

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2009

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HOUSE BILL 472*
Committee Substitute Favorable 4/23/09

Short Title: North Carolina Racial Justice Act.

(Public)

Sponsors:

Referred to:

March 9, 2009

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
2 AN ACT TO PROVIDE FOR THE FAIR AND RELIABLE IMPOSITION OF CAPITAL
3 SENTENCES.

4 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

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

7 "Article 101.

8 "North Carolina Racial Justice Act.

9 **"§ 15A-2010. North Carolina Racial Justice Act.**

10 No person shall be subject to or given a sentence of death, or shall be executed pursuant to
11 any judgment that was sought or obtained on the basis of race.

12 **"§ 15A-2011. Proof of racial discrimination.**

13 (a) A finding that race was the basis of the decision to seek or impose a death sentence
14 may be established if the court finds that race was a significant factor in decisions to seek or
15 impose the sentence of death in the county, the prosecutorial district, or the State at large at the
16 time the death sentence was sought or imposed.

17 (b) Evidence relevant to establish a finding that race was a significant factor in
18 decisions to seek or impose the sentence of death in the county, the prosecutorial district, or the
19 State at large at the time the death sentence was sought or imposed may include statistical
20 evidence or other evidence, including, but not limited to, sworn testimony of attorneys,
21 prosecutors, law enforcement officers, jurors, or other members of the criminal justice system
22 or both, that irrespective of statutory factors one or more of the following applies:

23 (1) Death sentences were sought or imposed significantly more frequently upon
24 persons of one race than upon persons of another race.

25 (2) Death sentences were sought or imposed significantly more frequently as
26 punishment for capital offenses against persons of one race than as
27 punishment of capital offenses against persons of another race.

28 (3) Race was a significant factor in decisions to exercise peremptory challenges
29 during jury selection.

30 A juror's testimony under this subsection shall be consistent with Rule 606(b) of the North
31 Carolina Rules of Evidence, as contained in G.S. 8C-1.

32 (c) The defendant has the burden of proving that race was a significant factor in
33 decisions to seek or impose the sentence of death in the county, the prosecutorial district, or the
34 State at large at the time the death sentence was sought or imposed. The State may offer
35 evidence in rebuttal of the claims or evidence of the defendant. The State may rebut a statistical
36 showing of statewide racial disparities by introducing statistical evidence or other evidence
37 demonstrating that no racial discrimination occurred in the county or the prosecutorial district



1 at the time the death penalty was sought or imposed. The court may consider evidence of any
2 program, implemented prior to the defendant's trial for the purpose of eliminating racial
3 disparities, in its evaluation of whether the State has adequately addressed those disparities.

4 **"§ 15A-2012. Hearing procedure.**

5 (a) The defendant shall state with particularity how the evidence supports a claim that
6 race was a significant factor in decisions to seek or impose the sentence of death in the county,
7 the prosecutorial district, or the State at large at the time the death sentence was sought or
8 imposed. The claim shall be raised by the defendant at the pretrial conference or in
9 postconviction proceedings. The court shall schedule a hearing on the claim and shall prescribe
10 a time for the submission of evidence by both parties. If the court finds that race was a
11 significant factor in decisions to seek or impose the sentence of death in the county, the
12 prosecutorial district, or the State at large at the time the death sentence was sought or imposed,
13 the court shall order that a death sentence shall not be sought, or that the death sentence
14 imposed by the judgment shall be vacated and the defendant resentenced to life imprisonment
15 without the possibility of parole.

16 (b) Notwithstanding any other provision or time limitation contained in Article 89 of
17 Chapter 15A of the General Statutes, a defendant may seek relief from the defendant's death
18 sentence upon the ground that racial considerations played a significant part in the decision to
19 seek or impose a death sentence by filing a motion seeking relief. The motion shall be filed
20 within one year of the effective date of this act.

21 Except as specifically stated in subsections (a) and (b) of this section, the procedures and
22 hearing on the motion seeking relief from a death sentence upon the ground that race was a
23 significant factor in decisions to seek or impose the sentence of death in the county, the
24 prosecutorial district, or the State at large at the time the death sentence was sought or imposed,
25 shall follow and comply with G.S. 15A-1420, 15A-1421, and 15A-1422."

26 **SECTION 2.** This act is effective when it becomes law and applies retroactively.