

The House Committee on Public Safety & Homeland Security offers the following substitute to SB 373:

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

1 To amend Chapter 8 of Title 35 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to the
2 employment and training of peace officers, so as to change certain provisions relating to the
3 investigation of an applicant's good moral character when applying for appointment or
4 certification as a peace officer; to provide immunities relating thereto; to provide for related
5 matters; to provide an effective date; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

6 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

7 **SECTION 1.**

8 Chapter 8 of Title 35 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to the employment
9 and training of peace officers, is amended by revising Code Section 35-8-8, relating to the
10 requirements for appointment or certification of persons as peace officers and
11 pre-employment attendance at a basic training course, as follows:

12 "35-8-8.

13 (a) Any person employed or certified as a peace officer shall:

14 (1) Be at least 18 years of age;

15 (2) Be a citizen of the United States;

16 (3) Have a high school diploma or its recognized equivalent;

17 (4) Not have been convicted by any state or by the federal government of any crime the
18 punishment for which could have been imprisonment in the federal or state prison or
19 institution nor have been convicted of sufficient misdemeanors to establish a pattern of
20 disregard for the law, provided that, for the purposes of this paragraph, violations of
21 traffic laws and other offenses involving the operation of motor vehicles when the
22 applicant has received a pardon shall not be considered;

23 (5) Be fingerprinted for the purpose of conducting a fingerprint based search at the
24 Georgia Bureau of Investigation and the Federal Bureau of Investigation to determine the
25 existence of any criminal record;

- 26 (6) Possess good moral character as determined by investigation under procedure
27 established by the council and fully cooperate during the course of such investigation;
- 28 (7) Be found, after examination by a licensed physician or surgeon, to be free from any
29 physical, emotional, or mental conditions which might adversely affect his or her
30 exercising exercise of the powers or duties of a peace officer; and
- 31 (8) Successfully complete a job related academy entrance examination provided for and
32 administered by the council in conformity with state and federal law. Such examination
33 shall be administered prior to entrance to the basic course provided for in Code Sections
34 35-8-9 and 35-8-11. The council may change or modify such examination and shall
35 establish the criteria for determining satisfactory performance on such examination.
36 Peace officers who do not perform satisfactorily on the examination shall be ineligible
37 to retake such examination for a period of six months after an unsuccessful attempt. The
38 provisions of this paragraph establish only the minimum requirements of academy
39 entrance examinations for peace officer candidates in this state; each law enforcement
40 unit is encouraged to provide such additional requirements and any preemployment
41 examination as it deems necessary and appropriate.
- 42 (b) Any person authorized to attend the basic training course prior to employment as a
43 peace officer shall meet the requirements of subsection (a) of this Code section.
- 44 (c)(1) For purposes of this subsection, the term 'employment related information' means
45 written information contained in a prior employer's records or personnel files that relates
46 to an applicant's, candidate's, or peace officer's performance or behavior while employed
47 by such prior employer, including performance evaluations, records of disciplinary
48 actions, and eligibility for rehire. Such term shall not include information prohibited
49 from disclosure by federal law or any document not in the possession of the employer at
50 the time a request for such information is received.
- 51 (2) Where an investigation is conducted for the purpose of hiring, certifying, or
52 continuing the certification of a peace officer, an employer shall disclose employment
53 related information to the investigating law enforcement agency upon receiving a written
54 request from such agency. Disclosure shall only be required under this subsection if the
55 law enforcement agency's request is accompanied by a copy of a signed, notarized
56 statement from the applicant, candidate, or peace officer releasing and holding harmless
57 such employer from any and all liability for disclosing complete and accurate information
58 to the law enforcement agency.
- 59 (3) An employer may charge a reasonable fee to cover actual costs incurred in copying
60 and furnishing documents to a requesting law enforcement agency, including retrieving
61 and redacting costs, provided such amount shall not exceed \$25.00 or \$0.25 per page,
62 whichever is greater. No employer shall be required to prepare or create any document

63 not already in the employer's possession at the time a request for employment related
64 information is received. Any employment related information provided pursuant to this
65 subsection that is not subject to public disclosure while in the possession of a prior
66 employer shall continue to be privileged and protected from public disclosure as a record
67 of the requesting law enforcement agency.

68 (4) No employer or law enforcement agency shall be subject to any civil liability for any
69 cause of action by virtue of disclosing complete and accurate information to a law
70 enforcement agency in good faith and without malice pursuant to this subsection. In any
71 such cause of action malice or bad faith shall only be demonstrated by clear and
72 convincing evidence. Nothing contained in this subsection shall be construed so as to
73 affect or limit rights or remedies provided by federal law.

74 (5) Before taking final action on an application for employment based, in whole or in
75 part, on any unfavorable employment related information received from a previous
76 employer, a law enforcement agency shall inform the applicant, candidate, or peace
77 officer that it has received such employment related information, and that the applicant,
78 candidate, or peace officer may inspect and respond in writing to such information. Upon
79 the applicant's, candidate's, or peace officer's request, the law enforcement agency shall
80 allow him or her to inspect the employment related information and to submit a written
81 response to such information. The request for inspection shall be made within five
82 business days from the date that the applicant, candidate, or peace officer is notified of
83 the law enforcement agency's receipt of such employment related information. The
84 inspection shall occur not later than ten business days after said notification. Any
85 response to the employment related information shall be made by the applicant,
86 candidate, or peace officer not later than three business days after his or her inspection."

87 **SECTION 2.**

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

90 **SECTION 3.**

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