

Byron Pugh Legal Addresses Nashville Criminal Penalty Enhancements Effective July 2025

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Nashville, TN - April 17, 2026 -
Byron Pugh Legal announces expanded criminal defense services addressing Tennessee's significant criminal penalty enhancements that took effect July 1, 2025, following the state's 2025 legislative session. The new laws elevated multiple offenses from misdemeanors to felonies and expanded the list of dangerous felonies carrying enhanced sentencing, fundamentally changing the legal landscape for Nashville residents facing criminal charges.

The 2025 Tennessee General Assembly passed more than 170 new laws, several of which directly restructure criminal penalties and create entirely new felony offenses. These changes mean that charges previously handled as misdemeanors in general sessions court now proceed as felony matters with longer timelines, higher bail exposure, and permanent consequences affecting employment, housing, and civil rights.

Among the most significant changes, HB 0045 elevated knowing injury to a child between ages 9 and 17 from

a Class A misdemeanor carrying up to 11 months and 29 days in jail to a Class E felony with a potential sentence of 1 to 6 years in prison and a permanent felony record. SB 769 transformed possession of a detached catalytic converter without authorization from a misdemeanor to a Class E felony, now carrying potential prison time and lifelong consequences.

Byron Pugh Nashville criminal defense lawyer services have expanded to address these enhanced penalties across all practice areas. The firm represents defendants facing charges under both longstanding Tennessee criminal statutes and the expanded penalty framework, including domestic assault, drug crimes, DUI, gun charges, and violent crimes throughout Davidson County.

"The 2025 legislative changes fundamentally altered the stakes for anyone charged with crimes in Nashville," stated Byron Pugh, Criminal Defense Attorney at Byron Pugh Legal. "Offenses that previously resolved as misdemeanors now carry felony exposure with mandatory prison ranges and lifelong collateral consequences. The window between arrest and arraignment has become critical, and defendants who delay seeking legal representation face significantly reduced ability to challenge charges, negotiate terms, or explore diversion options."

HB 0578 expanded Tennessee's list of dangerous felonies, with convictions for offenses on this list carrying mandatory enhanced sentencing when a firearm is involved. This directly affects gun charge cases in Davidson County, where defendants now face substantially increased penalties. Additionally, HB 0055 further amended Tennessee criminal statutes to expand the scope of several offense categories, adding new exposure for defendants in drug, DUI, and violent crime cases.

Tennessee law requires that anyone convicted of a felony face collateral consequences beyond imprisonment, including restrictions on employment, housing, professional licensing, and firearm rights. These permanent consequences make felony-level charges far more consequential than misdemeanor proceedings, affecting defendants' lives long after any sentence is served.

The firm's approach to criminal defense has evolved to address these heightened stakes, focusing on early intervention and comprehensive defense strategies tailored to the new penalty structure. As a Nashville criminal defense lawyer with experience as a former Assistant District Attorney, Byron Pugh brings insider knowledge of prosecution strategies to each case.

Byron Pugh Legal is a criminal defense law firm based in Nashville, Tennessee, representing individuals charged with felony and misdemeanor offenses throughout Davidson County and Middle Tennessee. The firm handles domestic assault, drug crimes, DUI, gun charges, property crimes, sex crimes, violent crimes,

and murder cases.

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For more information about Byron Pugh Legal, contact the company here:Byron Pugh LegalByron Pugh615-590-3117byron@byronpughlegal.com214 2nd Ave N #100Nashville, TN 37201

Byron Pugh Legal

Byron Pugh Legal offers expert criminal defense and family law services in Middle Tennessee, providing personalized attention and strategic advocacy to protect clients' rights.

Website: https://byronpughlegal.com/

Email: byron@byronpughlegal.com

Phone: 615-590-3117

