

Byron Pugh Legal Addresses Escalating Drug Crime Penalties Following Nashville Task Force Operation

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Nashville, TN - May 21, 2026 -
Byron Pugh Legal, a Nashville-based criminal defense firm, is addressing the dramatically elevated legal stakes facing Tennessee residents charged with drug crimes, particularly in light of a November 2025 Nashville Homeland Security Task Force operation that resulted in 38 defendants charged in a single indictment.

The operation, which included charges against eight MS-13 members for fentanyl, methamphetamine, and cocaine trafficking, along with carjacking violations and firearms offenses, reflects the scale of multi-agency drug enforcement activity now operating in the Nashville and Davidson County area. For defendants facing these charges, Tennessee's current drug penalty structure creates severe felony exposure that many may not fully understand.

Tennessee's "One Pill Will Kill Act," effective July 1, 2023, along with 2025 legislative enhancements, established a tiered fentanyl penalty structure under T.C.A. § 39-17-417. Possession of less than 0.1 grams

constitutes a Class C felony carrying 3 to 15 years; 0.1 to 10 grams represents a Class B felony with 8 to 30 years and fines up to $100,000; and more than 10 grams triggers a Class A felony with 15 to 60 years, fines up to $500,000, and mandatory 100 percent minimum sentence service.

"The November 2025 Nashville task force operation demonstrates that multi-agency investigations are producing large-scale indictments in Davidson County, where defendants face mandatory minimum sentences structured so that a gram weight difference can mean decades more in prison," stated Byron Pugh, Criminal Defense Attorney at Byron Pugh Legal. "In Nashville's urban geography, almost any alleged drug offense in a residential neighborhood falls within 500 feet of a school, park, or childcare center, and prosecutors use this enhancement to elevate charges and increase plea bargaining leverage."

House Bill 751, effective July 1, 2025, created additional felony exposure by establishing a new Class E felony for anyone who exposes a child to fentanyl, elevated to a Class B felony when the child is under age eight. This adds another layer of drug-adjacent felony exposure for defendants in cases where children are present at the time of an alleged offense.

Tennessee maintains strict marijuana laws while most neighboring states have moved toward decriminalization or medicalization. Possession with intent to sell in quantities between one-half ounce and 10 pounds constitutes a Class E felony carrying one to six years; 10 to 70 pounds represents a Class D felony; and 70 to 300 pounds triggers a Class B felony. The state offers no medical marijuana program and no expungement available for trafficking convictions.

Under T.C.A. § 39-17-432, drug offenses occurring within 500 feet of a school, park, library, or childcare center carry enhanced penalties. Davidson County prosecutors use this provision aggressively in Nashville's dense urban environment where such facilities are never far from alleged offense locations.

Byron Pugh Tennessee drug crimes lawyer services focus on challenging evidence at the earliest possible stage, including the legality of search and seizure, accuracy of weight measurements, chain of custody for tested substances, and constitutional validity of investigations. As a Tennessee Drug Crimes Lawyer, the firm represents defendants by examining every aspect of the prosecution's case.

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

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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.

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