
OLR Bill Analysis

HB 6007

AN ACT CONCERNING "BLUE ALERTS".

SUMMARY:

This bill requires the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP) to establish an emergency alert system to help law enforcement agencies (1) apprehend anyone suspected of killing or seriously injuring a peace officer or (2) locate a missing peace officer. (The system is known as Blue Alert – see BACKGROUND.)

DESPP must develop and implement policies and procedures for operating and administering the system. This includes procedures governing requests by law enforcement agencies to activate the system and guidelines to ensure that the dissemination of information does not (1) compromise the investigation of the offense or disappearance or (2) violate the privacy of the peace officer who is the subject of the alert or of the officer's next-of-kin.

The bill specifies when DESPP may activate the system.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2013

BLUE ALERT ACTIVATION

DESPP may activate the Blue Alert system only if it determines, after consulting with the law enforcement agency requesting activation, that:

1. a peace officer (a) was assaulted and killed by someone or suffered serious physical injury or was assaulted with a deadly weapon by a suspect who has not been apprehended and poses an imminent threat to the public or other peace officers or (b) is missing while performing his or her duties under circumstances warranting concern for his or her safety;

2. sufficient descriptive information is available to disseminate to the public about the (a) suspect or his or her vehicle or other means of escape or (b) circumstances of the peace officer's disappearance; and
3. disseminating the information to the public could help apprehend the suspect, locate the missing officer, or avert injury to any other person.

BACKGROUND

Peace Officers

By law "peace officers" are state or local police officers, Division of Criminal Justice inspectors, state marshals exercising statutory authority, judicial marshals performing their duties, conservation officers or special conservation officers, constables who performs criminal law enforcement duties, appointed special policemen, adult probation officers, Department of Correction officials authorized to make arrests in a correctional institution or facility, investigators in the State Treasurer's office, and federal narcotics agents (CGS § 53a-3).

Deadly Weapon

A "deadly weapon" is any weapon, whether loaded or unloaded, from which a shot may be discharged, or a switchblade knife, gravity knife, billy, blackjack, bludgeon, or metal knuckles (CGS § 53a-3).

Emergency Alert System

Blue Alerts are similar to AMBER Alerts, but have a different purpose. Instead of being used to find missing or endangered children, Blue Alerts are used to alert the public when a law enforcement officer has been killed, seriously injured, or missing and a suspect, considered an imminent threat, is at large. Blue Alerts alert the public of the possible danger and solicit the public's assistance in apprehending the suspect.

Currently, at least 15 states have Blue Alert laws, including California, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Ohio, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia. Legislation is pending in

several other states.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Public Safety and Security Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 24 Nay 0 (03/21/2013)