

Article 5.

Law Enforcement.

§ 18B-500. Alcohol law-enforcement agents.

(a) Appointment. – The Secretary of Public Safety shall appoint and supervise the Director of the Division of Alcohol Law Enforcement of the Department of Public Safety. The Director of the Division of Alcohol Law Enforcement of the Department of Public Safety may appoint and supervise a sufficient number of assistants who shall be competent and qualified to do the work of the Division. The Director is responsible for making all hiring and personnel decisions of the Division. Notwithstanding the provisions of this Chapter or Chapter 143A of the General Statutes, the Director may hire or fire personnel and transfer personnel within the Division. The Director may also appoint a regular employee of the Commission as an ALE agent, provided the employee was employed by the ABC Commission and serving as an ALE agent on January 1, 2019. Alcohol law-enforcement agents shall be designated as "alcohol law-enforcement agents." Persons serving as reserve alcohol law-enforcement agents are considered employees of the Division for workers' compensation purposes while performing duties assigned or approved by the Director of the Division or the Director's designee.

(b) Subject Matter Jurisdiction. – After taking the oath prescribed for a peace officer, an alcohol law-enforcement agent shall have authority to arrest and take other investigatory and enforcement actions for any criminal offense:

- (1) Occurring, encountered, or otherwise discovered on the premises of, or elsewhere when the conduct relates to, a location under application for or holding a permit issued by the North Carolina Alcoholic Beverage Control Commission or the North Carolina Education Lottery Commission.
- (2) Encountered or otherwise discovered while investigating or enforcing matters for the North Carolina Alcoholic Beverage Control Commission or the North Carolina Education Lottery Commission or encountered or otherwise discovered while investigating or enforcing the provisions of this Chapter, Chapter 18C of the General Statutes, G.S. 14-313, or Parts 1 and 2 of Article 37 of Chapter 14 of the General Statutes.
- (3) Encountered or otherwise discovered while carrying out any duty or function assigned to the Division by law.
- (4) Occurring in an agent's presence.
- (5) When assisting another law enforcement agency.

(b1) Authority. – Alcohol law-enforcement agents have authority as peace officers to execute criminal process, respond to and take enforcement action for any crime of violence or breach of the peace, and any additional duties as may from time to time be directed by the Governor or the Secretary of Public Safety when needed for security purposes at a public event or to protect persons or property because of a disaster or state of emergency.

(b2) Primary Responsibilities. – The primary responsibilities of an alcohol law-enforcement agent are the enforcement of this Chapter, Chapter 18C of the General Statutes, G.S. 14-313, and Parts 1 and 2 of Article 37 of Chapter 14 of the General Statutes.

(c) Territorial Jurisdiction. – An alcohol law-enforcement agent is a State officer with jurisdiction throughout the State.

(d) Service of Commission Orders. – Alcohol law-enforcement agents may serve and execute notices, orders, or demands issued by the Alcoholic Beverage Control Commission or the North Carolina State Lottery Commission for the surrender of permits or relating to any

administrative proceeding. While serving and executing such notices, orders, or demands, alcohol law-enforcement agents shall have all the power and authority possessed by law-enforcement officers when executing an arrest warrant.

(e) Discharge. – Alcohol law-enforcement agents are subject to the discharge provisions of G.S. 18B-202.

(f) Repealed by Session Laws 1995, c. 507, s. 6.2(a).

(g) Shifting of Personnel From One District to Another. – The Director of the Alcohol Law Enforcement Division may, from time to time, shift the forces from one district to another or consolidate more than one district force at any point for special purposes. Whenever an agent of the Alcohol Law Enforcement Division is transferred from one district to another for the convenience of the State or for reasons other than the request of the agent, the Department shall be responsible for transporting the household goods, furniture, and personal apparel of the agent and members of the agent's household. (1939, c. 158, s. 514; 1943, c. 400, s. 6; 1949, c. 974, ss. 11, 14; c. 1251, s. 4; 1951, c. 1056, s. 1; c. 1186, ss. 1, 2; 1953, c. 1207, ss. 2-4; 1957, c. 1440; 1961, c. 645; 1963, c. 426, ss. 1, 2, 4, 5, 12; 1967, c. 868; 1971, c. 872, s. 1; 1977, c. 70, s. 17; 1981, c. 412, s. 2; 1983, c. 629, s. 1; c. 768, ss. 25.1, 25.2; 1995, c. 466, s. 2; c. 507, s. 6.2(a); 2005-276, ss. 31.1(y), 31.1(z); 2005-344, ss. 10.1(b), 10.1(c); 2006-264, s. 35; 2011-145, s. 19.1(z); 2011-391, s. 43(j); 2012-83, s. 3; 2014-100, s. 17.1(www); 2018-5, s. 16B.3(b); 2019-203, s. 4.)

§ 18B-501. Local ABC officers.

(a) Appointment. – Except as provided in subsection (f), each local board shall hire one or more ABC enforcement officers. Local ABC enforcement officers shall be designated as "ABC Officers". The local board may designate one officer as the chief ABC officer for that board.

(b) Subject Matter Jurisdiction. – After taking the oath prescribed for a peace officer, a local ABC officer may arrest and take other investigatory and enforcement actions for any criminal offense; however, the primary responsibility of a local ABC officer is enforcement of the ABC laws and Article 5 of Chapter 90 (The Controlled Substances Act).

(c) Territorial Jurisdiction. – A local ABC officer has jurisdiction anywhere in the county in which he is employed except that a city ABC officer's territorial jurisdiction is subject to any limitation included in any local act governing that city ABC system. A local ABC officer may pursue outside his normal territorial jurisdiction anyone who commits an offense within that jurisdiction, as provided in G.S. 15A-402(d).

(d) Assisting Other Local Agencies. – The local ABC officers employed by a local board shall constitute a "law-enforcement agency" for purposes of G.S. 160A-288, and a local board shall have the same authority as a city or county governing body to approve cooperation between law-enforcement agencies under that section.

(e) Assisting State and Federal Enforcement. – A local ABC officer may assist State and federal law-enforcement agencies in the investigation of criminal offenses in North Carolina, under the following conditions:

- (1) The local board employing the officer has adopted a resolution approving such assistance and stating the conditions under which it may be provided;
- (2) The State or federal agency has made a written request for assistance from that local board, either for a particular investigation or for any investigation that might require assistance within a certain period of time;
- (3) The local ABC officer is supervised by someone in the requesting agency; and

- (4) As soon as practical after the assistance begins, an acknowledgement of the action is placed in the records of the local board.

A local ABC officer shall have territorial jurisdiction throughout North Carolina while assisting a State or federal agency under this section. While providing that assistance the officer shall continue to be considered an employee of the local board for purposes of salary, worker's compensation, and other benefits, unless a different arrangement is negotiated between the local board and the requesting agency.

(f) **Contracts with Other Agencies.** – Instead of hiring local ABC officers, a local board may contract to pay its enforcement funds to a sheriff's office, city police department, or other local law-enforcement agency for enforcement of the ABC laws within the law-enforcement agency's territorial jurisdiction. Enforcement agreements may be made with more than one agency at the same time. When such a contract for enforcement exists, the designated officers of the contracting law-enforcement agency shall have the same authority to inspect under G.S. 18B-502 that an ABC officer employed by that local board would have. An agency contracted to provide ABC law enforcement shall designate no more than five officers to conduct inspections pursuant to this section and G.S. 18B-502. If a city located in two or more counties approves the sale of some type of alcoholic beverage pursuant to the provisions of G.S. 18B-600(e4), and there are no local ABC boards established in the city and one of the counties in which the city is located, the local ABC board of any county in which the city is located may enter into an enforcement agreement with the city's police department for enforcement of the ABC laws within the entire city, including that portion of the city located in the county of the ABC board entering into the enforcement agreement.

(f1) **Accountability; Enforcement Reports.** – To ensure accountability to the appointing authority and the Commission, every local board's ABC officers and those law enforcement agencies subject to an enforcement agreement entered into pursuant to subsection (f) of this section shall report to the local board, by the fifth business day of each month, on a form developed by the Commission, the following:

- (1) The number of arrests made for ABC law, Controlled Substance Act, or other violations, by category, at ABC permitted outlets.
- (2) The number of arrests made for ABC law, Controlled Substance Act, or other violations, by category, at other locations.
- (3) The number of agencies assisted with ABC law or controlled substance related matters.
- (4) The number of alcohol education and responsible server programs presented.

The local board shall submit a copy of the enforcement report to the appointing authority and the Commission not later than five business days after receipt of the enforcement report by the local board. The Commission shall publish this information, by local board and enforcement agency, on a public Internet Web site maintained by the Commission.

(g) **Discharge.** – Local ABC officers and the designated officers of agencies which contract with local boards for enforcement of the ABC laws are subject to the discharge and ineligibility provisions of G.S. 18B-202. (1949, c. 1251, s. 4; 1961, c. 645; 1963, c. 426, s. 2; 1967, c. 868; 1971, c. 872, s. 1; 1973, c. 29; 1977, c. 908; 1981, c. 412, s. 2; 1993, c. 193, s. 2; 1995, c. 466, ss. 3, 4; 2010-122, ss. 5, 6, 7(a); 2021-182, s. 3(e).)

§ 18B-502. Inspection of licensed premises.

(a) **Authority.** – To procure evidence of violations of the ABC law, alcohol law-enforcement agents, employees of the Commission, local ABC officers, and officers of local

law-enforcement agencies that have contracted to provide ABC enforcement under G.S. 18B-501(f) shall have authority to investigate the operation of each licensed premises for which an ABC permit has been issued, to make inspections that include viewing the entire premises, and to examine the books and records of the permittee. The inspection authorized by this section may be made at any time it reasonably appears that someone is on the premises. Alcohol law-enforcement agents are also authorized to be on the premises to the extent necessary to enforce the provisions of Article 68 of Chapter 143 of the General Statutes. For purposes of this subsection, the phrase "licensed premises for which an ABC permit has been issued" includes a social district authorized under G.S. 18B-300.1 and an extended area authorized under G.S. 18B-904(h).

(b) Interference with Inspection. – Refusal by a permittee or by any employee of a permittee to permit officers to enter the premises to make an inspection authorized by subsection (a) shall be cause for revocation, suspension or other action against the permit of the permittee as provided in G.S. 18B-104. It shall be a Class 2 misdemeanor for any person to resist or obstruct an officer attempting to make a lawful inspection under this section.

(c) If any alcohol law enforcement agent or local ABC officer issues a citation to an employee of a permitted establishment, who is not the named holder of an ABC permit for the establishment, for conduct occurring on the premises of the establishment that is a violation of this Chapter or Chapter 14 of the General Statutes, the alcohol law enforcement agent or local ABC officer shall send notice by electronic means or certified mail to the holder of the permit within five business days of the issuance of the citation. If the Commission receives a report from a law enforcement agency other than the Division of Alcohol Law Enforcement of the Department of Public Safety or a local ABC officer documenting violations of this Chapter or Chapter 14 of the General Statutes for conduct occurring on the premises of a permitted establishment, the Commission shall send notice of the alleged violation to the holder of the permit within five business days of receipt of the law enforcement agency report. The written notice shall identify the currently alleged violations and the involved employee. Nothing in this subsection shall prevent or limit the Commission from taking any additional action warranted by the circumstances of the violation. (1939, c. 158, s. 514; 1943, c. 400, s. 6; 1949, c. 974, ss. 11, 14; c. 1251, s. 4; 1951, c. 1056, s. 1; c. 1186, ss. 1, 2; 1953, c. 1207, ss. 2-4; 1957, c. 1440; 1961, c. 645; 1963, c. 426, ss. 1, 2, 4, 5, 12; 1967, c. 868; 1971, c. 872, s. 1; 1977, c. 70, s. 17; 1981, c. 412, s. 2; 1993, c. 539, s. 313; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 24, s. 14(c); 1998-212, s. 19.11(f); 2021-150, s. 22.1; 2022-49, s. 3(a); 2024-41, s. 19(a).)

§ 18B-503. Disposition of seized alcoholic beverages.

(a) Storage. – A law-enforcement officer who seizes alcoholic beverages as evidence of an ABC law violation shall provide for the storage of those alcoholic beverages until the commencement of the trial or administrative hearing relating to the violation, unless some other disposition is authorized under this section.

(b) Disposition Before Trial. – After giving notice to each defendant, to any other known owner, and to the Commission, a judge may order any of the following dispositions of alcoholic beverages seized as evidence of an ABC law violation:

- (1) The destruction of any malt beverages except that amount needed for evidence at trial.
- (2) The sale of any alcoholic beverages other than malt beverages or nontaxpaid alcoholic beverages, and other than any alcoholic beverages needed for evidence at trial, if the trial is likely to be delayed for more than 90 days, or if the

quantity or nature of the alcoholic beverages is such that storage is impractical or unduly expensive.

(3) The destruction of the alcoholic beverages if storage or sale is not practical.

(4) Continued storage of the alcoholic beverages.

(c) Disposition After Trial. – After the criminal charge is resolved, a judge may order the following dispositions of seized alcoholic beverages:

(1) If the owner or possessor of the alcoholic beverages is found guilty of a criminal charge relating to those alcoholic beverages, the judge may order the sale or destruction of any alcoholic beverages that were held until trial.

(2) If the owner or possessor of the alcoholic beverages is found not guilty, or if charges are dismissed or otherwise resolved in favor of the owner or possessor, the judge shall order the alcoholic beverages returned to that owner or possessor, except as provided in subdivision (3).

(3) If the owner or possessor of the alcoholic beverages is found not guilty, or if charges are otherwise resolved in favor of the owner or possessor, but possession of the alcoholic beverages by that owner or possessor would be unlawful, the judge shall order the alcoholic beverages either sold or destroyed.

(4) If ownership of the alcoholic beverages remains uncertain after trial or after the charges have been dismissed, the judge may order the alcoholic beverages held, or the alcoholic beverages sold and the proceeds held, for a specified time, until ownership of the alcoholic beverages can be determined.

(d) Holding for Administrative Hearings. – If alcoholic beverages used as evidence in a criminal proceeding are also needed as evidence at an administrative hearing, a judge shall not order any of the dispositions set out in subsection (c), but shall order the alcoholic beverages held for the administrative hearing and for a determination of final disposition by the Commission. The Commission may, before or after an administrative hearing, order any of the dispositions authorized under subsections (b) and (c). If no related criminal proceeding has commenced, the Commission shall not order sale or destruction of alcoholic beverages until notice has been given to the district attorney for the district where the alcoholic beverages were seized or any violation of ABC laws related to the seizure of the alcoholic beverages is likely to be prosecuted.

(e) Sale Procedure. – The sale of unfortified wine or fortified wine shall be by public auction unless those wines would likely become spoiled or lose value in the time required to arrange a public auction. If spoilage or loss of value is likely, the judge ordering the sale or the Commission may authorize sale at the prevailing wholesale price, as determined by the Commission, to one or more persons holding the appropriate retail wine permits in the county in which the wine was seized, or in a neighboring county if there are no such persons in the county in which the wine was seized. Spirituous liquor may be sold only to the local ABC board serving the city or county in which the liquor was seized, or, if there is no local board for that city or county, to the nearest local board. The sale price shall be at least ten percent (10%) less than the price the local board would pay for the same liquor bought through the State warehouse.

(f) Sale Proceeds. – An agency selling alcoholic beverages seized under the provisions of this Chapter shall keep the proceeds in a separate account until some other disposition is ordered by a judge or the Commission. In a criminal proceeding, if the owner or possessor of the alcoholic beverages is found guilty of a violation relating to seizure of the alcoholic beverages, if the owner or possessor is found not guilty or the charge is dismissed or otherwise resolved in favor of the owner or possessor, but the possession of the alcoholic beverages by that owner or possessor would

be unlawful, or if the ownership of the alcoholic beverages cannot be determined, the proceeds from the sale of those alcoholic beverages shall be paid to the school fund of the county in which the alcoholic beverages were seized. If the owner or possessor of alcoholic beverages seized for violation of the ABC laws is found not guilty of criminal charges relating to the seizure of those beverages or the charge is dismissed or otherwise resolved in favor of the owner or possessor, and if possession of the alcoholic beverages by that owner or possessor was lawful when the beverages were seized, the proceeds from the sale of those alcoholic beverages shall be paid to the owner or possessor. The agency making the sale may deduct and retain from the amount to be placed in the county school fund the costs of storing the seized alcoholic beverages and of conducting the sale, but may not deduct those costs from the amount to be turned over to an owner or possessor of the alcoholic beverages.

(g) Court Action by Owner. – Any person who claims any of the following resulting from the seizure of alcoholic beverages may bring an action in the superior court of the county in which the alcoholic beverages were seized:

- (1) To be the owner of alcoholic beverages that are wrongfully held.
- (2) To be the owner of alcoholic beverages that are needed as evidence in another proceeding.
- (3) To be entitled to proceeds from a sale of seized alcoholic beverages.
- (4) To be entitled to restitution for alcoholic beverages wrongfully destroyed. (1923, c. 1, s. 12; C.S., s. 3411(l); 1939, c. 12; 1941, c. 310; 1957, c. 1235, s. 3; 1971, c. 872, s. 1; 1981, c. 412, s. 2; 1993, c. 415, s. 5.)

§ 18B-504. Forfeiture.

(a) Property Subject to Forfeiture. – The following kinds of property shall be subject to forfeiture:

- (1) Motor vehicles, boats, airplanes, and all other conveyances used to transport nontaxpaid alcoholic beverages in violation of the ABC laws;
- (2) Containers for alcoholic beverages which are manufactured, possessed, sold, or transported in violation of the ABC laws; and
- (3) Equipment or ingredients used in the manufacture of alcoholic beverages in violation of the ABC laws.

(b) Exemption for Forfeiture. – Property which may be possessed lawfully shall not be subject to forfeiture when it was used unlawfully by someone other than the owner of the property and the owner did not consent to the unlawful use.

(c) Seizure of Property. – If property subject to forfeiture has not already been seized as part of an arrest or search, a law-enforcement officer may apply to a judge for an order authorizing seizure of that property. An order for seizure may be issued only after criminal process has been issued for an ABC law violation in connection with that property. The order shall describe the property to be seized and shall state the facts establishing probable cause to believe that the property is subject to forfeiture.

(d) Custody until Trial. – A law-enforcement officer seizing property subject to forfeiture shall provide for its safe storage until trial. The officer may destroy stills and perishable materials seized under subdivision (a)(3), if storage is impractical and if the absence of the property will not be likely to adversely affect the defendant's right to defend against the charge that is the basis for the forfeiture. If the officer having custody of the property is satisfied that it will be returned at the time of trial, he may return the property to the owner upon receiving a bond for the value of the

property, signed by sufficient sureties. If the property is not returned at the time of trial, the full amount of the bond shall be forfeited to the court. Property which it is unlawful to possess may not be returned to the owner.

(e) Disposition after Trial. – The presiding judge in a criminal proceeding for violation of ABC laws may take the following actions after resolution of a charge against the owner or possessor of property subject to forfeiture under this section:

- (1) If the owner or possessor of the property is found guilty of an ABC offense, the judge may order the property forfeited.
- (2) If the owner or possessor of the property is found not guilty, or if the charge is dismissed or otherwise resolved in favor of the owner or possessor, the judge shall order the property returned to the owner or possessor.
- (3) If ownership of the property remains uncertain after trial, the judge may order the property held for a specified time to determine ownership. If the judge finds that ownership cannot be determined with reasonable effort, the judge shall order the property forfeited.
- (4) Regardless of the disposition of the charge, if the property is something that may not be possessed lawfully, the judge shall order it forfeited.
- (5) If the property is also needed as evidence at an administrative hearing, the judge shall provide that the order does not go into effect until the Commission determines that the property is no longer needed for the administrative proceeding.

(f) Disposition of Forfeited Property. – A judge ordering forfeiture of property may order any one of the following dispositions:

- (1) Sale at public auction;
- (2) Sale at auction after notice to certain named individuals or groups, if only a limited number of people would have use for that property;
- (3) Delivery to a named State or local law-enforcement agency, if the property is not suited for sale, with preference to be given in the following order, to: the agency that seized the property, the ALE Division, the Commission, the local board of the jurisdiction in which the property was seized, and the Department of Justice; or
- (4) Destruction, if possession of the property would be unlawful and it could not be used or is not wanted for law enforcement, or if sale or other disposition is not practical.

(g) Proceeds of Sale. – If forfeited property is sold, the proceeds of that sale shall be paid to the school fund of the county in which the property was seized, except as provided in subsection (h). Before placing the proceeds in the school fund the agency making the sale may deduct and retain the costs of storing the property and conducting the sale.

(h) Innocent Parties. – At any time before forfeiture is ordered, an owner of seized property or a holder of a security interest in seized property, other than the defendant, may apply to protect his interest in the property. The application may be made to any judge who has jurisdiction to try the offense with which the property is associated. If the judge finds that the property owner or holder of a security interest did not consent to the unlawful use of the property, and that the property may be possessed lawfully by the owner or holder, the judge may order:

- (1) That the property be returned to the owner, if it is not needed as evidence at trial;

- (2) That the property be returned to the owner following trial or other resolution of the case; or
- (3) That, if the property is sold following trial, a specified sum be paid from the proceeds of that sale to the holder of the security interest.

(i) **Defendant Unavailable.** – When property is seized for forfeiture, but the owner is unknown, the district attorney may seek forfeiture under this section by an action in rem against the property. If the owner is known and has been charged with an offense, but is unavailable for trial, the district attorney may seek forfeiture either by an action in rem against the property or by motion in the criminal action.

(j) **When No Charge is Made.** – Any owner of property seized for forfeiture may apply to a judge to have the property returned to him if no criminal charge has been made in connection with that property within a reasonable time after seizure. The judge may not order the return of the property if possession by the owner would be unlawful. (1923, c. 1, s. 6; C.S., s. 3411(f); 1927, c. 18; 1945, c. 635; 1951, c. 850; 1955, c. 560; 1957, c. 1235, s. 1; 1969, c. 789; 1971, c. 872, s. 1; 1977, c. 854, s. 2; 1981, c. 412, s. 2; c. 747, s. 48; 1993, c. 415, s. 6; 2011-145, s. 19.1(q); 2014-100, s. 17.1(xxx); 2019-203, s. 9(a).)

§ 18B-505. Restitution.

When a person is convicted of a violation of the ABC laws, the court may order him to make restitution to any law-enforcement agency for reasonable expenditures made in purchasing alcoholic beverages from him or his agent as part of an investigation leading to his conviction. (1981, c. 412, s. 2.)

§§ 18B-506 through 18B-599. Reserved for future codification purposes.