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HOUSE BILL NO. 203

Offered January 13, 2010

Prefiled January 8, 2010

A BILL to amend and reenact §§ 8.01-195.10, 19.2-327.2, and 19.2-327.10 of the Code of Virginia, relating to writ of actual innocence; available after parole or pardon.

Patron—Alexander

Referred to Committee for Courts of Justice

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That §§ 8.01-195.10, 19.2-327.2, and 19.2-327.10 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 8.01-195.10. Purpose; action by the General Assembly required; definitions.

A. The purpose of this article is to provide directions and guidelines for the compensation of persons who have been wrongfully incarcerated in the Commonwealth. Compensation for wrongful incarceration is governed by Article IV, Section 14 of the Constitution of Virginia, which prohibits the General Assembly from granting relief in cases in which the courts or other tribunals may have jurisdiction and any individual seeking payment of state funds for wrongful incarceration shall be deemed to have waived all other claims. The payment and receipt of any compensation for wrongful incarceration shall be contingent upon the General Assembly appropriating funds for that purpose. This article shall not provide an entitlement to compensation for persons wrongfully incarcerated or require the General Assembly to appropriate funds for the payment of such compensation. No estate of or personal representative for a decedent shall be entitled to seek a claim for compensation for wrongful incarceration.

B. As used in this article:

"Incarceration" or "incarcerated" means confinement in a local or regional correctional facility, juvenile correctional center, state correctional facility, residential detention center, or facility operated pursuant to the Corrections Private Management Act (§ 53.1-261 et seq.).

"Wrongful incarceration" or "wrongfully incarcerated" means incarceration for a felony conviction for which (i) the conviction has been vacated pursuant to Chapter 19.2 (§ 19.2-327.2 et seq.) or 19.3 (§ 19.2-327.10 et seq.) of Title 19.2, or the person incarcerated has been granted an absolute pardon for the commission of a crime that he did not commit, (ii) the person incarcerated must have entered a final plea of not guilty, or regardless of the plea, any person sentenced to death, or convicted of a Class 1 felony, a Class 2 felony, or any felony for which the maximum penalty is imprisonment for life, and (iii) the person incarcerated did not by any act or omission on his part intentionally contribute to his conviction for the felony for which he was incarcerated.

§ 19.2-327.2. Issuance of writ of actual innocence based on biological evidence.

Notwithstanding any other provision of law or rule of court, upon a petition of a person who was convicted of a felony upon a plea of not guilty, or for any person, regardless of the plea, sentenced to death, or convicted of (i) a Class 1 felony, (ii) a Class 2 felony or (iii) any felony for which the maximum penalty is imprisonment for life, the Supreme Court shall have the authority to issue writs of actual innocence under this chapter. The writ shall lie to the circuit court that entered the felony conviction; and that court shall have the authority to conduct hearings, as provided for in § 19.2-327.5, on such a petition as directed by order from the Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court shall have the authority to issue writs under this chapter for persons who are not currently incarcerated because they have been released on parole or probation, granted a pardon, or otherwise released from incarceration.

§ 19.2-327.10. Issuance of writ of actual innocence based on nonbiological evidence.

Notwithstanding any other provision of law or rule of court, upon a petition of a person who was convicted of a felony upon a plea of not guilty, the Court of Appeals shall have the authority to issue writs of actual innocence under this chapter. Only one such writ based upon such conviction may be filed by a petitioner. The writ shall lie to the court that entered the conviction; and that court shall have the authority to conduct hearings, as provided for in this chapter, on such a petition as directed by order from the Court of Appeals. In accordance with §§ 17.1-411 and 19.2-317, either party may appeal a final decision of the Court of Appeals to the Supreme Court of Virginia. Upon an appeal from the Court of Appeals, the Supreme Court of Virginia shall have the authority to issue writs in accordance with the provisions of this chapter.

The Court of Appeals, or the Supreme Court upon an appeal from the Court of Appeals, shall have

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59 *the authority to issue writs under this chapter for persons who are not currently incarcerated because*
60 *they have been released on parole or probation, granted a pardon, or otherwise released from*
61 *incarceration.*