

STATE OF NEW YORK

3253

2019-2020 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

February 5, 2019

Introduced by Sens. PARKER, SEPULVEDA -- read twice and ordered printed,
and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Codes

AN ACT to amend the civil rights law, in relation to recording certain
law enforcement activities

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

1 Section 1. This act shall be known and may be cited as the "New
2 Yorker's right to monitor act".

3 § 2. The civil rights law is amended by adding a new section 79-o to
4 read as follows:

5 § 79-o. Recording certain activities. 1. Definitions. For purposes of
6 this section, the following terms shall have the following meanings:

7 (a) "Officer" means any peace officer, police officer, security offi-
8 cer, security guard or similar official who is engaged in a law enforce-
9 ment activity;

10 (b) "Law enforcement activity" means any activity by an officer acting
11 under the color of law; and

12 (c) "Record" means to capture or attempt to capture any moving or
13 still image, sound, or impression through the use of any recording
14 device, camera, or any other device capable of capturing audio, moving
15 or still images, or by way of written notes or observations.

16 2. Right to record law enforcement related activities. A person not
17 under arrest or in the custody of a law enforcement official has the
18 right to record law enforcement activity and to maintain custody and
19 control of that recording and of any property or instruments used by
20 that person to record law enforcement activities, provided, however,
21 that a person in custody or under arrest does not, by that status alone,
22 forfeit the right to have any such recordings, property and equipment
23 maintained and returned to him or her. Nothing in this subdivision shall
24 be construed to permit a person to engage in actions that physically
25 interfere with law enforcement activity or otherwise constitute a crime
26 defined in the penal law involving obstructing governmental adminis-
27 tration.

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

LBD06662-01-9

1 3. Private right of action. (a) A claim of unlawful interference with
2 recording a law enforcement activity is established under this section
3 when a person demonstrates that he or she exercised or attempted to
4 exercise the right established in subdivision two of this section to
5 record a law enforcement activity and an officer acted to interfere with
6 that person's recording of a law enforcement activity, including but not
7 limited to, by:

8 (i) intentionally preventing or attempting to prevent that person from
9 recording law enforcement activity;

10 (ii) threatening that person for recording a law enforcement activity;

11 (iii) commanding that the person cease recording law enforcement
12 activity when the person was nevertheless authorized under law to
13 record;

14 (iv) stopping, seizing, searching, ticketing or arresting that person
15 because that person recorded a law enforcement activity; or

16 (v) unlawfully seizing property or instruments used by that person to
17 record a law enforcement activity, unlawfully destroying, or seizing a
18 recorded image or recorded images of a law enforcement activity, or
19 copying such a recording of a law enforcement activity without consent
20 of the person who recorded it or approval from an appropriate court.

21 (b) It shall be an affirmative defense to a civil action under subpar-
22 agraphs (i), (iii) and (iv) of paragraph (a) of this subdivision that at
23 the time of such conduct by an officer, such officer had probable cause
24 to arrest the person recording such a law enforcement activity for a
25 crime defined in the penal law involving obstructing governmental admin-
26 istration.

27 (c) A person subject to unlawful interference with recording law
28 enforcement activities as described in paragraph (a) of this subdivision
29 may bring an action for any violation of this section in any court of
30 competent jurisdiction for damages, including punitive damages, for
31 declaratory and injunctive relief, and such other remedies as the court
32 may deem appropriate.

33 (d) In any action or proceeding brought pursuant to this section, the
34 court may allow a prevailing plaintiff reasonable attorney's fees and
35 expert fees as a part of the costs which may be recovered.

36 (e) Any action or proceeding brought pursuant to this section shall be
37 commenced no later than three years after the date on which the
38 violation of this section is committed.

39 4. Preservation of rights. This section shall be in addition to all
40 rights, procedures, and remedies available under the United States
41 Constitution, 42 USC 1983, the constitution of the state of New York and
42 all other federal law, state law, law of the city of New York or the
43 administrative code of the city of New York, and all other civil reme-
44 dies, including monetary damages, created by statute, ordinance, regu-
45 lation or common law.

46 § 3. Severability clause. If any clause, sentence, paragraph, subdivi-
47 sion, section or part of this act shall be adjudged by any court of
48 competent jurisdiction to be invalid, such judgment shall not affect,
49 impair, or invalidate the remainder thereof, but shall be confined in its
50 operation to the clause, sentence, paragraph, subdivision, section or
51 part thereof directly involved in the controversy in which such judge-
52 ment shall have been rendered. It is hereby declared to be the intent of
53 the legislature that this act would have been enacted even if such
54 invalid provisions had not been included herein.

55 § 4. This act shall take effect on the thirtieth day after it shall
56 have become a law.