

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SESSION 2017

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HOUSE BILL 960\*  
Committee Substitute Favorable 6/6/18  
Third Edition Engrossed 6/13/18

Short Title: Local Law Enforcement/Citizens Academies.

(Public)

Sponsors:

Referred to:

May 21, 2018

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
2 AN ACT TO ENCOURAGE LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES TO OPERATE  
3 PROGRAMS THAT EDUCATE CITIZENS REGARDING LAW ENFORCEMENT  
4 OPERATIONS, TO RECOGNIZE THE DANGER SIGNS OF POTENTIALLY VIOLENT  
5 ACTIVITIES, AND TO PROVIDE TRAINING TO CITIZENS WHO WANT TO  
6 PROVIDE VOLUNTEER SERVICES TO LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES,  
7 AS RECOMMENDED BY THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT  
8 OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE.

9 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

10 **SECTION 1.** Article 13 of Chapter 160A of the General Statutes is amended by  
11 adding a new section to read:

12 **"§ 160A-289.3. Citizens academy and volunteer programs.**

13 (a) Findings. – The General Assembly finds the following:

14 (1) Acts of terrorism and other forms of violence directed against innocent  
15 civilians of all ages are on the increase.

16 (2) Where there are "see something, say something" programs in effect in local  
17 communities, the information gained is beneficial to the development of  
18 intelligence information that can, to some extent, preempt and ameliorate the  
19 effects of these acts of violence.

20 (3) Programs conducted by local law enforcement entities that educate volunteer  
21 citizens to recognize the danger signs involved in illegal or potentially violent  
22 activities increase the effectiveness of "see something, say something"  
23 programs.

24 (4) Such programs are in place and working at the local level in North Carolina.  
25 These programs demonstrate the effectiveness of getting more eyes surveilling  
26 a situation and help increase the likelihood of reported danger signs.

27 (b) Local Programs. – The chief of police of a local police department or of a county  
28 police department may establish a citizens academy (the program) that educates community  
29 members on the operations of the department and prepares participants to provide appropriate  
30 volunteer services. The program may provide orientation and training with department  
31 representatives from a variety of backgrounds and disciplines. The program should follow a  
32 pre-established curriculum that (i) includes instruction on the recognition and reporting of  
33 suspicious activity indicative of criminal behavior; (ii) emphasizes recognition of activities and  
34 threats that might lead to acts of terrorism or other violence against innocent civilians; (iii)  
35 includes de-escalation and mental health crisis training; (iv) includes training that will help



participants better understand persons with disabilities or mental illness; and (v) includes diversity and equity training. When selecting individuals to participate in the program, the department shall conduct background checks on potential participants and may exclude individuals based on prior criminal convictions or pending criminal charges or investigations. Any individual who is also a veteran must have received an honorable discharge to be eligible to participate in the program.

(c) Volunteer Services. – The department may use graduates of the program to provide appropriate volunteer services that support the operations of the department and increase safety and security within the community. These services may include volunteers participating in community patrols or other observational activities. No individual may be armed while providing volunteer services unless the individual has successfully completed a basic law enforcement training course as approved by the North Carolina Criminal Justice Education and Training Standards Commission and is authorized in writing to do so by the chief of police of the police department sponsoring the program."

**SECTION 2.** Article 3 of Chapter 162 of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new section to read:

**"§ 162-27. Citizens academy and volunteer programs.**

(a) Findings. – The General Assembly finds the following:

- (1) Acts of terrorism and other forms of violence directed against innocent civilians of all ages are on the increase.
- (2) Where there are "see something, say something" programs in effect in local communities, the information gained is beneficial to the development of intelligence information that can, to some extent, preempt and ameliorate the effects of these acts of violence.
- (3) Programs conducted by local law enforcement entities that educate volunteer citizens to recognize the danger signs involved in illegal or potentially violent activities increase the effectiveness of "see something, say something" programs.
- (4) Such programs are in place and working at the local level in North Carolina. These programs demonstrate the effectiveness of getting more eyes surveilling a situation and help increase the likelihood of reported danger signs.

(b) Local Programs. – The sheriff may establish a citizens academy (the program) that educates community members on the operations of the department and prepares participants to provide appropriate volunteer services. The program may provide orientation and training with department representatives from a variety of backgrounds and disciplines. The program should follow a pre-established curriculum that (i) includes instruction on the recognition and reporting of suspicious activity indicative of criminal behavior; (ii) emphasizes recognition of activities and threats that might lead to acts of terrorism or other violence against innocent civilians; (iii) includes de-escalation and mental health crisis training; (iv) includes training that will help participants better understand persons with disabilities or mental illness; and (v) includes diversity and equity training. When selecting individuals to participate in the program, the sheriff shall conduct background checks on potential participants and may exclude individuals based on prior criminal convictions or pending criminal charges or investigations. Any individual who is also a veteran must have received an honorable discharge to be eligible to participate in the program.

(c) Volunteer Services. – The sheriff may use graduates of the program to provide appropriate volunteer services that support the operations of the department and increase safety and security within the community. These services may include volunteers participating in community patrols or other observational activities. No individual may be armed while providing volunteer services unless the individual has successfully completed a basic law enforcement training course as approved by the North Carolina Sheriffs' Education and Training Standards

Commission and is authorized in writing to do so by the sheriff of the department sponsoring the  
program."

**SECTION 3.** This act is effective when it becomes law.