

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Judiciary

BILL: CS/SB 494

INTRODUCER: Judiciary Committee and Senator Bradley

SUBJECT: Compensation of Victims of Wrongful Incarceration

DATE: March 9, 2017

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Cellon</u>	<u>Hrdlicka</u>	<u>CJ</u>	Favorable
2.	<u>Brown</u>	<u>Cibula</u>	<u>JU</u>	Fav/CS
3.	_____	_____	<u>AP</u>	_____

Please see Section IX. for Additional Information:

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE - Substantial Changes

I. Summary:

CS/SB 494 amends chapter 961, Florida Statutes, which establishes an administrative process for compensation for a person who has been wrongfully incarcerated.

Under current law, a person is not eligible for compensation for wrongful incarceration through an administrative process if he or she has a criminal history that includes any felony.¹ This is commonly known as the “clean hands” provision of Florida’s wrongful incarceration compensation law. The bill narrows the list of felony offenses that disqualify a person from compensation from all felonies to violent felonies. The bill also removes as a disqualifier any offense for which the person was convicted of or pled guilty or nolo contendere to before he or she was wrongfully convicted and incarcerated. By narrowing the types of disqualifying felonies, the bill expands the pool of potential applicants for compensation through the administrative process.

This bill has an indeterminate fiscal impact because it is unknown how many applicants would be eligible under the expanded criteria.

¹ Section 961.04, F.S.

II. Present Situation:

The Victims of Wrongful Incarceration Compensation Act has been in effect since July 1, 2008.² The law establishes an administrative process for a person to petition the original sentencing court for an order finding the petitioner to have been wrongfully incarcerated and eligible for compensation.

The Department of Legal Affairs administers the eligible person's application process and verifies the validity of the claim.³ The Chief Financial Officer arranges for payment of the claim by securing an annuity or annuities payable to the claimant over at least 10 years, calculated at a rate of \$50,000 for each year of wrongful incarceration up to a total of \$2 million.⁴

“Clean Hands” Provision of the Act – Section 961.04, Florida Statutes

In cases in which sufficient evidence of actual innocence can be shown, the person is still ineligible for compensation if:

- Before the person's wrongful conviction and incarceration, the person was convicted of, or pled guilty or nolo contendere to, regardless of adjudication, any felony offense, or a crime committed in another jurisdiction the elements of which would constitute a felony in this state, or a crime committed against the United States which is designated a felony, excluding any delinquency disposition;
- During the person's wrongful incarceration, the person was convicted of, or pled guilty or nolo contendere to, regardless of adjudication, any felony offense; or
- During the person's wrongful incarceration, the person was also serving a concurrent sentence for another felony for which the person was not wrongfully convicted.⁵

Of the 30 states that have statutes that provide for compensation for wrongfully incarcerated persons, Florida is the only state with a “clean hands” provision.⁶

² Chapter 961, F.S. (ch. 2008-39, L.O.F.).

³ Section 961.05(2), F.S.

⁴ Additionally, the wrongfully incarcerated person is entitled to: waiver of tuition and fees for up to 120 hours of instruction at any career center established under s. 1001.44, F.S., any Florida College System Institution as defined in s. 1000.21(3), F.S., or any state university as defined in s. 1000.21(6), F.S., if the wrongfully incarcerated person meets and maintains the regular admission requirements; remains registered; and makes satisfactory academic progress as defined by the educational institution in which the claimant is enrolled. The wrongfully incarcerated person is also entitled to reimbursement of the amount of any fine, penalty, or court costs paid, and the amount of any reasonable attorney's fees and expenses incurred for all criminal proceedings and appeals regarding the wrongful conviction, to be calculated by the department based upon supporting documentation submitted as specified in s. 961.05, F.S.. Finally, the wrongfully incarcerated person is entitled to immediate administrative expunction of the person's criminal record resulting from his or her wrongful arrest, wrongful conviction, and wrongful incarceration. s. 961.06, F.S.

⁵ Section 961.04, F.S.

⁶ *Making Up for Lost Time*, page 19, The Innocence Project, Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, www.innocenceproject.org; (“Clean hands” meaning that a person is ineligible for compensation if he or she has prior felony offenses to the one for which compensation is being sought.). Other states generally take these matters up by “personal bills,” a process much like Florida's claim bill process.

Wrongfully Incarcerated - Placed on Parole or Community Supervision for the Offense

A person convicted of a felony may be sentenced to a split sentence, which is a sentence including both incarceration and release under supervision. Alternatively, a person could be granted parole if he or she meets the statutory criteria.⁷ Therefore, a person could potentially be wrongfully incarcerated for a crime and then placed on parole or community supervision as part of the sentence. If a person violates a condition of parole or community supervision, he or she may have parole or community supervision revoked. The basis for revocation of parole or community supervision may affect eligibility for compensation for wrongful incarceration.

Under s. 961.06(2), F.S., if a person commits a misdemeanor or a technical violation while under supervision which results in revocation of the community supervision or parole, the person remains eligible for compensation. If, however, a felony law violation results in revocation, the person is no longer eligible for compensation.⁸ Ineligibility based on a felony violation applies to any felony.

Wrongful Incarceration Claims

To date, four persons have been compensated under the administrative process for a total of \$4,276,901. Six other claimants had their claims denied, based on either ineligibility or incomplete applications.⁹

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The bill amends ch. 961, F.S., the Victims of Wrongful Incarceration Compensation Act. Chapter 961, F.S., currently provides an administrative process for a person who has been wrongfully incarcerated for a felony conviction to seek a court order finding the person to be eligible for compensation. Current law disqualifies a person who is otherwise eligible for compensation if he or she has a record of any prior felony, a felony committed while wrongfully incarcerated, or a felony committed while on parole or community supervision.

The bill limits disqualifying felonies to violent felonies. In other words, the bill provides that in order to be found ineligible for compensation based on other crimes, the person must have committed a violent felony, not a simple felony. Specifically a felony is disqualifying if:

- During the person's wrongful incarceration, he or she was convicted of, pled nolo contendere to, regardless of adjudication, any violent felony;¹⁰ or

⁷ Persons are not eligible for parole in Florida unless they were sentenced prior to the effective date of the sentencing guidelines which was October 1, 1983, and only if they meet the statutory criteria. Ch. 82-171, Laws of Florida; s. 947.16, F.S. The term "community supervision" as used in s. 961.06(2), F.S., could include controlled release, conditional medical or conditional release under the authority of the Commission on Offender Review (ch. 947, F.S.) or community control or probation under the supervision of the Department of Corrections (ch. 948, F.S.).

⁸ Section 961.06(2), F.S.

⁹ Email correspondence with the Office of the Attorney General (Jan. 14, 2016 and March 1, 2017) (on file with the Senate Committee on Judiciary). Persons whose claims have been successful are Leroy McGee (2010), James Bain (2011), Luis Diaz (2012), and James Richardson (2015). Jarvis McBride's claim was denied (2012). Three persons had their claims rejected based on incomplete applications. These are Robert Lewis (2011), Edwin Lampkin (2012), and Robert Glenn Mosley (2014). Two other claimants were determined to be ineligible for compensation (Ricardo Johnson (2013) and Joseph McGowan (2015)).

¹⁰ Section 961.04(2), F.S.

- During a period of parole or community supervision on the sentence that led to his or her wrongful incarceration, the person committed a violent felony that resulted in the revocation of the parole or community supervision.¹¹

A violent felony is defined in the bill by a cross-reference to ss. 775.084(1)(c)1. and 948.06(8)(c), F.S. The combined list of those violent felony offenses includes attempts to commit the crimes as well as offenses committed in other jurisdictions if the elements of the crimes are substantially similar.

The bill also removes as a disqualifying offense any felony for which the person was convicted or pled guilty or nolo contendere to before he or she was wrongfully incarcerated.

Violent felony offenses which would preclude a wrongfully incarcerated person from being eligible for compensation under the bill are:

- Kidnapping;
- False imprisonment of a child;
- Luring or enticing a child;
- Murder;
- Manslaughter;
- Aggravated manslaughter of a child;
- Aggravated manslaughter of an elderly person or disabled adult;
- Robbery;
- Carjacking;
- Home invasion robbery;
- Sexual Battery;
- Aggravated battery;
- Armed burglary and other burglary offenses that are first or second degree felonies;
- Aggravated child abuse;
- Aggravated abuse of an elderly person or disabled adult;
- Arson;
- Aggravated assault;
- Unlawful throwing, placing, or discharging of a destructive device or bomb;
- Treason;
- Aggravated stalking;
- Aircraft piracy;
- Abuse of a dead human body;
- Poisoning food or water;
- Lewd or lascivious battery, molestation, conduct, exhibition, or exhibition on computer;
- Lewd or lascivious offense upon or in the presence of an elderly or disabled person;
- Sexual performance by a child;
- Computer pornography;
- Transmission of child pornography; and
- Selling or buying of minors.

¹¹ Section 961.06(2), F.S.

In limiting disqualifying felonies to violent felonies, the pool of potential persons eligible for compensation due to wrongful incarceration may increase.

The bill takes effect October 1, 2017.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

More persons are potentially eligible for compensation under the provisions of SB 494. A person who is entitled to compensation based on wrongful incarceration would be paid at the rate of \$50,000 per year of wrongful incarceration up to a limit of \$2 million.¹² Payment is made from an annuity or annuities purchased by the Chief Financial Officer for the benefit of the wrongfully incarcerated person. The Victims of Wrongful Incarceration Compensation Act is funded through a continuing appropriation pursuant to s. 961.07, F.S.

Although statutory limits on compensation under the Act are clear, the fiscal impact of SB 494 is unquantifiable. The possibility that a person would be compensated for wrongful incarceration is based upon variables that cannot be known, such as the number of wrongful incarcerations that currently exist or might exist in the future. Four successful claims since the Act became effective total \$4,276,901.

¹² The Chief Financial Officer may adjust the annual rate of compensation for inflation for persons found to be wrongfully incarcerated after December 31, 2008. Section 961.06(1)(a), F.S.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill substantially amends the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 961.02, 961.04, and 961.06.

This bill reenacts the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 961.03, 961.05, 961.055, and 961.056.

IX. Additional Information:

- A. **Committee Substitute – Statement of Substantial Changes:**
(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

CS by Judiciary on March 7, 2017:

This CS removes as a disqualifying offense that makes a person ineligible for compensation for a wrongful incarceration any felony for which the person was convicted of or pled nolo contendere to before the person's wrongful conviction and incarceration.

- B. **Amendments:**

None.