

S.297

An act relating to the recording of custodial interrogations in homicide and sexual assault cases

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

Sec. 1. 13 V.S.A. chapter 182, subchapter 3 of is added to read:

Subchapter 3. Law Enforcement Practices

§ 5581. ELECTRONIC RECORDING OF A CUSTODIAL

INTERROGATION

(a) As used in this section:

(1) “Custodial interrogation” means any interrogation:

(A) involving questioning by a law enforcement officer that is reasonably likely to elicit an incriminating response from the subject; and

(B) in which a reasonable person in the subject’s position would consider himself or herself to be in custody, starting from the moment a person should have been advised of his or her Miranda rights and ending when the questioning has concluded.

(2) “Electronic recording” or “electronically recorded” means an audio and visual recording that is an authentic, accurate, unaltered record of a custodial interrogation, or if law enforcement does not have the capacity to create a visual recording, an audio recording of the interrogation.

(3) "Place of detention" means a building or a police station that is a place of operation for the State police, a municipal police department, county sheriff department, or other law enforcement agency that is owned or operated by a law enforcement agency at which persons are or may be questioned in connection with criminal offenses or detained temporarily in connection with criminal charges pending a potential arrest or citation.

(4) "Statement" means an oral, written, sign language, or nonverbal communication.

(b)(1) A custodial interrogation that occurs in a place of detention concerning the investigation of a felony violation of chapter 53 (homicide) or 72 (sexual assault) of this title shall be electronically recorded in its entirety.

(2) In consideration of best practices, law enforcement shall strive to simultaneously record both the interrogator and the person being interrogated.

(c)(1) The following are exceptions to the recording requirement in subsection (b) of this section:

(A) exigent circumstances;

(B) a person's refusal to be electronically recorded;

(C) interrogations conducted by other jurisdictions;

(D) a reasonable belief that the person being interrogated did not commit a felony violation of chapter 53 (homicide) or 72 (sexual assault) of

this title and, therefore, an electronic recording of the interrogation was not required;

(E) the safety of a person or protection of his or her identity; and

(F) equipment malfunction.

(2) If law enforcement does not make an electronic recording of a custodial interrogation as required by this section, the prosecution shall prove by a preponderance of the evidence that one of the exceptions identified in subdivision (1) of this subsection applies. If the prosecution does not meet the burden of proof, the evidence is still admissible, but the Court shall provide cautionary instructions to the jury regarding the failure to record the interrogation.

## Sec. 2. TASK FORCE

(a) Creation. There is created an Interrogation Practices Task Force to plan for the implementation of Sec. 1 of this act, 13 V.S.A. § 5581 (electronic recording of a custodial interrogation).

(b) Membership. The Task Force shall be composed of the following eight members:

(1) the Commissioner of Public Safety or his or her designee;

(2) the Director of the Criminal Justice Training Council or his or her designee;

(3) a Sheriff appointed by the Vermont Sheriffs' Association;

(4) a Chief of Police appointed by the Vermont Association of Chiefs of Police;

(5) the Attorney General or his or her designee;

(6) the Defender General or his or her designee;

(7) the Executive Director of State's Attorneys and Sheriffs or his or her designee;

(8) a representative appointed by The Innocence Project.

(c) Powers and duties. The Task Force, in consultation with practitioners and experts in recording interrogations, shall:

(1) assess the scope and location of the current inventory of recording equipment in Vermont;

(2) develop recommendations, including funding options, regarding how to equip adequately law enforcement with the recording devices necessary to carry out Sec. 1 of this act, 13 V.S.A. § 5581 (electronic recording of a custodial interrogation); and

(3) develop recommendations for expansion of recordings to questioning by a law enforcement officer that is reasonably likely to elicit an incriminating response from the subject regarding any felony offense.

(d) Assistance. The Task Force shall have the administrative, technical, and legal assistance of the Department of Public Safety.

(e) Report. On or before October 1, 2014, the Task Force shall submit a written report to the Senate and House Committees on Judiciary with its recommendations for implementation of Sec. 1. of this act, 13 V.S.A. § 5581 (electronic recording of a custodial interrogation).

(f) Meetings.

(1) The Commissioner of Public Safety shall call the first meeting of the Task Force to occur on or before June 1, 2014.

(2) The Committee shall select a chair from among its members at the first meeting.

(3)(A) A majority of the members of the Task Force shall be physically present at the same location to constitute a quorum.

(B) Action shall be taken only if there is both a quorum and a majority vote of all members of the Task Force.

(4) The Task Force shall cease to exist on December 31, 2014.

### Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATES

Sec. 1 shall take effect on July 1, 2015 and Sec. 2 and this section shall take effect on passage.