

North Carolina man arrested for attending county fair

written by Matthew Snell | September 30, 2022



By Matt . . . A Greenville man was arrested Monday, September 26th, by the Pitt County Sherriff's Major Crimes Unit after they discovered he had visited the Pitt County American Legion Fair the previous Friday night for an hour and a half. He is a registrant, and the sheriff's office asserts he should not have been there under North Carolina law. This arrest comes after a two-month-long public dispute between the Sherriff's department and the fair organizers over the security contract for the fair.

[In a press release](#) obtained by NARSOL, the Pitt County Sherriff's Office (PCSO) claims that the registrant in question entered the American Legion Fair for about an hour and a half on September 23, 2022. He was arrested by the PCSO Major Crimes Unit three days later on Monday, September 26. The press release does not give a specific reason they were alerted to his presence. However, officials have intimated that it may have been a "concerned citizen" that made the call

to the unit. The man who was placed on the North Carolina Sex Offender Registry for an alleged 2005 crime out-of-state was ultimately released on a \$5000 secured bond and charged with a felony under North Carolina's ambiguous "Sex Offender on Premises Law."

The Sherriff's Department's public statement on the incident indicated that there was no threat to the public and it was an isolated incident.

This arrest follows a contentious and public argument between the Sherriff, Paula S. Dance, and the fair's organizers. The fair has been held annually for the past 102 years, and the PCSO has enjoyed a contract from the organizers to provide security for as long as local people can remember [until this year's fair](#). One of the organizers mentioned to a local media outlet that Sherriff Dance had told him the deputies are afraid to provide security after the fair was shut down early last year over a firearm-related incident. Sherriff Dance denies that she told the organizer this and claims she never heard back from them after she proposed [an increased security scheme for the fair this year](#). Instead, organizers engaged with a private security firm for this year's security but later fired the firm due to licensing issues and opted for an all-volunteer security force. This disagreement set off a social media response from the Sherriff. Last year, the PCSO billed fair organizers for over \$15,500 for the six-day-long event.

According to deputies, the Sherriff authorized plain-clothed officers to attend the fair to provide security despite the wishes of the organizers. Over the course of the fair, the PCSO made two unrelated arrests, one dealing with [a non-lethal stabbing](#) and the other the arrest of the registrant.

These ambiguous laws, unfortunately, pepper our country and allow law enforcement to arrest a registrant "At any place where minors frequently congregate, including, but not limited

to, libraries, arcades, amusement parks, recreation parks, and swimming pools, when minors are present” ([SC statute14-208.18](#).). These arrests are normally unaccompanied by any form of danger or threat to the public and are not prompted by a complaint filed with the police for any wrongdoing but instead rely totally on law enforcement’s ability to arrest a person just for being in a public place.

These laws that continue to punish people many years after all legal punishment for their crimes has been satisfied are intricately woven into the fabric of sex offender registries. It is all too often that registrants are unjustly punished for crimes that happened decades ago. It is not uncommon for the new charges to be considered a reoffense, bringing with them new convictions and prison time.