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HOUSE BILL NO. 3189

Offered January 19, 2007

A BILL to amend and reenact § 18.2-57 of the Code of Virginia, relating to assault and battery upon a law-enforcement officer; penalty.

Patron—Melvin

Referred to Committee for Courts of Justice

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**1. That § 18.2-57 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:**

§ 18.2-57. Assault and battery.

A. Any person who commits a simple assault or assault and battery shall be guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor, and if the person intentionally selects the person against whom a simple assault is committed because of his race, religious conviction, color or national origin, the penalty upon conviction shall include a term of confinement of at least six months, 30 days of which shall be a mandatory minimum term of confinement.

B. However, if a person intentionally selects the person against whom an assault and battery resulting in bodily injury is committed because of his race, religious conviction, color or national origin, the person shall be guilty of a Class 6 felony, and the penalty upon conviction shall include a term of confinement of at least six months, 30 days of which shall be a mandatory minimum term of confinement.

C. In addition, if any person commits an assault or an assault and battery against another knowing or having reason to know that such other person is a judge, a law-enforcement officer as defined hereinafter, a correctional officer as defined in § 53.1-1, a person employed by the Department of Corrections directly involved in the care, treatment or supervision of inmates in the custody of the Department, a firefighter as defined in § 65.2-102, or a volunteer firefighter or lifesaving or rescue squad member who is a member of a bona fide volunteer fire department or volunteer rescue or emergency medical squad regardless of whether a resolution has been adopted by the governing body of a political subdivision recognizing such firefighters or members as employees, engaged in the performance of his public duties, such person is guilty of a Class 6 felony, and, upon conviction, the sentence of such person shall include a mandatory minimum term of confinement of six months. *Notwithstanding the foregoing provisions, upon the trial of any person charged with a violation of this subsection when the level of the offense is minimal, the court in its discretion may find the accused guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor, punishment for which shall include a mandatory minimum term of incarceration of 30 days.*

Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to affect the right of any person charged with a violation of this section from asserting and presenting evidence in support of any defenses to the charge that may be available under common law.

D. In addition, if any person commits a battery against another knowing or having reason to know that such other person is a full-time or part-time teacher, principal, assistant principal, or guidance counselor of any public or private elementary or secondary school and is engaged in the performance of his duties as such, he shall be guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor and the sentence of such person upon conviction shall include a sentence of 15 days in jail, two days of which shall be a mandatory minimum term of confinement. However, if the offense is committed by use of a firearm or other weapon prohibited on school property pursuant to § 18.2-308.1, the person shall serve a mandatory minimum sentence of confinement of six months.

E. As used in this section:

"Judge" means any justice or judge of a court of record of the Commonwealth including a judge designated under § 17.1-105, a judge under temporary recall under § 17.1-106, or a judge pro tempore under § 17.1-109, any member of the State Corporation Commission, or of the Virginia Workers' Compensation Commission, and any judge of a district court of the Commonwealth or any substitute judge of such district court.

"Law-enforcement officer" means any full-time or part-time employee of a police department or sheriff's office which is part of or administered by the Commonwealth or any political subdivision thereof, who is responsible for the prevention or detection of crime and the enforcement of the penal, traffic or highway laws of this Commonwealth, and any conservation officer of the Department of Conservation and Recreation commissioned pursuant to § 10.1-115, and game wardens appointed pursuant to § 29.1-200, and such officer also includes jail officers in local and regional correctional

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59 facilities, all deputy sheriffs, whether assigned to law-enforcement duties, court services or local jail
60 responsibilities, auxiliary police officers appointed or provided for pursuant to §§ 15.2-1731 and
61 15.2-1733 and auxiliary deputy sheriffs appointed pursuant to § 15.2-1603.

62 "School security officer" means an individual who is employed by the local school board for the
63 purpose of maintaining order and discipline, preventing crime, investigating violations of school board
64 policies and detaining persons violating the law or school board policies on school property, a school
65 bus or at a school-sponsored activity and who is responsible solely for ensuring the safety, security and
66 welfare of all students, faculty and staff in the assigned school.

67 F. "Simple assault" or "assault and battery" shall not be construed to include the use of, by any
68 teacher, teacher aide, principal, assistant principal, guidance counselor, school security officer, school
69 bus driver or school bus aide, while acting in the course and scope of his official capacity, any of the
70 following: (i) incidental, minor or reasonable physical contact or other actions designed to maintain
71 order and control; (ii) reasonable and necessary force to quell a disturbance or remove a student from
72 the scene of a disturbance that threatens physical injury to persons or damage to property; (iii)
73 reasonable and necessary force to prevent a student from inflicting physical harm on himself; (iv)
74 reasonable and necessary force for self-defense or the defense of others; or (v) reasonable and necessary
75 force to obtain possession of weapons or other dangerous objects or controlled substances or associated
76 paraphernalia that are upon the person of the student or within his control.

77 In determining whether a person was acting within the exceptions provided in this subsection, due
78 deference shall be given to reasonable judgments that were made by a teacher, teacher aide, principal,
79 assistant principal, guidance counselor, school security officer, school bus driver, or school bus aide at
80 the time of the event.