

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

H.B. 54
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Criminal Justice
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Engrossed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

In March 2019, Javier Ambler was chased for over 20 minutes by Williamson County sheriff's deputies for not dimming his headlights to oncoming traffic. In the ensuing confrontation with the deputies, Ambler was tased multiple times and ultimately died of certain heart failure and disease in combination with forcible restraint. The deputies who chased and tased Ambler were being filmed throughout the incident by a film crew from *Live PD*, a ride-along style reality television show. An independent analysis of use-of-force reports by the *Austin American-Statesman* found that violent encounters between Williamson County sheriff's deputies and civilians nearly doubled in the year after *Live PD* cameras began following deputies. The presence of production crews during police operations blurs the lines of reality and entertainment, intensifies the degree of police response, and puts civilian lives in danger. H.B. 54 seeks to address this issue by prohibiting law enforcement agencies from authorizing a person to film peace officers acting in the line of duty for the purpose of creating a reality television program, while maintaining transparency by excluding journalists reporting on matters of public concern from the prohibition.

H.B. 54 amends current law relating to accompanying and filming peace officers of state and local law enforcement agencies for producing reality television programs.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Authorizes this Act to be cited as Javier Ambler's Law.

SECTION 2. Amends Chapter 614, Government Code, by adding Subchapter M, as follows:

SUBCHAPTER M. ACCOMPANYING OR FILMING OF PEACE OFFICERS

Sec. 614.231. DEFINITIONS. Defines "law enforcement agency" and "reality television program."

Sec. 614.232. ACCOMPANYING AND FILMING PEACE OFFICERS FOR REALITY TELEVISION PROGRAM PROHIBITED. Prohibits a law enforcement agency from authorizing a person to accompany and film a peace officer acting in the line of duty for the purpose of producing a reality television program.

SECTION 3. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2021.