

STATE OF NEW YORK

1348

2019-2020 Regular Sessions

IN ASSEMBLY

January 15, 2019

Introduced by M. of A. QUART -- read once and referred to the Committee on Governmental Operations

AN ACT to amend the civil rights law, the executive law, the penal law and the civil practice law and rules, in relation to harassment through electronic communication; and to amend the penal law, in relation to increasing the penalties for falsely reporting an incident and stalking

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

1 Section 1. Legislative intent. The legislature hereby declares that in
2 order to protect the physical and emotional well-being of citizens to
3 the fullest extent, it is necessary to acknowledge and punish harassment
4 that occurs through electronic communication. Technological innovations
5 have resulted in various platforms for personal sharing, many of which
6 are often misused maliciously. Current penal laws are centered on harm
7 that occurs within a public setting, which fails to account for the
8 expansive and dynamic nature of modern technology. Harassment, intim-
9 idation, and other such crimes now occur through many mediums including,
10 but not limited to, telephone, e-mail, webcam, and social media. Though
11 virtual harassment may not directly result in physical injuries, the
12 potential threat to one's sense of safety and mental health is just as
13 concerning. Further, online harassment often leads to offline harassment
14 and violence. Thus, it is the responsibility of the legislature to
15 ensure that abuses enacted via technology are punished accordingly, just
16 as abuses enacted in person are.

17 § 2. The civil rights law is amended by adding a new section 16 to
18 read as follows:

19 § 16. Protection of rights. It is unlawful for any person to willfully
20 injure, intimidate or interfere with, or attempt to injure, intimidate
21 or interfere with, or oppress or threaten any other person in the exer-
22 cise of any right secured by the constitution or laws of New York state

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets
[-] is old law to be omitted.

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1 or by the constitution or laws of the United States. A violation of this
2 section shall be punishable by a fine of not more than one thousand
3 dollars or imprisonment of not more than one year or both; and if bodily
4 injury results, a violation of this section shall be punishable by a
5 fine of not more than ten thousand dollars or by imprisonment for not
6 more than ten years, or both.

7 § 3. The civil rights law is amended by adding a new section 50-f to
8 read as follows:

9 § 50-f. Online privacy. 1. No person shall publicly disclose informa-
10 tion about another person that:

11 a. is private and not a matter of public record or otherwise open to
12 the public eye;

13 b. is not a legitimate matter of public concern; and

14 c. would be considered offensive or private to a reasonable person.

15 2. No person shall publicly disclose information about another person
16 that:

17 a. is personally identifiable;

18 b. places the person in a false light;

19 c. is highly objectionable by a reasonable person; and

20 d. is done with actual malice.

21 3. No person shall publicly use another person's name, picture,
22 portrait, voice or likeness to their own benefit without consent, or
23 unless the use is for news or commentary.

24 4. Anyone aggrieved under this section has a cause of action for legal
25 and injunctive relief.

26 § 4. The executive law is amended by adding a new section 837-t to
27 read as follows:

28 § 837-t. Office for the prevention of internet crime and harassment.

29 1. Establishment of office. There is hereby established within the
30 division of criminal justice services an office for the prevention of
31 internet crime and harassment.

32 2. Duties and responsibilities. The office shall coordinate state and
33 municipal efforts to prevent the use of the internet for harassment and
34 other crimes. The office's duties shall include but shall not be limit-
35 ed to:

36 (a) Developing or hiring a contractor to develop a training curriculum
37 for all law enforcement agencies to train officers in current internet
38 technologies and how that technology is used to perpetrate harassment
39 and other crime. Such training curriculum must be implemented by two
40 years after the effective date of this section and must include one
41 comprehensive course and annual update courses. Current officers are
42 required to complete the comprehensive course no later than three years
43 after the effective date of this section, and the annual update courses
44 within each calendar year beginning with the year two thousand twenty-
45 two. New officers are required to complete the comprehensive course
46 within six months of hiring and the annual update course each following
47 year.

48 (b) Prescribing general guidelines to enable state agencies to collab-
49 orate in preventing, investigating and prosecuting Internet harassment
50 and other Internet crimes.

51 § 5. Section 240.25 of the penal law, as amended by chapter 109 of the
52 laws of 1994, is amended to read as follows:

53 § 240.25 Harassment in the first degree.

54 A person is guilty of harassment in the first degree when he or she
55 intentionally and repeatedly harasses another person by following such
56 person in or about a public place or places or by engaging in a course

1 of conduct or by repeatedly committing acts which places such person in
2 reasonable fear of physical injury in a public place, a private place or
3 by using electronic communication, including but not limited to e-mail,
4 webcam, telephone, or social media. This section shall not apply to
5 activities regulated by the national labor relations act, as amended,
6 the railway labor act, as amended, or the federal employment labor
7 management act, as amended.

8 Harassment in the first degree is a class B misdemeanor.

9 § 6. Subdivision 3 of section 240.26 of the penal law, as amended by
10 chapter 109 of the laws of 1994, is amended to read as follows:

11 3. He or she engages in a course of conduct or repeatedly commits acts
12 in a public place, a private place or by using electronic communication,
13 including but not limited to e-mail, webcam, telephone, or social media
14 which alarm or seriously annoy such other person and which serve no
15 legitimate purpose.

16 § 7. The closing paragraph of section 240.50 of the penal law, as
17 amended by chapter 301 of the laws of 2001, is amended to read as
18 follows:

19 Falsely reporting an incident in the third degree is a class [~~A misde-~~
20 ~~meanor~~] E felony.

21 § 8. The closing paragraph of section 240.55 of the penal law, as
22 amended by chapter 301 of the laws of 2001, is amended to read as
23 follows:

24 Falsely reporting an incident in the second degree is a class [~~E~~] D
25 felony.

26 § 9. The closing paragraph of section 240.60 of the penal law, as
27 amended by chapter 301 of the laws of 2001, is amended to read as
28 follows:

29 Falsely reporting an incident in the first degree is a class [~~D~~] C
30 felony.

31 § 10. The closing paragraph of section 120.55 of the penal law, as
32 added by chapter 635 of the laws of 1999, is amended to read as follows:

33 Stalking in the second degree is a class [~~E~~] D felony.

34 § 11. The closing paragraph of section 120.60 of the penal law, as
35 amended by chapter 434 of the laws of 2000, is amended to read as
36 follows:

37 Stalking in the first degree is a class [~~D~~] C felony.

38 § 12. Subdivision 2 of section 79-n of the civil rights law, as added
39 by chapter 227 of the laws of 2010, is amended to read as follows:

40 2. Any person who intentionally selects a person or property for harm
41 or causes damage to the property of another [~~or~~], causes physical injury
42 or death to another or commits harassment as defined in section 240.25
43 of the penal law in whole or in substantial part because of a belief or
44 perception regarding the race, color, national origin, ancestry, gender,
45 religion, religious practice, age, disability or sexual orientation of a
46 person, regardless of whether the belief or perception is correct, shall
47 be liable, in a civil action or proceeding maintained by such individual
48 or group of individuals, for injunctive relief, damages, or any other
49 appropriate relief in law or equity. If it shall appear to the satisfac-
50 tion of the court or justice that the respondent has, in fact, violated
51 this section, an injunction may be issued by such court or justice,
52 enjoining and restraining any further violation, without requiring proof
53 that any person has, in fact, been injured or damaged thereby.

54 § 13. Section 213-c of the civil practice law and rules, as added by
55 chapter 3 of the laws of 2006, is amended to read as follows:

1 § 213-c. Action by victim of conduct constituting certain sexual
2 offenses. Notwithstanding any other limitation set forth in this arti-
3 cle, a civil claim or cause of action to recover from a defendant as
4 hereinafter defined, for physical, psychological or other injury or
5 condition suffered by a person as a result of acts by such defendant of
6 rape in the first degree as defined in section 130.35 of the penal law,
7 or criminal sexual act in the first degree as defined in section 130.50
8 of the penal law, or aggravated sexual abuse in the first degree as
9 defined in section 130.70 of the penal law, or course of sexual conduct
10 against a child in the first degree as defined in section 130.75 of the
11 penal law may be brought within five years, or harassment in the second
12 degree as defined in section 240.26 of the penal law, or harassment in
13 the first degree as defined in section 240.25 of the penal law. As used
14 in this section, the term "defendant" shall mean only a person who
15 commits the acts described in this section or who, in a criminal
16 proceeding, could be charged with criminal liability for the commission
17 of such acts pursuant to section 20.00 of the penal law and shall not
18 apply to any related civil claim or cause of action arising from such
19 acts. Nothing in this section shall be construed to require that a crim-
20 inal charge be brought or a criminal conviction be obtained as a condi-
21 tion of bringing a civil cause of action or receiving a civil judgment
22 pursuant to this section or be construed to require that any of the
23 rules governing a criminal proceeding be applicable to any such civil
24 action.
25 § 14. This act shall take effect on the first of November next
26 succeeding the date on which it shall have become a law.