



# HOUSE BILL 972: Law Enforcement Recordings/No Public Record.

2016-2017 General Assembly

<b>Committee:</b>	House Finance	<b>Date:</b>	June 20, 2016
<b>Introduced by:</b>	Reps. Faircloth, McNeill, Boles, Hurley	<b>Prepared by:</b>	Susan Sitze
<b>Analysis of:</b>	PCS to Second Edition H972-CSSA-115		Committee Counsel

**SUMMARY:** *The Proposed Committee Substitute (PCS) for House Bill 972 would provide that recordings made by law enforcement agencies are not public records, establish whether, to whom, and what portions of a recording may be disclosed or a copy released, establish the procedure for contesting a refusal to disclose a recording or to obtain a copy of a recording, and direct State or local law enforcement agencies to provide, upon request, access to a method to view and analyze recordings to the State Bureau of Investigation (SBI) and the North Carolina State Crime Laboratory (State Crime Lab).*

### BILL ANALYSIS:

**Section 1** of the PCS would create a new G.S. 132-1.4A to govern the disclosure and release of video and audio recordings made by law enforcement agencies through the use of body-worn cameras, dashboard cameras, or any other video or audio recording device operated by or on behalf of a law enforcement agency when carrying out law enforcement responsibilities. The provisions would not govern video or audio recordings of interviews regarding agency internal investigations or interviews or interrogations of suspects or witnesses. The recordings would not be public records or personnel records.

### Disclosure – Allowing a person to view or listen to a recording

Disclosure may be provided by the custodial law enforcement agency upon a written request to the head of the law enforcement agency stating the date and approximate time of the activity captured in the recording or otherwise identifying the activity with reasonable particularity sufficient to identify the recording to which the request refers. Only those portions of the recording that are relevant to the person's request may be disclosed.

Law enforcement agencies may disclose a recording only to the following persons:

- A person whose image or voice is in the recording.
- A personal representative of an adult person whose image or voice is in the recording, if the adult person has consented to the disclosure.
- A personal representative of a minor or an adult person under lawful guardianship whose image or voice is in the recording.
- A personal representative of a deceased person whose image or voice is in the recording.
- A personal representative of an adult person who is incapacitated and unable to provide consent to disclosure.

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The custodial law enforcement agency may consider any of the following factors in determining if a record is disclosed:

- If the person requesting disclosure of the recording is a person authorized to receive disclosure pursuant to subsection (c) of this section.
- If the recording contains information that is otherwise confidential or exempt from disclosure or release under State or federal law.
- If disclosure would reveal information regarding a person that is of a highly sensitive personal nature.
- If disclosure may harm the reputation or jeopardize the safety of a person.
- If disclosure would create a serious threat to the fair, impartial, and orderly administration of justice.
- If confidentiality is necessary to protect either an active or inactive internal or criminal investigation or potential internal or criminal investigation.

A person requesting disclosure may appeal the denial of disclosure, or the agency's failure to provide disclosure more than three business days after the request, to the superior court in any county where any portion of the recording was made. The court's standard of review is abuse of discretion. The court may conduct an in camera review of the recording. Notice of any proceeding shall be given to the head of the custodial law enforcement agency, any law enforcement officer whose image or voice is in the recording and the head of their employing agency, and the District Attorney.

## **Release** – Providing a copy of a recording

Recordings may only be released pursuant to court order. Any person may file an action in the superior court in any county where any portion of the recording was made for an order releasing the recording. In determining whether to release a recording, the court shall consider the following standards:

- Release is necessary to advance a compelling public interest.
- The recording contains information that is otherwise confidential or exempt from disclosure or release under State or federal law.
- The person requesting release is seeking to obtain evidence to determine legal issues in a current or potential court proceeding.
- Release would reveal information regarding a person that is of a highly sensitive personal nature.
- Release may harm the reputation or jeopardize the safety of a person.
- Release would create a serious threat to the fair, impartial, and orderly administration of justice.
- Confidentiality is necessary to protect either an active or inactive internal or criminal investigation or potential internal or criminal investigation.
- There is good cause shown to release all portions of a recording.

The court may conduct an in camera review of the recording. Notice of any proceeding shall be given to the head of the custodial law enforcement agency, any law enforcement officer whose image or voice is in the recording and the head of their employing agency, and the District Attorney.

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## Additional provisions

- A custodial law enforcement agency shall disclose or release a recording to a district attorney:
  - For review of potential criminal charges.
  - In order to comply with discovery requirements in a criminal prosecution.
  - Any other law enforcement purpose.
- A custodial law enforcement agency may disclose or release a recording for the following purposes:
  - For law enforcement training purposes.
  - Within the custodial law enforcement agency for any administrative, training, or law enforcement purpose.
  - To another law enforcement agency for law enforcement purposes.
- Recordings shall be retained for the period of time required by the applicable records retention and disposition schedule developed by the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources Division of Archives and Records.
- Any law enforcement agency that uses body-worn cameras or dashboard cameras shall adopt a policy applicable to the use of those cameras.
- No civil liability shall arise from the good faith compliance with the provisions of this act.
- A fee may be charged to copy the recording for release.
- No attorney fees shall be awarded for any action pursuant to this section.

**Section 2** of the PCS would require any law enforcement agency that uses the services of the SBI or the State Crime Lab to analyze a recording to, at no cost, provide access to a method to view and analyze the recording upon request of the SBI or the State Crime Lab.

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** October 1, 2016, and applies to all requests made on or after that date for the disclosure or release of a recording.