

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2011

SESSION LAW 2012-148
SENATE BILL 635

AN ACT TO AMEND THE STATE SENTENCING LAWS TO COMPLY WITH THE UNITED STATES SUPREME COURT DECISION IN MILLER V. ALABAMA.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1. Chapter 15A of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new Article to read:

"Article 93.

"Sentencing for Minors Subject to Life Imprisonment Without Parole.

"§ 15A-1476. Applicability.

Notwithstanding the provisions of G.S. 14-17, a defendant who is convicted of first degree murder, and who was under the age of 18 at the time of the offense, shall be sentenced in accordance with this Article. For the purposes of this Article, "life imprisonment with parole" shall mean that the defendant shall serve a minimum of 25 years imprisonment prior to becoming eligible for parole.

"§ 15A-1477. Penalty determination.

(a) In determining a sentence under this Article, the court shall do one of the following:

- (1) If the sole basis for conviction of a count or each count of first degree murder was the felony murder rule, then the court shall sentence the defendant to life imprisonment with parole.
- (2) If the court does not sentence the defendant pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection, then the court shall conduct a hearing to determine whether the defendant should be sentenced to life imprisonment without parole, as set forth in G.S. 14-17, or a lesser sentence of life imprisonment with parole.

(b) The hearing under subdivision (2) of subsection (a) of this section shall be conducted by the trial judge as soon as practicable after the guilty verdict is returned. The State and the defendant shall not be required to resubmit evidence presented during the guilt determination phase of the case. Evidence, including evidence in rebuttal, may be presented as to any matter that the court deems relevant to sentencing, and any evidence which the court deems to have probative value may be received.

(c) The defendant or the defendant's counsel may submit mitigating circumstances to the court, including, but not limited to, the following factors:

- (1) Age at the time of the offense.
- (2) Immaturity.
- (3) Ability to appreciate the risks and consequences of the conduct.
- (4) Intellectual capacity.
- (5) Prior record.
- (6) Mental health.
- (7) Familial or peer pressure exerted upon the defendant.
- (8) Likelihood that the defendant would benefit from rehabilitation in confinement.
- (9) Any other mitigating factor or circumstance.

(d) The State and the defendant or the defendant's counsel shall be permitted to present argument for or against the sentence of life imprisonment with parole. The defendant or the defendant's counsel shall have the right to the last argument.

(e) The provisions of Article 58 of Chapter 15A of the General Statutes apply to proceedings under this Article.

"§ 15A-1478. Sentencing; assignment for resentencing.



(a) The court shall consider any mitigating factors in determining whether, based upon all the circumstances of the offense and the particular circumstances of the defendant, the defendant should be sentenced to life imprisonment with parole instead of life imprisonment without parole. The order adjudging the sentence shall include findings on the absence or presence of any mitigating factors and such other findings as the court deems appropriate to include in the order.

(b) All motions for appropriate relief filed in superior court seeking resentencing under the provisions of this Article may be heard and determined in the trial division by any judge (i) who is empowered to act in criminal matters in the superior court district or set of districts as defined in G.S. 7A-41.1, in which the judgment was entered and (ii) who is assigned pursuant to this section to review the motion for appropriate relief and take the appropriate administrative action to dispense with the motion.

(c) The judge who presided at the trial of the defendant is empowered to act upon the motion for appropriate relief even though the judge is in another district or even though the judge's commission has expired; however, if the judge who presided at the trial is still unavailable to act, the senior resident superior court judge shall assign a judge who is empowered to act under subsection (b) of this section.

(d) All motions for appropriate relief filed in superior court seeking resentencing under the provisions of this Article shall, when filed, be referred to the senior resident superior court judge, who shall assign the motion as provided by this section for review and administrative action, including, as may be appropriate, dismissal, calendaring for hearing, entry of a scheduling order for subsequent events in the case, or other appropriate actions.

"§ 15A-1479. Incidents of parole.

(a) Except as otherwise provided in this section, a defendant sentenced to life imprisonment with parole shall be subject to the conditions and procedures set forth in Article 85 of Chapter 15A of the General Statutes, including the notification requirement in G.S. 15A-1371(b)(3).

(b) The term of parole for a person released from imprisonment from a sentence of life imprisonment with parole shall be five years and may not be terminated earlier by the Post-Release Supervision and Parole Commission.

(c) A defendant sentenced to life imprisonment with parole who is paroled, and then violates a condition of parole and is returned to prison to serve the life sentence, shall not be eligible for parole for five years from the date of the return to confinement.

(d) Life imprisonment with parole under this Article means that unless the defendant receives parole, the defendant shall remain imprisoned for the defendant's natural life."

SECTION 2. The North Carolina Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, in consultation with the Office of the Juvenile Defender, the Conference of District Attorneys, and other organizations and agencies it deems appropriate, shall study the provisions in this act, United States Supreme Court precedent relevant to sentencing a minor for first degree murder, sentencing policies in other jurisdictions, and any other matter relating to the sentencing of minors convicted of first degree murder. The Commission shall report its findings and recommendations to the General Assembly no later than January 31, 2013.

SECTION 3. This act is effective when it becomes law and is applicable to any sentencing hearings held on or after that date. This act also applies to any resentencing hearings required by law for a defendant who was under the age of 18 years at the time of the offense, was sentenced to life imprisonment without parole prior to the effective date of this act, and for whom a resentencing hearing has been ordered.

In the General Assembly read three times and ratified this the 3rd day of July, 2012.

s/ Walter H. Dalton
President of the Senate

s/ Thom Tillis
Speaker of the House of Representatives

s/ Beverly E. Perdue
Governor

Approved 3:59 p.m. this 12th day of July, 2012