voter Protection Integrity/Every Vote Counts.

SPONSOR(S): Senators Ford and Clark

FISCAL IMPACT					
(\$ in millions)					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Estimate Available					
State Impact	FY 2013-14	FY 2014-15	FY 2015-16	FY 2016-17	FY 2017-18
General Fund Revenues:					
General Fund Expenditures:					
Special Fund Revenues:					
Special Fund Expenditures:					
State Positions:					
NET STATE IMPACT	Likely budget cost. See Assumptions & Methodology section for additional details.				
PRINCIPAL DEPARTMENT(S) & PROGRAM(S) AFFECTED:					
Administrative Office of the Courts, Indigent Defense Services, Department of Public Safety					
EFFECTIVE DATE: January 1, 2014 and applies to primaries and elections conducted on or after that date					
TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS:					
None					

FISCAL IMPACT SUMMARY:

The proposed bill may have a fiscal impact to address an increase in the scope of the chargeable offense being enforced, adjudicated and having penalties applied to those convicted under the broadening of the current statute. However, given there is no historical data on this new definition or similar offenses to use as a proxy for predicting the total number of new offenses, the Fiscal Research Division cannot reasonably estimate the total additional costs that may be incurred. The following costs may be incurred for every one person charged and convicted of this crime:

- Administrative Office of the Courts: \$365 per disposition
- Indigent Defense Services: \$221 in district court
\$396 in superior court without a trial
\$1,046 in superior court with a trial
- Prison Section: No cost (excess bed space projected for at least five years)
- Community Corrections: Minimum of \$980-\$2,831

Please see the Assumptions and Methodology section for additional information.

BILL SUMMARY:

This bill creates G.S. 163-166.13, Guarantee of right to vote through positive affirmation to local election officials at voting place. This statute requires an individual who is seeking to vote to clarify his or her identity using one of two methods: by signing a photo affidavit or by presenting proper photo identification. Subsection (b) of the statute states that any person who wishes to certify his or her identity through a photo affidavit, may have his or her photograph taken by a designated election official and sign a voter photo affidavit affirming that he or she is in fact the registered voter in whose name they are requesting a ballot. Fraudulently signing the photo affidavit would be a Class I felony under the existing G.S. 163-275, "Certain acts declared felonies," subsection (7).

This statute goes into effect January 1, 2014 and applies to primaries and elections conducted on or after that date.

ASSUMPTIONS AND METHODOLOGY:

General

The Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission prepares prison population projections for each bill containing a criminal penalty. The Commission assumes for such bills that expanding existing or creating new criminal offenses produces no deterrent or incapacitative effect on crime. Therefore, the Fiscal Research Division does not assume deterrent effects for any criminal penalty bill.

S.L. 2011-192 (H.B. 642), the Justice Reinvestment Act (JRA), made changes to North Carolina's court system, corrections system (both to prisons and probation), and to post-release supervision. The Act also created a statewide confinement program for housing misdemeanants with sentences of less than 180 days in county jails. Previously, county jails were only required to house misdemeanants with sentences of 90 days or less. In addition, all F-I felons are now subject to nine months of post-release supervision (PRS). B1-E felony PRS has been increased from nine months to twelve months. Due to the lack of historical data about JRA implementation, it is not possible to estimate the number of prison beds that may be needed as a result of revocations.

Judicial Branch

The Administrative Office of the Courts provides Fiscal Research with a fiscal impact analysis for most criminal penalty bills. For such bills, fiscal impact is typically based on the assumption that court time will increase due to anticipated increases in trials and corresponding increases in workload for judges, clerks, and prosecutors. This increased court time is also expected to result in greater expenditures for jury fees and indigent defense.

The Administrative Office of the Courts currently does not have a specific offense code for violations of G.S. 163-275. The lack of an AOC offense code is some indication that this offense is infrequently charged and/or infrequently results in convictions. AOC is not able to estimate how many additional charges may be filed due to the expansion of current requirements. For every additional person charged with a Class I felony offense, AOC estimates the average cost to the court would be \$365.

The Office of Indigent Defense Services (IDS) provides Fiscal Research with a fiscal impact analysis for criminal penalty bills that will result in greater expenditures for indigent defense. IDS estimates that the cost of a PAC attorney per case for a new Class I felony would be \$221 in district court. In superior court, IDS estimates that the cost of a PAC attorney per case for a Class I felony would be \$396 if the case does not go to trial and \$1,046 if it does.

Department of Public Safety –Prison Section

Since the bill expands the scope of an existing offense, the Sentencing Commission does not have any historical data from which to estimate the impact of this section on the prison population. It is not known how many offenders might be convicted and sentenced under the expanded statute.

The chart below depicts the projected inmate population relative to available prison bed capacity system-wide. Capacity projections assume operation at Expanded Operating Capacity,¹ and represent the total number of beds in operation, or authorized for construction or operation as of December 2012.

Based on the most recent population projections and estimated bed capacity, there are surplus prison beds available for the five-year fiscal note horizon and beyond. Therefore, no additional beds will be required unless the projected number of additional inmates resulting from a bill (row four) exceeds the projected number of beds under the inmate population (row three).

Population Projections and Bed Capacity Five Year Impact					
	June 30 2013	June 30 2014	June 30 2015	June 30 2016	June 30 2017
1. Inmates ²	36,838	36,967	37,107	36,861	36,748
2. Prison Beds (Expanded Capacity)	40,718	40,970	40,970	40,970	40,970
3. Beds Over/(Under) Inmate Population	(3,880)	(4,003)	(3,863)	(4,109)	(4,222)
4. Additional Inmates Due to this Bill³	No estimate available				
5. Additional Beds Required					

Department of Public Safety – Community Correction Section

All active sentences for felony offenses now result in a minimum of twelve months of post-release supervision (PRS) for B1-E level offenses and a minimum of nine months of PRS for F-I level offenses. Additionally, for felony offense classes E through I and all misdemeanor classes, offenders may be given non-active (intermediate or community) sentences exclusively, or in conjunction with imprisonment (split-sentence). Sanctions include electronic house arrest, community service, substance abuse treatment, participation in educational or vocational skills development, payment of court costs, fines, and restitution, and short-term jail sentences not exceeding six days per month.

All types of post-release supervision, including intermediate or community sanctions, are supervised by the Community Corrections Section (CCS); CCS also oversees community service.⁴ General post-release supervision and supervision of intermediate and community offenders by a probation officer costs \$3.63 per offender, per day; no cost is assumed for those receiving unsupervised probation, or who are only ordered to pay fines, fees, or restitution. Total costs are based on average supervision length and the percentage of

¹ Expanded Operating Capacity (EOC) is: 1) the number of single cells housing one inmate, 2) the number of single cells housing two inmates, and 3) the number of beds in dormitories, allowing between 35 (130% of Standard Operating Capacity) and 50 (SOC) square feet per inmate.

² The Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission prepares inmate population projections annually. These projections are derived from: historical information on incarceration and release rates under Structured Sentencing; crime rate forecasts by a technical advisory group; probation and offender revocation rates; and the decline (parole and max-outs) of the stock prison population sentenced under prior sentencing acts. Projections were updated in February 2013.

³ Criminal penalty bills effective December 1, 2013 should not affect prison population and bed needs until FY 2014-15 due to the lag time between offense charge and sentencing - six months on average. No delayed effect is presumed for the Court System.

⁴ CCS incurs costs of \$1.29 per day for each offender sentenced to the Community Service Work Program.

offenders (per offense class) sentenced to active sentences requiring post-release supervision, intermediate sanctions and supervised probations.

In FY 2011-12, 18% of Class I felony offenders received active sentences; 33% received intermediate sentences; and 49% received community punishments. All active sentences result in nine months of post-release supervision (PRS). The cost of nine months of PRS is \$980 per offender (\$3.63 per day times 270 days).⁵ The average lengths of intermediate and community punishment imposed for this offense class were 26 and 22 months, respectively. The average cost to community corrections for any individual convicted of a Class I felony who receives an intermediate sentence is \$2,831 (780 days times \$3.63 per day). The average cost to community corrections for any individual convicted of a Class I felony who receives a supervised community sentence is \$2,396 (660 days times \$3.63 per day). It is not known how many offenders might be convicted and sentenced to intermediate or supervised community sentences under the proposed bill.

SOURCES OF DATA: Department of Public Safety; Administrative Office of the Courts; North Carolina Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission; Office of Indigent Defense Services.

TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS: None

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⁵ Due to the effective date of December 1, 2013 and the typical lag time between charge and conviction (6 months), little impact is assumed for CCS in FY 2012-13. Though some offenders may come under CCS supervision during this time, this note assumes an even entry over the course of FY 2013-14.