

ASSEMBLY BILL

No. 316

Introduced by Assembly Member Solorio

February 18, 2009

An act to amend Section 340.6 of the Code of Civil Procedure, and to amend Sections 851.8, 4901, 4903, and 4904 of, and to add Section 851.86 to, the Penal Code, relating to wrongful convictions.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 316, as introduced, Solorio. Wrongful convictions.

Existing law requires that an action against an attorney for a wrongful act or omission, other than for actual fraud, arising in the performance of professional services must be commenced within one year after the plaintiff discovers, or should have discovered, the wrongful act or omission, or 4 years from the date of the wrongful act or omission, whichever occurs first.

This bill would provide that, if the plaintiff is required to establish his or her factual innocence for an underlying criminal charge as an element of his or her claim against an attorney, the time period to commence this action shall be 2 years after the plaintiff achieves postconviction exoneration in the form of a final judicial disposition of the criminal case.

Existing law provides that any finding that an arrestee is factually innocent, as specified, shall not be admissible as evidence in any action.

This bill would provide that, notwithstanding this provision, a finding that an arrestee is factually innocent shall be admissible as evidence at a hearing before the California Victim Compensation and Government Claims Board.

Existing law allows a presiding judge, whenever a person is acquitted of a charge and it appears to the judge that the defendant is factually innocent of the charge, to order that the records in the case be sealed.

This bill would require a judge, upon written or oral motion of any party in the case or the court, to order that the records in a case be sealed whenever a person is convicted of a charge and the conviction is set aside because a determination was made that the person was factually innocent.

Existing law allows a person erroneously convicted and imprisoned to present a claim within a period of 6 months after judgment of acquittal or discharge given, or after pardon granted, or after release from imprisonment, against the state to the California Victim Compensation and Government Claims Board for the pecuniary injury sustained by him or her through the erroneous conviction and imprisonment.

This bill would instead provide that a person erroneously convicted and imprisoned may present this claim within 2 years.

Existing law establishes a process for a hearing on an erroneously convicted person's claim at which the claimant is required to introduce evidence in support of the claim and the Attorney General may introduce evidence in opposition. Existing law requires the claimant to prove the facts set forth in the statement constituting the claim, including that the crime charged was either not committed at all, or, if committed, not committed by the claimant, and the fact that the claimant did not, by any act or omission, either intentionally or negligently, contribute to the bringing about of his or her arrest or conviction, and that he or she sustained pecuniary injury. If the evidence shows that the claimant has proved these facts, existing law requires the board to recommend to the Legislature that an appropriation be made for indemnifying the claimant.

This bill would remove the requirement on the claimant to prove that he or she did not negligently contribute to his or her arrest or conviction. The bill would provide that when determining whether the claimant intentionally contributed to the bringing about of his or her arrest or conviction, the factfinder shall not consider statements obtained from an involuntary false confession or involuntary plea.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes.
State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all the following:

(a) It is the intent of the Legislature to remedy some of the harm caused to all factually innocent people who have been wrongfully convicted and served time in state prison in California.

(b) A factually innocent person is a person who was convicted of a crime that either was not committed or, if committed, was not committed by him or her.

(c) This act would remove some of the obstacles to compensation for the factually innocent and would ease their transition back into society.

SEC. 2. Section 340.6 of the Code of Civil Procedure is amended to read:

340.6. (a) An action against an attorney for a wrongful act or omission, other than for actual fraud, arising in the performance of professional services shall be commenced within one year after the plaintiff discovers, or through the use of reasonable diligence should have discovered, the facts constituting the wrongful act or omission, or four years from the date of the wrongful act or omission, whichever occurs first. *If the plaintiff is required to establish his or her factual innocence for an underlying criminal charge as an element of his or her claim, the action shall be commenced within two years after the plaintiff achieves postconviction exoneration in the form of a final judicial disposition of the criminal case.* In no event shall the time for commencement of legal action exceed four years except that the period shall be tolled during the time that any of the following exist:

(1) The plaintiff has not sustained actual injury;

(2) The attorney continues to represent the plaintiff regarding the specific subject matter in which the alleged wrongful act or omission occurred;

(3) The attorney willfully conceals the facts constituting the wrongful act or omission when such facts are known to the attorney, except that this subdivision shall toll only the four-year limitation; ~~and~~.

(4) The plaintiff is under a legal or physical disability which restricts the plaintiff's ability to commence legal action.

1 (b) In an action based upon an instrument in writing, the
2 effective date of which depends upon some act or event of the
3 future, the period of limitations provided for by this section shall
4 commence to run upon the occurrence of ~~such~~ *that* act or event.

5 SEC. 3. Section 851.8 of the Penal Code is amended to read:

6 851.8. (a) In any case where a person has been arrested and
7 no accusatory pleading has been filed, the person arrested may
8 petition the law enforcement agency having jurisdiction over the
9 offense to destroy its records of the arrest. A copy of the petition
10 shall be served upon the prosecuting attorney of the county or city
11 having jurisdiction over the offense. The law enforcement agency
12 having jurisdiction over the offense, upon a determination that the
13 person arrested is factually innocent, shall, with the concurrence
14 of the prosecuting attorney, seal its arrest records, and the petition
15 for relief under this section for three years from the date of the
16 arrest and thereafter destroy its arrest records and the petition. The
17 law enforcement agency having jurisdiction over the offense shall
18 notify the Department of Justice, and any law enforcement agency
19 that arrested the petitioner or participated in the arrest of the
20 petitioner for an offense for which the petitioner has been found
21 factually innocent under this subdivision, of the sealing of the
22 arrest records and the reason therefor. The Department of Justice
23 and any law enforcement agency so notified shall forthwith seal
24 their records of the arrest and the notice of sealing for three years
25 from the date of the arrest, and thereafter destroy their records of
26 the arrest and the notice of sealing. The law enforcement agency
27 having jurisdiction over the offense and the Department of Justice
28 shall request the destruction of any records of the arrest which they
29 have given to any local, state, or federal agency or to any other
30 person or entity. Each agency, person, or entity within the State
31 of California receiving the request shall destroy its records of the
32 arrest and the request, unless otherwise provided in this section.

33 (b) If, after receipt by both the law enforcement agency and the
34 prosecuting attorney of a petition for relief under subdivision (a),
35 the law enforcement agency and prosecuting attorney do not
36 respond to the petition by accepting or denying the petition within
37 60 days after the running of the relevant statute of limitations or
38 within 60 days after receipt of the petition in cases where the statute
39 of limitations has previously lapsed, then the petition shall be
40 deemed to be denied. In any case where the petition of an arrestee

1 to the law enforcement agency to have an arrest record destroyed
2 is denied, petition may be made to the superior court that would
3 have had territorial jurisdiction over the matter. A copy of the
4 petition shall be served on the law enforcement agency and the
5 prosecuting attorney of the county or city having jurisdiction over
6 the offense at least 10 days prior to the hearing thereon. The
7 prosecuting attorney and the law enforcement agency through the
8 district attorney may present evidence to the court at the hearing.
9 Notwithstanding Section 1538.5 or 1539, any judicial determination
10 of factual innocence made pursuant to this section may be heard
11 and determined upon declarations, affidavits, police reports, or
12 any other evidence submitted by the parties which is material,
13 relevant and reliable. A finding of factual innocence and an order
14 for the sealing and destruction of records pursuant to this section
15 shall not be made unless the court finds that no reasonable cause
16 exists to believe that the arrestee committed the offense for which
17 the arrest was made. In any court hearing to determine the factual
18 innocence of a party, the initial burden of proof shall rest with the
19 petitioner to show that no reasonable cause exists to believe that
20 the arrestee committed the offense for which the arrest was made.
21 If the court finds that this showing of no reasonable cause has been
22 made by the petitioner, then the burden of proof shall shift to the
23 respondent to show that a reasonable cause exists to believe that
24 the petitioner committed the offense for which the arrest was made.
25 If the court finds the arrestee to be factually innocent of the charges
26 for which the arrest was made, then the court shall order the law
27 enforcement agency having jurisdiction over the offense, the
28 Department of Justice, and any law enforcement agency which
29 arrested the petitioner or participated in the arrest of the petitioner
30 for an offense for which the petitioner has been found factually
31 innocent under this section to seal their records of the arrest and
32 the court order to seal and destroy the records, for three years from
33 the date of the arrest and thereafter to destroy their records of the
34 arrest and the court order to seal and destroy such records. The
35 court shall also order the law enforcement agency having
36 jurisdiction over the offense and the Department of Justice to
37 request the destruction of any records of the arrest which they have
38 given to any local, state, or federal agency, person or entity. Each
39 state or local agency, person or entity within the State of California
40 receiving such a request shall destroy its records of the arrest and

1 the request to destroy the records, unless otherwise provided in
2 this section. The court shall give to the petitioner a copy of any
3 court order concerning the destruction of the arrest records.

4 (c) In any case where a person has been arrested, and an
5 accusatory pleading has been filed, but where no conviction has
6 occurred, the defendant may, at any time after dismissal of the
7 action, petition the court that dismissed the action for a finding
8 that the defendant is factually innocent of the charges for which
9 the arrest was made. A copy of the petition shall be served on the
10 prosecuting attorney of the county or city in which the accusatory
11 pleading was filed at least 10 days prior to the hearing on the
12 petitioner's factual innocence. The prosecuting attorney may
13 present evidence to the court at the hearing. The hearing shall be
14 conducted as provided in subdivision (b). If the court finds the
15 petitioner to be factually innocent of the charges for which the
16 arrest was made, then the court shall grant the relief as provided
17 in subdivision (b).

18 (d) In any case where a person has been arrested and an
19 accusatory pleading has been filed, but where no conviction has
20 occurred, the court may, with the concurrence of the prosecuting
21 attorney, grant the relief provided in subdivision (b) at the time of
22 the dismissal of the accusatory pleading.

23 (e) Whenever any person is acquitted of a charge and it appears
24 to the judge presiding at the trial at which the acquittal occurred
25 that the defendant was factually innocent of the charge, the judge
26 may grant the relief provided in subdivision (b).

27 (f) In any case where a person who has been arrested is granted
28 relief pursuant to subdivision (a) or (b), the law enforcement agency
29 having jurisdiction over the offense or court shall issue a written
30 declaration to the arrestee stating that it is the determination of the
31 law enforcement agency having jurisdiction over the offense or
32 court that the arrestee is factually innocent of the charges for which
33 the person was arrested and that the arrestee is thereby exonerated.
34 Thereafter, the arrest shall be deemed not to have occurred and
35 the person may answer accordingly any question relating to its
36 occurrence.

37 (g) The Department of Justice shall furnish forms to be utilized
38 by persons applying for the destruction of their arrest records and
39 for the written declaration that one person was found factually
40 innocent under subdivisions (a) and (b).

(h) Documentation of arrest records destroyed pursuant to subdivision (a), (b), (c), (d), or (e) that are contained in investigative police reports shall bear the notation “Exonerated” whenever reference is made to the arrestee. The arrestee shall be notified in writing by the law enforcement agency having jurisdiction over the offense of the sealing and destruction of the arrest records pursuant to this section.

(i) (1) Any finding that an arrestee is factually innocent pursuant to subdivision (a), (b), (c), (d), or (e) shall not be admissible as evidence in any action.

(2) *Notwithstanding paragraph (1), a finding that an arrestee is factually innocent pursuant to subdivisions (a) to (e), inclusive, shall be admissible as evidence at a hearing before the California Victim Compensation and Government Claims Board.*

(j) Destruction of records of arrest pursuant to subdivision (a), (b), (c), (d), or (e) shall be accomplished by permanent obliteration of all entries or notations upon the records pertaining to the arrest, and the record shall be prepared again so that it appears that the arrest never occurred. However, where (1) the only entries on the record pertain to the arrest and (2) the record can be destroyed without necessarily affecting the destruction of other records, then the document constituting the record shall be physically destroyed.

(k) No records shall be destroyed pursuant to subdivision (a), (b), (c), (d), or (e) if the arrestee or a codefendant has filed a civil action against the peace officers or law enforcement jurisdiction which made the arrest or instituted the prosecution and if the agency which is the custodian of the records has received a certified copy of the complaint in the civil action, until the civil action has been resolved. Any records sealed pursuant to this section by the court in the civil actions, upon a showing of good cause, may be opened and submitted into evidence. The records shall be confidential and shall be available for inspection only by the court, jury, parties, counsel for the parties and any other person authorized by the court. Immediately following the final resolution of the civil action, records subject to subdivision (a), (b), (c), (d), or (e) shall be sealed and destroyed pursuant to subdivision (a), (b), (c), (d), or (e).

(l) For arrests occurring on or after January 1, 1981, and for accusatory pleadings filed on or after January 1, 1981, petitions for relief under this section may be filed up to two years from the

1 date of the arrest or filing of the accusatory pleading, whichever
2 is later. Until January 1, 1983, petitioners can file for relief under
3 this section for arrests which occurred or accusatory pleadings
4 which were filed up to five years prior to the effective date of the
5 statute. Any time restrictions on filing for relief under this section
6 may be waived upon a showing of good cause by the petitioner
7 and in the absence of prejudice.

8 (m) Any relief which is available to a petitioner under this
9 section for an arrest shall also be available for an arrest which has
10 been deemed to be or described as a detention under Section 849.5
11 or 851.6.

12 (n) This section shall not apply to any offense which is classified
13 as an infraction.

14 (o) (1) This section shall be repealed on the effective date of a
15 final judgment based on a claim under the California or United
16 States Constitution holding that evidence that is relevant, reliable,
17 and material may not be considered for purposes of a judicial
18 determination of factual innocence under this section. For purposes
19 of this subdivision, a judgment by the appellate division of a
20 superior court is a final judgment if it is published and if it is not
21 reviewed on appeal by a court of appeal. A judgment of a court of
22 appeal is a final judgment if it is published and if it is not reviewed
23 by the California Supreme Court.

24 (2) Any decision referred to in this subdivision shall be stayed
25 pending appeal.

26 (3) If not otherwise appealed by a party to the action, any
27 decision referred to in this subdivision which is a judgment by the
28 appellate division of the superior court shall be appealed by the
29 Attorney General.

30 (p) A judgment of the court under subdivision (b), (c), (d), or
31 (e) is subject to the following appeal path:

32 (1) In a felony case, appeal is to the court of appeal.

33 (2) In a misdemeanor case, or in a case in which no accusatory
34 pleading was filed, appeal is to the appellate division of the superior
35 court.

36 SEC. 4. Section 851.86 is added to the Penal Code, to read:

37 851.86. Whenever a person is convicted of a charge, and the
38 conviction is set aside based upon a determination that the person
39 was factually innocent of the charge, the judge shall order that the
40 records in the case be sealed, including any record of arrest or

detention, upon written or oral motion of any party in the case or the court, and with notice to all parties to the case. If such an order is made, the court shall give the defendant a copy of that order and inform the defendant that he or she may thereafter state he or she was not arrested for that charge and that he or she was not convicted of that charge, and that he or she was found innocent of that charge by the court. The court shall also inform the defendant of the availability of indemnity for persons erroneously convicted pursuant to Chapter 5 (commencing with Section 4900) of Title 6 of Part 3, and the time limitations for presenting those claims.

SEC. 5. Section 4901 of the Penal Code is amended to read:

4901. A claim under Section 4900, accompanied by a statement of the facts constituting the claim, verified in the manner provided for the verification of complaints in civil actions, must be presented by the claimant to the California Victim Compensation and Government Claims Board within a period of ~~six months~~ *two years* after judgment of acquittal or discharge given, or after pardon granted, or after release from imprisonment, ~~and at least four months prior to the next meeting of the Legislature~~ and no claim not so presented shall be considered *by the* California Victim Compensation and Government Claims Board.

SEC. 6. Section 4903 of the Penal Code is amended to read:

4903. On such hearing the claimant shall introduce evidence in support of the claim, and the Attorney General may introduce evidence in opposition thereto. The claimant must prove the facts set forth in the statement constituting the claim, including the fact that the crime with which he *or she* was charged was either not committed at all, or, if committed, was not committed by him *or her*, the fact that he *or she* did not, by any act or omission on his *or her* part, ~~either intentionally or negligently~~, contribute to the bringing about of his *or her* arrest or conviction for the crime with which he *or she* was charged, and the pecuniary injury sustained by him *or her* through his *or her* erroneous conviction and imprisonment. *For purposes of this chapter, when determining whether the claimant intentionally contributed to the bringing about of his or her arrest or conviction, the factfinder shall not consider statements obtained from an involuntary false confession or involuntary plea.*

SEC. 7. Section 4904 of the Penal Code is amended to read:

1 4904. If the evidence shows that the crime with which the
2 claimant was charged was either not committed at all, or, if
3 committed, was not committed by the claimant, and that the
4 claimant did not, by any act or omission—~~either, intentionally or~~
5 ~~negligently,~~ contribute to the bringing about of his or her arrest or
6 conviction; *for the crime with which he or she was charged*, and
7 that the claimant has sustained pecuniary injury through his or her
8 erroneous conviction and imprisonment, the California Victim
9 Compensation and Government Claims Board shall report the facts
10 of the case and its conclusions to the next Legislature, with a
11 recommendation that an appropriation be made by the Legislature
12 for the purpose of indemnifying the claimant for the pecuniary
13 injury. The amount of the appropriation recommended shall be a
14 sum equivalent to one hundred dollars (\$100) per day of
15 incarceration served subsequent to the claimant's conviction and
16 that appropriation shall not be treated as gross income to the
17 recipient under the Revenue and Taxation Code.