

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2015

SESSION LAW 2015-186
HOUSE BILL 529

AN ACT TO REPEAL THE PUNISHMENT OF REVOKING A PERSON'S DRIVERS LICENSE FOR COMMITTING CERTAIN DRIVING WHILE LICENSE REVOKED OFFENSES; TO MAKE DRIVING WHILE LICENSE REVOKED A NONMOVING VIOLATION FOR CERTAIN PURPOSES; AND TO MAKE OTHER CONFORMING CHANGES.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1. This act shall be known as the "North Carolina Drivers License Restoration Act."

SECTION 2. G.S. 20-28 reads as rewritten:

"§ 20-28. Unlawful to drive while license revoked, after notification, or while disqualified.

(a) Driving While License Revoked. – Except as provided in ~~subsection~~ subsections (a1) or (a2) of this section, any person whose drivers license has been revoked who drives any motor vehicle upon the highways of the State while the license is revoked is guilty of a Class 3 misdemeanor ~~unless the person's license was originally revoked for an impaired driving revocation, in which case the person is guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor.~~

(a1) Driving While License Revoked for Impaired Driving. – Any person whose drivers license has been revoked for an impaired driving revocation as defined in G.S. 20-28.2(a) and who drives any motor vehicle upon the highways of the State is guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor. Upon conviction, the person's license shall be revoked for an additional period of one year for the first offense, two years for the second offense, and permanently for a third or subsequent offense.

If the person's license was originally revoked for an impaired driving revocation, the court may order as a condition of probation that the offender abstain from alcohol consumption and verify compliance by use of a continuous alcohol monitoring system, of a type approved by the Division of Adult Correction of the Department of Public Safety, for a minimum period of 90 days.

The restoree of a revoked drivers license who operates a motor vehicle upon the highways of the State without maintaining financial responsibility as provided by law shall be punished as for driving without a license.

~~(a1)~~(a2) Driving Without Reclaiming License. – A person convicted under subsection (a) shall be punished as if the person had been convicted of driving without a license under G.S. 20-35 if the person demonstrates to the court that either subdivisions (1) and (2), or subdivision (3) of this subsection is true:

- (1) At the time of the offense, the person's license was revoked solely under G.S. 20-16.5; and
- (2) a. The offense occurred more than 45 days after the effective date of a revocation order issued under G.S. 20-16.5(f) and the period of revocation was 45 days as provided under subdivision (3) of that subsection; or
b. The offense occurred more than 30 days after the effective date of the revocation order issued under any other provision of G.S. 20-16.5; or
- (3) At the time of the offense the person had met the requirements of G.S. 50-13.12, or G.S. 110-142.2 and was eligible for reinstatement of the person's drivers license privilege as provided therein.

In addition, a person punished under this subsection shall be treated for drivers license and insurance rating purposes as if the person had been convicted of driving without a license under



G.S. 20-35, and the conviction report sent to the Division must indicate that the person is to be so treated.

~~(a2)(a3)~~ Driving After Notification or Failure to Appear. – A person shall be guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor if:

- (1) The person operates a motor vehicle upon a highway while that person's license is revoked for an impaired drivers license revocation after the Division has sent notification in accordance with G.S. 20-48; or
- (2) The person fails to appear for two years from the date of the charge after being charged with an implied-consent offense.

Upon conviction, the person's drivers license shall be revoked for an additional period of one year for the first offense, two years for the second offense, and permanently for a third or subsequent offense. The restorer of a revoked drivers license who operates a motor vehicle upon the highways of the State without maintaining financial responsibility as provided by law shall be punished as for driving without a license.

...
(c) When Person May Apply for License. – A person whose license has been revoked may apply for a license as follows:

- (1) If revoked under subsection ~~(a)-(a1)~~ of this section for one year, the person may apply for a license after 90 days.
- (2) If punished under subsection ~~(a1)-(a2)~~ of this section and the original revocation was pursuant to G.S. 20-16.5, in order to obtain reinstatement of a drivers license, the person must obtain a substance abuse assessment and show proof of financial responsibility to the Division. If the assessment recommends education or treatment, the person must complete the education or treatment within the time limits specified by the Division.
- (3) If revoked under subsection ~~(a2)-(a3)~~ of this section for one year, the person may apply for a license after one year.
- (4) If revoked under this section for two years, the person may apply for a license after one year.
- (5) If revoked under this section permanently, the person may apply for a license after three years.

(c1) Upon the filing of an application the Division may, with or without a hearing, issue a new license upon satisfactory proof that the former licensee has not been convicted of a moving violation under this Chapter or the laws of another state, a violation of any provision of the alcoholic beverage laws of this State or another state, or a violation of any provisions of the drug laws of this State or another state when any of these violations occurred during the revocation period. For purposes of this subsection, a violation of subsection (a) of this section shall not be considered a moving violation.

...
(c3) A person whose license is revoked for violation of subsection ~~(a)-(a1)~~ of this section where the person's license was originally revoked for an impaired driving revocation, or a person whose license is revoked for a violation of subsection ~~(a2)-(a3)~~ of this section, may only have the license conditionally restored by the Division pursuant to the provisions of subsection (c4) of this section.

...
(d) Driving While Disqualified. – A person who was convicted of a violation that disqualified the person and required the person's drivers license to be revoked who drives a motor vehicle during the revocation period is punishable as provided in ~~the other subsections~~ subsection (a1) of this section. A person who has been disqualified who drives a commercial motor vehicle during the disqualification period is guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor and is disqualified for an additional period as follows:

- (1) For a first offense of driving while disqualified, a person is disqualified for a period equal to the period for which the person was disqualified when the offense occurred.
- (2) For a second offense of driving while disqualified, a person is disqualified for a period equal to two times the period for which the person was disqualified when the offense occurred.
- (3) For a third offense of driving while disqualified, a person is disqualified for life.

The Division may reduce a disqualification for life under this subsection to 10 years in accordance with the guidelines adopted under G.S. 20-17.4(b). A person who drives a commercial motor vehicle while the person is disqualified and the person's drivers license is revoked is punishable for both driving while the person's license was revoked and driving while disqualified."

SECTION 3. G.S. 20-28.1(a) reads as rewritten:

"(a) Upon receipt of notice of conviction of any person of a motor vehicle moving offense, ~~except a conviction punishable under G.S. 20-28(a1),~~ such offense having been committed while such person's driving privilege was in a state of suspension or revocation, the Division shall revoke such person's driving privilege for an additional period of time as set forth in subsection (b) hereof. For purposes of this section a violation of G.S. 20-7(a), 20-24.1, or 20-28(a) or (a2) shall not be considered a "motor vehicle moving offense" unless the offense occurred in a commercial motor vehicle or the person held a commercial drivers license at the time of the offense."

SECTION 4. G.S. 20-17.8(f) reads as rewritten:

"(f) Effect of Violation of Restriction. – A person subject to this section who violates any of the restrictions of this section commits the offense of driving while license revoked for impaired driving under G.S. 20-28(a)G.S. 20-28(a1) and is subject to punishment and license revocation as provided in that section. If a law enforcement officer has reasonable grounds to believe that a person subject to this section has consumed alcohol while driving or has driven while he has remaining in his body any alcohol previously consumed, the suspected offense of driving while license is revoked is an alcohol-related offense subject to the implied-consent provisions of G.S. 20-16.2. If a person subject to this section is charged with driving while license revoked by violating a condition of subsection (b) of this section, and a judicial official determines that there is probable cause for the charge, the person's license is suspended pending the resolution of the case, and the judicial official must require the person to surrender the license. The judicial official must also notify the person that he is not entitled to drive until his case is resolved. An alcohol concentration report from the ignition interlock system shall not be admissible as evidence of driving while license revoked, nor shall it be admissible in an administrative revocation proceeding as provided in subsection (g) of this section, unless the person operated a vehicle when the ignition interlock system indicated an alcohol concentration in violation of the restriction placed upon the person by subdivision (b)(3) of this section."

SECTION 5. G.S. 20-179.3(j) reads as rewritten:

"(j) Effect of Violation of Restriction. – A holder of a limited driving privilege who violates any of its restrictions commits the offense of driving while ~~his license is revoked for~~ impaired driving under G.S. 20-28(a)G.S. 20-28(a1) and is subject to punishment and license revocation as provided in that section. If a law-enforcement officer has reasonable grounds to believe that the holder of a limited driving privilege has consumed alcohol while driving or has driven while he has remaining in his body any alcohol previously consumed, the suspected offense of driving while license is revoked is an alcohol-related offense subject to the implied-consent provisions of G.S. 20-16.2. If a holder of a limited driving privilege is charged with driving while license revoked by violating a restriction contained in his limited driving privilege, and a judicial official determines that there is probable cause for the charge, the limited driving privilege is suspended pending the resolution of the case, and the judicial official must require the holder to surrender the limited driving privilege. The judicial official must also notify the holder that he is not entitled to drive until his case is resolved.

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, an alcohol screening test may be administered to a driver suspected of violating this section, and the results of an alcohol screening test or the driver's refusal to submit may be used by a law enforcement officer, a court, or an administrative agency in determining if alcohol was present in the driver's body. No alcohol screening tests are valid under this section unless the device used is one approved by the Department of Health and Human Services, and the screening test is conducted in accordance with the applicable regulations of the Department as to the manner of its use."

SECTION 6. G.S. 20-179(c) reads as rewritten:

"(c) Determining Existence of Grossly Aggravating Factors. – At the sentencing hearing, based upon the evidence presented at trial and in the hearing, the judge, or the jury in superior court, must first determine whether there are any grossly aggravating factors in the case. Whether a prior conviction exists under subdivision (1) of this subsection, or whether a conviction exists under subdivision (d)(5) of this section, shall be matters to be determined by

the judge, and not the jury, in district or superior court. If the sentencing hearing is for a case remanded back to district court from superior court, the judge shall determine whether the defendant has been convicted of any offense that was not considered at the initial sentencing hearing and impose the appropriate sentence under this section. The judge must impose the Aggravated Level One punishment under subsection (f3) of this section if it is determined that three or more grossly aggravating factors apply. The judge must impose the Level One punishment under subsection (g) of this section if it is determined that the grossly aggravating factor in subdivision (4) of this subsection applies or two of the other grossly aggravating factors apply. If the judge does not find that the aggravating factor at subdivision (4) of this subsection applies, then the judge must impose the Level Two punishment under subsection (h) of this section if it is determined that only one of the other grossly aggravating factors applies. The grossly aggravating factors are:

- (1) A prior conviction for an offense involving impaired driving if:
 - a. The conviction occurred within seven years before the date of the offense for which the defendant is being sentenced; or
 - b. The conviction occurs after the date of the offense for which the defendant is presently being sentenced, but prior to or contemporaneously with the present sentencing; or
 - c. The conviction occurred in district court; the case was appealed to superior court; the appeal has been withdrawn, or the case has been remanded back to district court; and a new sentencing hearing has not been held pursuant to G.S. 20-38.7.Each prior conviction is a separate grossly aggravating factor.
- (2) Driving by the defendant at the time of the offense while his driver's license was revoked under ~~G.S. 20-28~~, G.S. 20-28(a1), and the revocation was an impaired driving revocation under G.S. 20-28.2(a).

...

In imposing an Aggravated Level One, a Level One, or a Level Two punishment, the judge may consider the aggravating and mitigating factors in subsections (d) and (e) in determining the appropriate sentence. If there are no grossly aggravating factors in the case, the judge must weigh all aggravating and mitigating factors and impose punishment as required by subsection (f)."

SECTION 7. This act becomes effective December 1, 2015, and applies to convictions on or after that date. Prosecutions for offenses committed before the effective date of this act are not abated or affected by this act, and the statutes that would be applicable but for this act remain applicable to those prosecutions.

In the General Assembly read three times and ratified this the 29th day of July, 2015.

s/ Philip E. Berger
President Pro Tempore of the Senate

s/ Paul Stam
Speaker Pro Tempore of the House of Representatives

s/ Pat McCrory
Governor

Approved 3:10 p.m. this 5th day of August, 2015