

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2017

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HOUSE BILL 960*
Committee Substitute Favorable 6/6/18
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Short Title: Local Law Enforcement/Citizens Academies.

(Public)

Sponsors:

Referred to:

May 21, 2018

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT TO ENCOURAGE LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES TO OPERATE PROGRAMS THAT EDUCATE CITIZENS REGARDING LAW ENFORCEMENT OPERATIONS, TO RECOGNIZE THE DANGER SIGNS OF POTENTIALLY VIOLENT ACTIVITIES, AND TO PROVIDE TRAINING TO CITIZENS WHO WANT TO PROVIDE VOLUNTEER SERVICES TO LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES, AS RECOMMENDED BY THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1. Article 13 of Chapter 160A of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new section to read:

"§ 160A-289.3. Citizens academy and volunteer programs.

(a) Findings. – The General Assembly finds the following:

- (1) Acts of terrorism and other forms of violence directed against innocent civilians of all ages are on the increase.
- (2) Where there are "see something, say something" programs in effect in local communities, the information gained is beneficial to the development of intelligence information that can, to some extent, preempt and ameliorate the effects of these acts of violence.
- (3) Programs conducted by local law enforcement entities that educate volunteer citizens to recognize the danger signs involved in illegal or potentially violent activities increase the effectiveness of "see something, say something" programs.
- (4) Such programs are in place and working at the local level in North Carolina. These programs demonstrate the effectiveness of getting more eyes surveilling a situation and help increase the likelihood of reported danger signs.

(b) Local Programs. – The chief of police of a local police department or of a county police department may establish a citizens academy (the program) that educates community members on the operations of the department and prepares participants to provide appropriate volunteer services. The program may provide orientation and training with department representatives from a variety of backgrounds and disciplines. The program should follow a pre-established curriculum that (i) includes instruction on the recognition and reporting of suspicious activity indicative of criminal behavior; (ii) emphasizes recognition of activities and threats that might lead to acts of terrorism or other violence against innocent civilians; (iii) includes de-escalation and mental health crisis training; (iv) includes training that will help



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1 participants better understand persons with disabilities or mental illness; and (v) includes
2 diversity and equity training. When selecting individuals to participate in the program, the
3 department shall conduct background checks on potential participants and may exclude
4 individuals based on prior criminal convictions or pending criminal charges or investigations.
5 Any individual who is also a veteran must have received an honorable discharge to be eligible to
6 participate in the program.

7 (c) Volunteer Services. – The department may use graduates of the program to provide
8 appropriate volunteer services that support the operations of the department and increase safety
9 and security within the community. These services may include volunteers participating in
10 community patrols or other observational activities. No individual may be armed while providing
11 volunteer services unless the individual has successfully completed a basic law enforcement
12 training course as approved by the North Carolina Criminal Justice Education and Training
13 Standards Commission and is authorized in writing to do so by the chief of police of the police
14 department sponsoring the program."

15 **SECTION 2.** Article 3 of Chapter 162 of the General Statutes is amended by adding
16 a new section to read:

17 **"§ 162-27. Citizens academy and volunteer programs.**

18 (a) Findings. – The General Assembly finds the following:

- 19 (1) Acts of terrorism and other forms of violence directed against innocent
20 civilians of all ages are on the increase.
- 21 (2) Where there are "see something, say something" programs in effect in local
22 communities, the information gained is beneficial to the development of
23 intelligence information that can, to some extent, preempt and ameliorate the
24 effects of these acts of violence.
- 25 (3) Programs conducted by local law enforcement entities that educate volunteer
26 citizens to recognize the danger signs involved in illegal or potentially violent
27 activities increase the effectiveness of "see something, say something"
28 programs.
- 29 (4) Such programs are in place and working at the local level in North Carolina.
30 These programs demonstrate the effectiveness of getting more eyes surveilling
31 a situation and help increase the likelihood of reported danger signs.

32 (b) Local Programs. – The sheriff may establish a citizens academy (the program) that
33 educates community members on the operations of the department and prepares participants to
34 provide appropriate volunteer services. The program may provide orientation and training with
35 department representatives from a variety of backgrounds and disciplines. The program should
36 follow a pre-established curriculum that (i) includes instruction on the recognition and reporting
37 of suspicious activity indicative of criminal behavior; (ii) emphasizes recognition of activities
38 and threats that might lead to acts of terrorism or other violence against innocent civilians; (iii)
39 includes de-escalation and mental health crisis training; (iv) includes training that will help
40 participants better understand persons with disabilities or mental illness; and (v) includes
41 diversity and equity training. When selecting individuals to participate in the program, the sheriff
42 shall conduct background checks on potential participants and may exclude individuals based on
43 prior criminal convictions or pending criminal charges or investigations. Any individual who is
44 also a veteran must have received an honorable discharge to be eligible to participate in the
45 program.

46 (c) Volunteer Services. – The sheriff may use graduates of the program to provide
47 appropriate volunteer services that support the operations of the department and increase safety
48 and security within the community. These services may include volunteers participating in
49 community patrols or other observational activities. No individual may be armed while providing
50 volunteer services unless the individual has successfully completed a basic law enforcement
51 training course as approved by the North Carolina Sheriffs' Education and Training Standards

1 Commission and is authorized in writing to do so by the sheriff of the department sponsoring the
2 program."

3 **SECTION 3.** This act is effective when it becomes law.