

Stricken language would be deleted from and underlined language would be added to present law.

1 State of Arkansas
2 93rd General Assembly
3 Regular Session, 2021
4

As Engrossed: H3/4/21 H3/22/21

A Bill

HOUSE BILL 1523

5 *By: Representatives Bentley, M. Berry, Brooks, Brown, Bryant, Carr, C. Cooper, Crawford, Gazaway,*
6 *McCollum, Milligan, Underwood, Beck, Dotson, McClure, Wing, B. Smith*

7 *By: Senator G. Stubblefield*
8

For An Act To Be Entitled

10 AN ACT TO BE KNOWN AS THE "ARKANSAS EQUAL JUSTICE
11 UNDER THE LAW ACT OF 2021"; CONCERNING VIOLENT
12 OFFENSES THAT WERE COMMITTED IN ORDER TO PREVENT A
13 PERSON FROM EXERCISING HIS OR HER CONSTITUTIONAL
14 RIGHTS; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Subtitle

16 TO BE KNOWN AS THE "ARKANSAS EQUAL
17 JUSTICE UNDER THE LAW ACT OF 2021".
18
19
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21

22 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:
23

24 SECTION 1. DO NOT CODIFY. Legislative intent.

25 It is the intent of the General Assembly to:

26 (1) Affirm that it is the duty of the General Assembly, as an
27 elected body representing the people of Arkansas, to ensure that all persons
28 are afforded protection under the law and equal justice under the law; and

29 (2) Ensure that the federal and state constitutional rights
30 afforded all citizens are protected at all costs, including the free speech
31 and free exercise of religion provisions under the First Amendment to the
32 United States Constitution and Arkansas Constitution, Article 2, §§ 6, 24,
33 and 25.
34

35 SECTION 2. DO NOT CODIFY. Legislative findings.

36 (a) The General Assembly finds that throughout the Arkansas Code there



1 are a number of statutes already in place that protect our most vulnerable
2 and disparate populations.

3 (b) Some particular examples are as follows:

4 (1) Section 5-38-301 criminalizes, among other things, arson of
5 dedicated church property used as a place of worship;

6 (2) Section 5-71-207 criminalizes disorderly conduct including
7 purposely causing public inconvenience, annoyance, or alarm or recklessly
8 creating a risk of public inconvenience, annoyance, or alarm, if the person
9 in a public place mars, defiles, desecrates, or otherwise damages a
10 “religious symbol that is an object of respect by the public or a substantial
11 segment of the public”;

12 (3) Section 5-71-215 criminalizes, among other things, damages
13 to any place of worship;

14 (4) Section 6-10-114 prohibits:

15 (A) Discrimination against a student for race, national
16 origin, or ethnic background by a school board member, administrator, or
17 school employee, and that person’s license may be suspended; and

18 (B) Authorizing or participating in a discriminatory
19 activity, retaliation for reporting, or allowing students to participate in a
20 discriminatory activity;

21 (5) Section 6-18-514 prohibits bullying in a public school which
22 includes bullying for “attributes”, “including without limitation race,
23 color, religion, ancestry, national origin, socioeconomic status, academic
24 status, disability, gender, gender identity, physical appearance, health
25 condition, or sexual orientation”;

26 (6) Section 6-81-606 prohibits discrimination on the basis of
27 race, color, national origin, religion, sex, or area of teacher education in
28 the Teacher Opportunity Program;

29 (7) Section 16-123-106 under the Arkansas Civil Rights Act of
30 1993, § 16-123-101 et seq., concerns hate offenses and allows civil action
31 for intimidation, harassment, personal violence, and vandalism to real or
32 personal property motivated by racial, religious, or ethnic animosity;

33 (8) Section 16-123-107 under the Arkansas Civil Rights Act of
34 1993, § 16-123-101 et seq., prohibits discrimination because of race,
35 religion, national origin, gender, or the presence of any sensory, mental, or
36 physical disability;

1 (9) The Arkansas Fair Housing Act, § 16-123-201 et seq.,
2 prohibits misconduct in real estate transactions “on the basis of religion,
3 race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or familial status” and
4 authorizes a civil action for damages and attorney’s fees;

5 (10) Section 16-123-310 prohibits discrimination in the sale or
6 rental of housing because of race, color, religion, sex, familial status, or
7 national origin;

8 (11) Section 16-123-348 prohibits willfully injuring,
9 intimidating, or interfering with, or attempting to injure, intimidate, or
10 interfere with, a person because of his or her race, color, religion, sex,
11 disability, familial status, or national origin regarding housing
12 transactions;

13 (12) Section 16-123-404 prohibits the government from
14 substantially burdening “a person’s exercise of religion”;

15 (13) Section 21-12-103 authorizes all state agencies to
16 terminate an employee for prohibited discrimination “based upon race, creed,
17 religion, national origin, age, sex, or gender”;

18 (14) Section 23-66-206 prohibits unfair methods of competition
19 and unfair or deceptive acts or practices, including “refusing to insure or
20 continue to insure an individual or risks solely because of the individual’s
21 race, color, creed, national origin, citizenship, status as a victim of
22 domestic abuse, or sex”; and

23 (15) Section 23-114-404 prohibits denial of admission to a
24 raffle or a game of bingo because of race, color, creed, religion, national
25 origin, sex, or disability.

26
27 SECTION 3. Arkansas Code Title 5, Chapter 4, Subchapter 1, is amended
28 to add an additional section to read as follows:

29 5-4-110. Prevention of victim’s constitutional rights – Findings
30 required.

31 (a) As used in this section:

32 (1) "Constitutional right" means:

33 (A) An enumerated right contained in the following
34 amendments to the United States Constitution:

35 (i) The First Amendment;

36 (ii) The Second Amendment;

1 (iii) The Thirteenth Amendment;
2 (iv) The Fifteenth Amendment;
3 (v) The Nineteenth Amendment;
4 (vi) The Twenty-Fourth Amendment; and
5 (vii) The Twenty-Sixth Amendment; and
6 (B) An enumerated right contained in the following
7 provisions of the Arkansas Constitution:

8 (i) Article 2, § 1;
9 (ii) Article 2, § 3;
10 (iii) Article 2, § 4;
11 (iv) Article 2, § 5;
12 (v) Article 2, § 6;
13 (vi) Article 2, § 13;
14 (vii) Article 2, § 21;
15 (viii) Article 2, § 24;
16 (ix) Article 2, § 26;
17 (x) Amendment 34; and
18 (xi) Amendment 51; and

19 (2) "Felony involving violence" means the same as defined in §
20 5-4-501(d)(2).

21 (b) The state may allege in the information or indictment that a
22 defendant committed a felony involving violence for the purpose of preventing
23 a person from exercising his or her constitutional right.

24 (c) If the state makes the allegation described under subsection (b)
25 of this section, the finder of fact shall make a finding beyond a reasonable
26 doubt whether the person committed the felony involving violence for the
27 purpose of preventing a person from exercising his or her constitutional
28 right.

29
30 SECTION 4. Arkansas Code § 5-4-401 is amended to read as follows:
31 5-4-401. Sentence.

32 (a) A Except for a defendant sentenced under subsection (c) of this
33 section, a defendant convicted of a felony shall receive a determinate
34 sentence according to the following limitations:

35 (1) For a Class Y felony, the sentence shall be not less than
36 ten (10) years and not more than forty (40) years, or life;

1 (2) For a Class A felony, the sentence shall be not less than
2 six (6) years nor more than thirty (30) years;

3 (3) For a Class B felony, the sentence shall be not less than
4 five (5) years nor more than twenty (20) years;

5 (4) For a Class C felony, the sentence shall be not less than
6 three (3) years nor more than ten (10) years;

7 (5) For a Class D felony, the sentence shall not exceed six (6)
8 years; and

9 (6) For an unclassified felony, the sentence shall be in
10 accordance with a limitation of the statute defining the felony.

11 (b) A defendant convicted of a misdemeanor may be sentenced according
12 to the following limitations:

13 (1) For a Class A misdemeanor, the sentence shall not exceed one
14 (1) year;

15 (2) For a Class B misdemeanor, the sentence shall not exceed
16 ninety (90) days;

17 (3) For a Class C misdemeanor, the sentence shall not exceed
18 thirty (30) days; and

19 (4) For an unclassified misdemeanor, the sentence shall be in
20 accordance with a limitation of the statute defining the misdemeanor.

21 (c) A person eighteen (18) years of age or older who commits a felony
22 involving violence in which the finder of fact finds under § 5-4-110 that the
23 person committed the felony involving violence for the purpose of preventing
24 a person from exercising a constitutional right is subject to the following
25 sentencing ranges:

26 (1) For a Class A felony, the sentence shall be not less than
27 ten (10) years nor more than thirty (30) years;

28 (2) For a Class B felony, the sentence shall be not less than
29 six (6) years nor more than twenty (20) years;

30 (3) For a Class C felony, the sentence shall be not less than
31 four (4) years nor more than ten (10) years; and

32 (4) For a Class D felony, the sentence shall be not less than
33 three (3) years nor more than six (6) years.

34
35 SECTION 5. Arkansas Code Title 12, Chapter 1, is amended to add an
36 additional section to read as follows:

1 12-1-103. Data collection – Civil rights criminal offense.

2 (a) As used in this section, “civil rights criminal offense” means an
3 offense that resulted in a conviction and a finding under § 5-4-110 that the
4 person committed the offense for the purpose of preventing a person from
5 exercising his or her constitutional right.

6 (b)(1) The Attorney General shall establish and maintain a central
7 repository for the collection, analysis, and dissemination of civil rights
8 criminal offense data.

9 (2) The Division of Arkansas State Police and the Arkansas Crime
10 Information Center shall assist the Attorney General with the establishment
11 of the central repository described in subdivision (b)(1) of this section.

12 (c)(1) Each law enforcement agency shall submit a quarterly report to
13 the Attorney General concerning the commission of civil rights criminal
14 offenses within the law enforcement agency’s jurisdiction.

15 (2) The quarterly report required under subdivision (c)(1) of
16 this section shall contain without limitation the following information, if
17 known:

18 (A) All relevant demographic information concerning the
19 suspect;

20 (B) All relevant demographic information concerning the
21 victim, including a specific reference to the constitutional right that the
22 law enforcement agency believes led to the commission of the civil rights
23 criminal offense;

24 (C) The status or outcome of the criminal investigation
25 or, if applicable, criminal prosecution; and

26 (D) A summary of the civil rights criminal offense,
27 including all relevant information known at the time of submission of the
28 quarterly report.

29 (d) Data concerning a civil rights criminal offense maintained in the
30 central repository shall be disseminated upon request to a:

31 (1) Federal, state, or local law enforcement agency;

32 (2) Political subdivision of the state; or

33 (3) State agency.

34 (e) The Attorney General shall publish on December 1 of each year a
35 summary and report of the data required to be collected and maintained under
36 this section, and the annual summary and report shall be delivered to the:

