

By: Solomons

H.B. No. 66

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to prohibiting certain disruptions at a funeral service;
creating an offense.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. Chapter 42, Penal Code, is amended by adding
Section 42.055 to read as follows:

Sec. 42.055. FUNERAL SERVICE DISRUPTIONS. (a) In this
section:

(1) "Facility" means a building at which any portion
of a funeral service takes place, including a funeral parlor,
mortuary, private home, or established place of worship.

(2) "Funeral service" means a ceremony, procession, or
memorial service, including a wake or viewing, held in connection
with the burial or cremation of the dead.

(3) "Picketing" means:

(A) standing, sitting, or repeated walking,
riding, driving, or other similar action by a person displaying or
carrying a banner, placard, or sign;

(B) engaging in loud singing, chanting,
whistling, or yelling, with or without noise amplification through
a device such as a bullhorn or microphone; or

(C) blocking access to a facility or cemetery
being used for a funeral service.

(b) A person commits an offense if, during the period

1 beginning one hour before the service begins and ending one hour
2 after the service is completed, the person engages in picketing
3 within 500 feet of a facility or cemetery being used for a funeral
4 service.

5 (c) An offense under this section is a Class A misdemeanor
6 unless the actor has been previously convicted under this section,
7 in which event the offense is a state jail felony.

8 SECTION 2. Sections 42.04(a) and (c), Penal Code, are
9 amended to read as follows:

10 (a) If conduct that would otherwise violate Section
11 42.01(a)(5) (Unreasonable Noise), ~~[or]~~ 42.03 (Obstructing
12 Passageway), or 42.055 (Funeral Service Disruptions) consists of
13 speech or other communication, of gathering with others to hear or
14 observe such speech or communication, or of gathering with others
15 to picket or otherwise express in a nonviolent manner a position on
16 social, economic, political, or religious questions, the actor must
17 be ordered to move, disperse, or otherwise remedy the violation
18 prior to his arrest if he has not yet intentionally harmed the
19 interests of others which those sections seek to protect.

20 (c) It is a defense to prosecution under Section
21 42.01(a)(5), ~~[or]~~ 42.03, or 42.055:

22 (1) that in circumstances in which this section
23 requires an order no order was given;

24 (2) that an order, if given, was manifestly
25 unreasonable in scope; or

26 (3) that an order, if given, was promptly obeyed.

27 SECTION 3. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives

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1 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as
2 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this
3 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this
4 Act takes effect on the 91st day after the last day of the
5 legislative session.