

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2023

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SENATE BILL 251

Short Title: Civilian Traffic Investigators. (Public)

Sponsors: Senators Lazzara, P. Newton, and Moffitt (Primary Sponsors).

Referred to: Rules and Operations of the Senate

March 9, 2023

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
2 AN ACT AUTHORIZING CITIES TO EMPLOY AND ALLOW CIVILIAN PERSONNEL TO
3 INVESTIGATE TRAFFIC CRASHES INVOLVING ONLY PROPERTY DAMAGE.

4 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

5 **SECTION 1.** Article 21 of Chapter 160A of the General Statutes is amended by
6 adding a new section to read:

7 **"§ 160A-499.6. Civilian Traffic Investigators.**

8 (a) A city may employ and allow civilian personnel to investigate traffic crashes. The
9 civilian personnel shall be known as "Civilian Traffic Investigators" (hereinafter "Investigator"
10 or "Investigators"). The employment or use of Investigators, either full- or part-time, shall not
11 supplant or replace any of the city's existing sworn law enforcement officer personnel or
12 otherwise reduce the number of sworn law enforcement officers employed by a city.

13 (b) All of the following shall apply to Investigators authorized in subsection (a) of this
14 section:

- 15 (1) The city shall establish the minimum standards for employment as an
16 Investigator.
- 17 (2) Each Investigator shall attend a training program designed by the chief of
18 police, or the chief's designee, or, if applicable, the sheriff of the county with
19 which the city has contracted to provide law enforcement services, or the
20 sheriff's designee, in consultation with the North Carolina Justice Academy.
21 Upon completion of the training program, each Investigator shall spend not
22 less than four weeks of field training with a law enforcement officer who has
23 experience conducting traffic crash investigations.
- 24 (3) Each Investigator shall be issued credentials by the city identifying the
25 individual as a Civilian Traffic Investigator. The Investigator shall produce
26 official credentials at any time when requested by a member of the public
27 involved in or a witness to a crash.
- 28 (4) Investigators shall be issued a uniform that is substantially different in color
29 and style from that of a law enforcement officer for the city. The uniform shall
30 have patches that clearly identify the individual as an Investigator, and the
31 individual's name shall be clearly displayed on the uniform. Investigators shall
32 not be issued badges.
- 33 (5) Any vehicles issued to, or used by, an Investigator shall not bear markings or
34 symbols that identify the vehicle as a police vehicle. The vehicle may have
35 emergency equipment and lights installed but shall not use blue lights in any
36 manner or form. Red and amber lights are permissible.



- 1 (6) Investigators shall not be issued a weapon of any type.
- 2 (7) Investigators shall have no authority to arrest or issue criminal process.
- 3 (8) Investigators shall investigate crashes involving only property damage.
- 4 Investigators shall comply with all provisions of G.S. 20-166.1. A report
- 5 completed by an Investigator shall be treated the same as if it were completed
- 6 by a law enforcement officer for purposes of G.S. 20-166.1(i). A law
- 7 enforcement officer shall investigate any crash involving personal injury or a
- 8 fatality.
- 9 (9) Investigators shall have the same authority as a law enforcement officer to tow
- 10 or remove a vehicle that is obstructing a public street or highway."
- 11 **SECTION 2.** This act is effective when it becomes law.