

Senate Bill 291

By: Senators Shafer of the 48th, Douglas of the 17th, Sims of the 12th, Rogers of the 21st,
Powell of the 23rd and others

AS PASSED SENATE

**A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT**

1 To amend Part 3 of Article 4 of Chapter 11 of Title 16 of the Official Code of Georgia
2 Annotated, relating to carrying and possession of firearms, so as to revise comprehensively
3 the laws concerning the carrying of concealed weapons; to revise the method by which
4 licenses to carry weapons are issued; to prohibit the carrying of certain items in certain
5 buildings; to provide exceptions; to provide a penalty; to prohibit the seizure or registration
6 of firearms during official states of emergency; to prohibit any additional limitations on
7 carrying firearms during states of emergency; to provide civil remedies for violations; to
8 provide for related matters; to provide an effective date; to repeal conflicting laws; and for
9 other purposes.

10 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:**

11 **SECTION 1.**

12 Part 3 of Article 4 of Chapter 11 of Title 16 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated,
13 relating to carrying and possession of firearms, is amended by revising subsection (e) of
14 Code Section 16-11-127, relating to carrying deadly weapons to or at public gatherings, as
15 follows:

16 "(e) A person licensed or permitted to carry a firearm by this part shall be permitted to
17 carry such firearm, subject to the limitations of this part, in all parks, historic sites, and
18 recreational areas, including all publicly owned buildings located in such parks, historic
19 sites, and recreational areas and in wildlife management areas, notwithstanding Code
20 Section 12-3-10, in wildlife management areas notwithstanding Code Section 27-3-1.1 and
21 27-3-6, and in public transportation notwithstanding Code Sections 16-12-122 through
22 16-12-127; provided, however, that a person shall not carry a firearm into a place
23 prohibited by federal law. A person licensed or permitted to carry a firearm by this part
24 shall also be permitted to carry such firearm, subject to the limitations of this part, in an
25 airport in any area in which the possession of firearms is not regulated by the federal
26 government."

27

SECTION 2.

28 Said part is further amended by revising Code Section 16-11-129, relating to license to carry
29 pistol or revolver, as follows:

30 "16-11-129.

31 (a)(1) *Application for license or renewal license; term.* The judge of the probate court
32 of each county may, on application under oath and on payment of a fee of \$15.00, issue
33 a license ~~or renewal license~~ valid for a period of five years to any person whose domicile
34 is in that county or who is on active duty with the United States armed forces and who
35 is not a domiciliary of this state but who either resides in that county or on a military
36 reservation located in whole or in part in that county at the time of such application,
37 which license ~~or renewal license~~ shall authorize that person to carry any pistol or revolver
38 in any county of this state notwithstanding any change in that person's county of
39 residence or state of domicile. Applicants shall submit the application for a license ~~or~~
40 ~~renewal license~~ to the judge of the probate court on forms prescribed and furnished free
41 of charge to persons wishing to apply for the license ~~or renewal license~~. An applicant
42 who is not a United States citizen shall provide sufficient personal identifying data,
43 including without limitation his or her place of birth and United States issued alien or
44 admission number, as the Georgia Bureau of Investigation may prescribe by rule or
45 regulation. An applicant who is in nonimmigrant status shall provide proof of his or her
46 qualifications for an exception to the federal firearm prohibition pursuant to 18 U.S.C.
47 Section 922(y). Forms shall be designed to elicit information from the applicant pertinent
48 to his or her eligibility under this Code section, including citizenship, but shall not require
49 data which is nonpertinent or irrelevant, such as serial numbers or other identification
50 capable of being used as a de facto registration of firearms owned by the applicant. The
51 Department of Public Safety shall furnish application forms and license forms required
52 by this Code section. The forms shall be furnished to each judge of each probate court
53 within the state at no cost.

54 (2) At least 90 days before the expiration of a license issued under this subsection, the
55 judge of the probate court shall notify the license holder in writing at the license holder's
56 last known address that such license is expiring and provide forms for renewing such
57 license. If the license holder desires to renew the license, the license holder shall submit
58 the forms for renewal to the judge of the probate court of his or her county of domicile
59 or residence, as applicable, in this state not less than 45 days prior to the expiration of
60 such license along with a fee of \$15.00. The forms for renewal shall be completed fully
61 by the applicant, shall affirm under oath that the license holder still meets the
62 qualifications for eligibility for the license, and shall contain sufficient information to
63 allow the judge of the probate court to cause a criminal history records check to be

64 performed on the license holder to verify such eligibility for a license. Within two
65 business days after receiving the forms for license renewal with the required fees, the
66 judge of the probate court shall cause a criminal history records check from the Georgia
67 Crime Information Center and the Federal Bureau of Investigation's National Instant
68 Criminal Background Check System to be conducted for purposes of determining the
69 eligibility of the license holder for a renewal license, and an appropriate report shall be
70 returned to the judge of the probate court with the results of such check. Such check shall
71 be conducted and the report returned to the judge of the probate court within 30 days.
72 After receiving the results of the criminal history check, the judge of the probate court
73 shall verify the eligibility of the license holder for a renewal license within ten days after
74 receiving such report. The judge of the probate court shall date stamp the report to show
75 the date on which the report was received by the judge of the probate court. Upon
76 verifying the license holder's eligibility, the judge of the probate court shall issue the
77 license holder a renewal license which shall be valid for a period of five years. The
78 Georgia Bureau of Investigation may charge such fee as is necessary to cover the cost of
79 the records search which shall be added to the fee for the license renewal and shall be
80 paid at the time of making the application for license renewal. When a person who is not
81 a United States citizen applies for renewal of a license under this paragraph, the judge of
82 the probate court shall cause a search to be made of the records maintained by United
83 States Immigration and Customs Enforcement to verify the eligibility of the license
84 holder for renewal of such license. As a condition to the issuance of a renewal of a
85 license, a license holder who is in nonimmigrant status shall provide proof of his or her
86 qualifications for an exception to the federal firearm prohibition pursuant to 18 U.S.C.
87 Section 922(y). If the judge of the probate court finds that the person is not eligible for
88 a license under this Code section, the judge of the probate court shall deny the license
89 renewal and shall notify the license holder in writing of the reasons for such denial. The
90 Department of Public Safety shall furnish license renewal forms required by this
91 paragraph. The forms shall be furnished to each judge of each probate court within the
92 state at no cost.

93 (b) *Licensing exceptions.* No license or renewal license shall be granted to:

94 (1) Any person who is prohibited from possessing firearms pursuant to 18 U.S.C. Section
95 922;

96 (1.1) Any person under 21 years of age;

97 (2) Any person who is a fugitive from justice or against whom proceedings are pending
98 for any felony, forcible misdemeanor, or violation of Code Section 16-11-126,
99 16-11-127, or 16-11-128 until such time as the proceedings are adjudicated;

100 (3) Any person who has been convicted of a felony by a court of this state or any other
 101 state; by a court of the United States including its territories, possessions, and dominions;
 102 or by a court of any foreign nation and has not been pardoned for such felony by the
 103 President of the United States, the State Board of Pardons and Paroles, or the person or
 104 agency empowered to grant pardons under the constitution or laws of such state or nation
 105 or any person who has been convicted of a forcible misdemeanor and has not been free
 106 of all restraint or supervision in connection therewith for at least ~~five~~ seven years ~~or any~~
 107 ~~person who has been convicted of a violation of Code Section 16-11-126, 16-11-127, or~~
 108 ~~16-11-128 and has not been free of all restraint or supervision in connection therewith for~~
 109 ~~at least three years, immediately preceding the date of the application;~~

110 (4) Any individual who has been hospitalized as an inpatient in any mental hospital or
 111 alcohol or drug treatment center within five years of the date of his or her application.
 112 The probate judge may require any applicant to sign a waiver authorizing any mental
 113 hospital or treatment center to inform the judge whether or not the applicant has been an
 114 inpatient in any such facility in the last five years and authorizing the superintendent of
 115 such facility to make to the judge a recommendation regarding whether a license to carry
 116 a pistol or revolver should be issued. When such a waiver is required by the probate
 117 judge, the applicant shall pay to the probate judge a fee of \$3.00 for reimbursement of the
 118 cost of making such a report by the mental health hospital, alcohol or drug treatment
 119 center, or the Department of Human Resources, which the probate judge shall remit to
 120 the hospital, center, or department. The judge shall keep any such hospitalization or
 121 treatment information confidential. It shall be at the discretion of the probate judge,
 122 considering the circumstances surrounding the hospitalization and the recommendation
 123 of the superintendent of the hospital or treatment center where the individual was a
 124 patient, to issue the license or renewal license;

125 ~~(B) As used in this paragraph, the term:~~

126 ~~(i) 'Controlled substance' means any drug, substance, or immediate precursor~~
 127 ~~included in the definition of controlled substances in paragraph (4) of Code Section~~
 128 ~~16-13-21.~~

129 ~~(ii) 'Convicted' means a plea of guilty, a finding of guilt by a court of competent~~
 130 ~~jurisdiction, the acceptance of a plea of nolo contendere, or the affording of first~~
 131 ~~offender treatment by a court of competent jurisdiction irrespective of the pendency~~
 132 ~~or availability of an appeal or an application for collateral relief.~~

133 ~~(iii) 'Dangerous drug' means any drug defined as such in Code Section 16-13-71; or~~

134 (5) Any person not lawfully present in the United States.

135 (c) *Fingerprinting.*

136 Following completion of the application for a license ~~or the renewal of a license~~, the
 137 judge of the probate court shall require the applicant to proceed to an appropriate law
 138 enforcement agency in the county with the completed application. The appropriate local
 139 law enforcement agency in each county shall then capture the fingerprints of the applicant
 140 for a license ~~or renewal license~~ to carry a pistol or revolver, ~~place the fingerprint required~~
 141 ~~by subsection (f) of this Code section on a blank license form which has been furnished~~
 142 ~~to the law enforcement agency by the judge of the probate court, and place the name of~~
 143 ~~the applicant on the blank license form.~~ The law enforcement agency shall be entitled to
 144 a fee of \$5.00 from the applicant for its services in connection with the application.

145 (d) *Investigation of applicant; issuance of license; renewal.*

146 (1) For ~~both~~ license applications ~~and requests for license renewals~~, the judge of the
 147 probate court shall within two business days following the receipt of the application ~~or~~
 148 ~~request~~ direct the law enforcement agency to request a fingerprint based criminal history
 149 records check from the Georgia Crime Information Center and Federal Bureau of
 150 Investigation for purposes of determining the suitability of the applicant and return an
 151 appropriate report to the judge of the probate court. Fingerprints shall be in such form
 152 and of such quality as prescribed by the Georgia Crime Information Center and under
 153 standards adopted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The Georgia Bureau of
 154 Investigation may charge such fee as is necessary to cover the cost of the records search.

155 (2) For ~~both~~ license applications ~~and requests for license renewals~~, the judge of the
 156 probate court shall within two business days following the receipt of the application ~~or~~
 157 ~~request~~ also direct the law enforcement agency to conduct a background check using the
 158 Federal Bureau of Investigation's National Instant Criminal Background Check System
 159 and return an appropriate report to the probate judge.

160 (3) When a person who is not a United States citizen applies for a license ~~or renewal of~~
 161 ~~a license~~ under this Code section, the judge of the probate court shall direct the law
 162 enforcement agency to conduct a search of the records maintained by ~~the~~ United States
 163 ~~Bureau~~ of Immigration and Customs Enforcement. As a condition to the issuance of a
 164 license or the renewal of a license, an applicant who is in nonimmigrant status shall
 165 provide proof of his or her qualifications for an exception to the federal firearm
 166 prohibition pursuant to 18 U.S.C. Section 922(y).

167 (4) The law enforcement agency shall report to the judge of the probate court within 30
 168 days, by telephone and in writing, of any findings relating to the applicant which may
 169 bear on his or her eligibility for a license ~~or renewal license~~ under the terms of this Code
 170 section. When no derogatory information is found on the applicant bearing on his or her
 171 eligibility to obtain a license or renewal license, a report shall not be required. The law
 172 enforcement agency shall return the application and the blank license form with the

173 fingerprint thereon directly to the judge of the probate court within such time period. Not
174 later than ten days after the judge of the probate court receives the report from the law
175 enforcement agency concerning the suitability of the applicant for a firearms license, the
176 judge of the probate court shall issue such applicant a license ~~or renewal license~~ to carry
177 any pistol or revolver unless facts establishing ineligibility have been reported or unless
178 the judge determines such applicant has not met all the qualifications, is not of good
179 moral character, or has failed to comply with any of the requirements contained in this
180 Code section. The judge of the probate court shall date stamp the report from the law
181 enforcement agency to show the date on which the report was received by the judge of
182 the probate court.

183 (e) *Revocation, loss, or damage to license.* If, at any time during the period for which the
184 license was issued, the judge of the probate court of the county in which the license was
185 issued shall learn or have brought to his or her attention in any manner any reasonable
186 ground to believe the licensee is not eligible to retain the license, the judge may, after
187 notice and hearing, revoke the license of the person upon adjudication of falsification of
188 application, mental incompetency, chronic alcohol or narcotic usage, conviction of any
189 felony or forcible misdemeanor, or for violation of Code Section 16-11-126, 16-11-127,
190 or 16-11-128. It shall be unlawful for any person to possess a license which has been
191 revoked, and any person found in possession of any such revoked license, except in the
192 performance of his or her official duties, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor. It shall be
193 required that any license holder under this Code section have in his or her possession his
194 or her valid license whenever he or she is carrying a pistol or revolver under the authority
195 granted by this Code section, and his or her failure to do so shall be prima-facie evidence
196 of a violation of Code Section 16-11-128. Loss of any license issued in accordance with
197 this Code section or damage to the license in any manner which shall render it illegible
198 shall be reported to the judge of the probate court of the county in which it was issued
199 within 48 hours of the time the loss or damage becomes known to the license holder. The
200 judge of the probate court shall thereupon issue a replacement for and shall take custody
201 of and destroy a damaged license; and in any case in which a license has been lost, he or
202 she shall issue a cancellation order and notify by telephone and in writing each of the law
203 enforcement agencies whose records were checked before issuance of the original license.
204 The judge shall charge the fee specified in subsection (k) of Code Section 15-9-60 for such
205 services.

206 (f) *License specifications.* Licenses issued as prescribed in this Code section shall be
207 printed on durable but lightweight card stock, and the completed card shall be laminated
208 in plastic to improve its wearing qualities and to inhibit alterations. Measurements shall
209 be 3 1/4 inches long; and 2 1/4 inches wide. Each shall be serially numbered within the

210 county of issuance and shall bear the full name, residential address, birth date, weight,
 211 height, color of eyes, ~~sex, and a clear print of the right index finger~~ and gender of the
 212 licensee. ~~If the right index fingerprint cannot be secured for any reason, the print of~~
 213 ~~another finger may be used but such print shall be marked to identify the finger from which~~
 214 ~~the print is taken.~~ The license shall show the date of issuance, the expiration date, and the
 215 probate court in which issued and shall be signed by the licensee and bear the signature or
 216 facsimile thereof of the judge. The seal of the court shall be placed on the face before the
 217 license is laminated. The reverse side of the license shall have imprinted thereon in its
 218 entirety Code Section 16-11-127.

219 (g) *Alteration or counterfeiting of license; penalty.* A person who deliberately alters or
 220 counterfeits such a license card commits a felony and, upon conviction thereof, shall be
 221 punished by imprisonment for a period of not less than one nor more than five years.

222 (h) *Licenses for former law enforcement officers.* Except as otherwise provided in Code
 223 Section 16-11-130, any person who has served as a law enforcement officer for at least ten
 224 of the 12 years immediately preceding the retirement of such person as a law enforcement
 225 officer shall be entitled to be issued a license as provided for in this Code section without
 226 the payment of any of the fees provided for in this Code section. Such person ~~must~~ shall
 227 comply with all the other provisions of this Code section relative to the issuance of such
 228 licenses. As used in this subsection, the term 'law enforcement officer' means any peace
 229 officer who is employed by the United States government or by the State of Georgia or any
 230 political subdivision thereof and who is required by the terms of his or her employment,
 231 whether by election or appointment, to give his or her full time to the preservation of public
 232 order or the protection of life and property or the prevention of crime. Such term shall
 233 include conservation rangers. Licenses issued to such former law enforcement officers
 234 shall be distinctive in design by the use of color or style or other means from other licenses
 235 issued under this Code section.

236 (i) *Temporary renewal licenses.*

237 (1) Any person who holds a license under this Code section to carry a pistol or revolver
 238 may, at the time he or she applies for a renewal of the license, also apply for a temporary
 239 renewal license if less than ~~90~~ 45 days remain before expiration of the license he or she
 240 then holds or if his or her previous license has expired within the last 30 days.

241 (2) Unless the judge of the probate court knows or is made aware of any fact which
 242 would make the applicant ineligible for a five-year renewal license, the judge shall at the
 243 time of application issue a temporary renewal license to the applicant.

244 (3) Such a temporary renewal license shall be in the form of a paper receipt indicating
 245 the date on which the court received the renewal application and shall show the name,

246 address, ~~sex~~ gender, age, and race of the applicant and that the temporary renewal license
247 expires 90 days from the date of issue.

248 (4) During its period of validity, the temporary renewal permit, if carried on or about the
249 holder's person together with the holder's previous license, shall be valid in the same
250 manner and for the same purposes as a five-year license.

251 (5) A \$1.00 fee shall be charged by the probate court for issuance of a temporary renewal
252 license.

253 (6) A temporary renewal license may be revoked in the same manner as a five-year
254 license.

255 (j) When an eligible applicant who is a United States citizen fails to receive a license,
256 temporary permit, or renewal license within the time period required by this Code section
257 and the application or request has been properly filed, the applicant may bring an action in
258 mandamus or other legal proceeding in order to obtain a license, temporary license, or
259 renewal license, and such applicant shall be entitled to recover his or her costs in such
260 action, including reasonable attorney's fees."

261 **SECTION 3.**

262 Said part is further amended by adding a new Code section to read as follows:

263 "16-11-136.

264 (a) No officer or employee of the state or any political subdivision thereof, member of the
265 National Guard in the service of the state, or any person operating pursuant to or under
266 color of state law, receiving state funds, under control of any official of the state or political
267 subdivision thereof, or providing services to such officer, employee, or other person, while
268 acting during a declared official state of emergency, shall:

269 (1) Temporarily or permanently seize, or authorize seizure of, any firearm the possession
270 of which is not prohibited under Article 4 of Chapter 11 of this title, other than as
271 evidence in a criminal investigation;

272 (2) Require registration of any firearm for which registration is not required by Article 4
273 of Chapter 11 of this title;

274 (3) Prohibit possession of any firearm, or promulgate any rule, regulation, or order
275 prohibiting possession of any firearm, in any place or by any person where such
276 possession is not otherwise prohibited by Article 4 of Chapter 11 of this title; or

277 (4) Prohibit the carrying of firearms by any person otherwise authorized to carry firearms
278 under Article 4 of Chapter 11 of this title, solely because such person is operating under
279 the direction, control, or supervision of an agency of the state or political subdivision
280 thereof during a declared official state of emergency.

281 (b) Any individual aggrieved by a violation of this Code section may seek in the courts of
282 this state relief in an action at law or in equity or other proper proceeding for redress
283 against any person who subjects such individual, or causes such individual to be subjected,
284 to the deprivation of any of the rights, privileges, or immunities provided by this Code
285 section.

286 (c) In addition to any other remedy at law or in equity, an individual aggrieved by the
287 seizure or confiscation of a firearm in violation of this Code section may bring an action
288 for return of such firearm in the superior court of the county in which that individual
289 resides or in which such firearm is located. In any action or proceeding to enforce this
290 Code section, the court shall award the prevailing party, other than the state or political
291 subdivision thereof, reasonable attorney fees."

292 **SECTION 4.**

293 This Act shall become effective upon its approval by the Governor or upon its becoming law
294 without such approval.

295 **SECTION 5.**

296 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.