

H.697

Introduced by Representative Oliver of Sheldon

Referred to Committee on

Date:

Subject: Crimes and criminal procedure; public justice and public officers

Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to require members of the public to maintain a 25-foot distance from first responders during an ongoing public safety emergency.

An act relating to first responders' buffers during ongoing public safety emergencies

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

Sec. 1. 13 V.S.A. § 3020 is added to read:

§ 3020. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT WITH FIRST RESPONDERS DURING  
PUBLIC SAFETY EMERGENCIES

(a) As used in this section:

(1) "Emotional distress" means significant mental suffering or distress that may, but does not necessarily, require medical or other professional treatment or counseling.

(2) "First responder" includes any law enforcement officer certified by the Vermont Criminal Justice Council pursuant to 20 V.S.A. § 2358, firefighter

1 as defined in 20 V.S.A. § 3151(3), and emergency medical personnel as  
2 defined in 24 V.S.A. § 2651.

3 (3) “Harass” means to engage purposefully in a course of conduct  
4 directed at a first responder that would cause a reasonable person substantial  
5 emotional distress and that is not otherwise legally permitted.

6 (4) “Public safety emergency” means an acute event in which a first  
7 responder must engage in the lawful performance of a legal duty to address an  
8 immediate threat to public health or safety.

9 (b)(1) It is unlawful for a person to intentionally remain or come within 25  
10 feet of the first responder during a public safety emergency:

11 (A) after the first responder verbally identifies as a first responder;

12 (B) after receiving a verbal warning from the first responder not to  
13 approach the first responder; and

14 (C) with the intent to:

15 (i) obstruct or impede the first responder’s ability to perform the  
16 first responder’s duties;

17 (ii) threaten the first responder with physical harm; or

18 (iii) harass the first responder.

19 (2) A person who is convicted of a violation of this section shall be  
20 imprisoned not more than 60 days or fined not more than \$500.00, or both.

1       Sec. 2. EFFECTIVE DATE

2       This act shall take effect January 1, 2027.