

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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H.B. 5238
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Criminal Justice
5/9/2025
Engrossed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Under current state law, it is illegal to obstruct or interfere with a lawful meeting, procession, or gathering by physical action or a verbal utterance. However, the law does not adequately address disruptions of events that occur in virtual or hybrid settings. As virtual events have become increasingly common and as public and governmental bodies continue to rely on virtual platforms for meetings and events, there have been instances of individuals intentionally disrupting virtual proceedings through electronic interference, including hacking or accessing these proceedings without authorization. H.B. 5238 seeks to provide law enforcement officers and prosecutors with clearer authority to act in cases where digital disruptions impede lawful proceedings.

H.B. 5238 amends current law relating to the criminal offense of disrupting a meeting or procession.

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. Amends Section 42.05(a), Penal Code, to provide that a person commits an offense if, with intent to prevent or disrupt a lawful meeting, procession, or gathering, whether in person or virtual, the person obstructs or interferes with the meeting, procession, or gathering in certain manners, including by electronic disturbance, including hacking, of any virtual component of the meeting, procession, or gathering, and to make nonsubstantive changes.

SECTION 2. Makes application of this Act prospective.

SECTION 3. Effective date: September 1, 2025.