

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2011

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HOUSE BILL 215
Committee Substitute Favorable 3/23/11

Short Title: Unborn Victims of Violence Act/Ethen's Law.

(Public)

Sponsors:

Referred to:

March 3, 2011

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
2 AN ACT TO CREATE CRIMINAL OFFENSES FOR ACTS THAT CAUSE THE DEATH
3 OR INJURY OF AN UNBORN CHILD OR ARE COMMITTED AGAINST A
4 PREGNANT WOMAN, AND TO PROVIDE THAT THE ACT SHALL BE ENTITLED
5 "THE UNBORN VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE ACT/ETHEN'S LAW."

6 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

7 SECTION 1. This act shall be known as the "Unborn Victims of Violence
8 Act/Ethen's Law."

9 SECTION 2. Chapter 14 of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new
10 Article to read:

11 "Article 6A.

12 "Unborn Victims.

13 "**§ 14-23.1. Definition.**

14 As used in this Article, unless the context requires otherwise, "unborn child" means a
15 member of the species homo sapiens, at any stage of development, who is carried in the womb.

16 "**§ 14-23.2. Murder of an unborn child; penalty.**

17 (a) A person who unlawfully causes the death of an unborn child is guilty of the
18 separate offense of murder of an unborn child if the person does any one of the following:

19 (1) Willfully and maliciously commits an act with the intent to cause the death
20 of the unborn child.

21 (2) Commits an act causing the death of the unborn child that is inherently
22 dangerous to human life and is done so recklessly and wantonly that it
23 reflects disregard of life.

24 (3) Causes the death of the unborn child in perpetration or attempted
25 perpetration of any of the criminal offenses set forth under G.S. 14-17.

26 (b) Penalty. – An offense under this section shall be a Class A felony, and any person
27 who commits such offense shall be punished with imprisonment in the State's prison for life
28 without parole.

29 "**§ 14-23.3. Voluntary manslaughter of an unborn child; penalty.**

30 (a) A person is guilty of the separate offense of voluntary manslaughter of an unborn
31 child if the person unlawfully causes the death of an unborn child by an act that would be
32 voluntary manslaughter if it resulted in the death of the mother.

33 (b) Penalty. – Any person who commits an offense under this section shall be guilty of
34 a Class D felony.

35 "**§ 14-23.4. Involuntary manslaughter of an unborn child; penalty.**



1 (a) A person is guilty of the separate offense of involuntary manslaughter of an unborn
2 child if the person unlawfully causes the death of an unborn child by an act that would be
3 involuntary manslaughter if it resulted in the death of the mother.

4 (b) Penalty. – Any person who commits an offense under this section shall be guilty of
5 a Class F felony.

6 **"§ 14-23.5. Assault inflicting serious bodily injury on an unborn child; penalty.**

7 (a) A person is guilty of the separate offense of assault inflicting serious bodily injury
8 on an unborn child if the person commits a battery on the mother of the unborn child and the
9 child is subsequently born alive and suffered serious bodily harm as a result of the battery.

10 (b) For purposes of this section, "serious bodily harm" is defined as bodily injury that
11 creates a substantial risk of death, or that causes serious permanent disfigurement, coma, a
12 permanent or protracted condition that causes extreme pain, or permanent or protracted loss or
13 impairment of the function of any bodily member or organ, or that results in prolonged
14 hospitalization, or causes the birth of the unborn child prior to 37 weeks gestation, if the child
15 weighs 2,500 grams or less at the time of birth.

16 (c) Penalty. – Any person who commits an offense under this section shall be guilty of
17 a Class F felony.

18 **"§ 14-23.6. Battery on an unborn child.**

19 (a) A person is guilty of the separate offense of battery on an unborn child if the person
20 commits a battery on a pregnant woman. This offense is a lesser-included offense of
21 G.S. 14-23.5.

22 (b) Penalty. – Any person who commits an offense under this section is guilty of a
23 Class A1 misdemeanor.

24 **"§ 14-23.7. Exceptions.**

25 Nothing in this Article shall be construed to permit the prosecution under this Article of:

26 (1) Acts which cause the death of an unborn child if those acts were lawful,
27 pursuant to the provisions of G.S. 14-45.1.

28 (2) Acts which are committed pursuant to usual and customary standards of
29 medical practice during diagnostic testing or therapeutic treatment.

30 (3) Acts committed by a pregnant woman with respect to her own unborn child,
31 including, but not limited to, acts which result in miscarriage or stillbirth by
32 the woman. The following definitions shall apply in this section:

33 a. Miscarriage. – The interruption of the normal development of an
34 unborn child, other than by a live birth, and which is not an induced
35 abortion permitted under G.S. 14-45.1, resulting in the complete
36 expulsion or extraction from a pregnant woman of the unborn child.

37 b. Stillbirth. – The death of an unborn child prior to the complete
38 expulsion or extraction from a woman, irrespective of the duration of
39 pregnancy and which is not an induced abortion permitted under
40 G.S. 14-45.1.

41 **"§ 14-23.8. Knowledge not required.**

42 Except for an offense under G.S. 14-23.2(a)(1), an offense under this Article does not
43 require proof that:

44 (1) The person engaging in the conduct had knowledge or should have had
45 knowledge that the victim of the underlying offense was pregnant, or

46 (2) The defendant intended to cause the death of, or bodily injury to, the unborn
47 child."

48 **SECTION 3.** G.S. 14-18.2 is repealed.

49 **SECTION 4.** This act shall not be construed to impose criminal liability on an
50 expectant mother who is the victim of acts of domestic violence which cause injury or death to

1 her unborn child. The term "domestic violence" is defined in Chapter 50B of the General
2 Statutes.

3 **SECTION 5.** Prosecutions for offenses committed before the effective date of this
4 act are not abated or affected by this act, and the statutes that would be applicable but for this
5 act remain applicable to those prosecutions.

6 **SECTION 6.** If any provision of this act or its application is held invalid, the
7 invalidity does not affect other provisions or applications of this act that can be given effect
8 without the invalid provisions or application, and to this end the provisions of this act are
9 severable.

10 **SECTION 7.** A prosecution for or conviction under this act is not a bar to
11 conviction of or punishment for any other crime committed by the defendant as part of the
12 same conduct.

13 **SECTION 8.** This act becomes effective December 1, 2011, and applies to
14 offenses committed on or after that date.