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SENATE BILL NO. 685

AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE

(Proposed by the House Committee for Courts of Justice
on March 6, 2012)

(Patron Prior to Substitute—Senator Reeves)

A BILL to amend the Code of Virginia by adding a section numbered 19.2-56.2, relating to application for and issuance of search warrant for a tracking device; installation and use; penalty; emergency.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding a section numbered 19.2-56.2 as follows:

§ 19.2-56.2. Application for and issuance of search warrant for a tracking device; installation and use.

A. As used in this section unless the context requires a different meaning:

"Judicial officer" means a judge, magistrate, or other person authorized to issue criminal warrants.

"Law-enforcement officer" shall have the same meaning as in § 9.1-101.

"Tracking device" means an electronic or mechanical device that permits a person to remotely determine or track the position or movement of a person or object. "Tracking device" includes devices that store geographic data for both subsequent access or analysis and devices that allow for the real-time monitoring of movement.

"Use of a tracking device" includes the installation, maintenance, and monitoring of a tracking device but does not include the interception of wire, electronic, or oral communications or the capture, collection, monitoring, or viewing of images.

B. A law-enforcement officer may apply for a search warrant from a judicial officer to permit the use of a tracking device. Each application for a search warrant authorizing the use of a tracking device shall be made in writing, upon oath or affirmation, to a judicial officer in the circuit in which the tracking device is to be installed, or where there is probable cause to believe the offense for which the tracking device is sought has been committed, is being committed, or will be committed.

The law-enforcement officer shall submit an affidavit, which shall include:

1. The identity of the applicant and the identity of the law-enforcement agency conducting the investigation;

2. The identity of the vehicle, container, item, or object to which, in which, or on which the tracking device is to be attached, placed, or otherwise installed; the name of the owner or possessor of the vehicle, container, item, or object described, if known; and the jurisdictional area in which the vehicle, container, item, or object described is expected to be found, if known; and

3. Material facts constituting the probable cause for the issuance of the search warrant and alleging substantially the offense in relation to which such tracking device is to be used and a showing that probable cause exists that the information likely to be obtained may be evidence of the commission of such offense.

C. 1. If the judicial officer finds, based on the affidavit submitted, that there is probable cause to believe that a crime has been committed, is being committed, or will be committed and that there is probable cause to believe the information likely to be obtained from the use of the tracking device may be evidence of the commission of such offense, the judicial officer shall issue a search warrant authorizing the use of the tracking device. The search warrant shall authorize the use of the tracking device from within the Commonwealth to track a person or property for a reasonable period of time, not to exceed 30 days from the issuance of the search warrant. The search warrant shall authorize the collection of the tracking data contained in or obtained from the tracking device but shall not authorize the interception of wire, electronic, or oral communications, or the capture, collection, monitoring, or viewing of images.

2. By operation of law, the affidavit, search warrant, return, and any other related materials or pleadings shall be sealed and shall be delivered to and preserved as a record by the circuit court clerk. Upon motion of the Commonwealth or the owner or possessor of the vehicle, container, item, or object that was tracked, the circuit court may unseal such documents if it appears that the unsealing is consistent with the ends of justice and is necessary to reasonably inform such person of the nature of the evidence to be presented against him or to adequately prepare for his defense.

3. The circuit court may, for good cause shown, grant one or more extensions, not to exceed 30 days each.

D. 1. The search warrant shall command the law-enforcement officer to complete the installation authorized by the search warrant within 15 days after issuance of the search warrant.

2. The law-enforcement officer executing the search warrant shall enter on it the exact date and time the device was installed and the period during which it was used.

60 3. Law-enforcement officers shall be permitted to monitor the tracking device during the period
61 authorized in the search warrant, unless the period is extended as provided for in this section.

62 4. Law-enforcement officers shall remove the tracking device as soon as practical, but not later than
63 10 days after the use of the tracking device has ended. Upon request, and for good cause shown, the
64 circuit court may grant one or more extensions for such removal for a period not to exceed 10 days
65 each.

66 5. In the event that law-enforcement officers are unable to remove the tracking device as required by
67 subdivision 4, the law-enforcement officers shall disable the device, if possible, and all use of the
68 tracking device shall cease.

69 6. Within 10 days after the use of the tracking device has ended, the executed search warrant shall
70 be returned to the circuit court designated in the search warrant where it shall be preserved as a
71 record by the clerk of the circuit court.

72 E. Within 10 days after the use of the tracking device has ended, a copy of the executed search
73 warrant shall be served on the person who was tracked and the person whose property was tracked.
74 Service may be accomplished by delivering a copy to the person who, or whose property, was tracked
75 or by leaving a copy with any individual found at the person's usual place of abode, who is a member
76 of the person's family, other than a temporary sojourner or guest, and who is 16 years of age or older
77 and by mailing a copy to the person's last known address. Upon request, and for good cause shown, the
78 circuit court may grant one or more extensions for such service for a period not to exceed 30 days
79 each. Good cause shall include, but not be limited to, a continuing criminal investigation, the potential
80 for intimidation, the endangerment of an individual, or the preservation of evidence.

81 F. The unauthorized disclosure or publication of the existence of a search warrant issued pursuant to
82 this section, application for such search warrant, any affidavit filed in support of such warrant, or any
83 return or data obtained as a result of such search warrant is punishable as a Class 1 misdemeanor.

84 G. The provisions of this section shall be severable and, if any of its provisions shall be held
85 unconstitutional by a court of competent jurisdiction, then the decision of such court shall not affect or
86 impair any of the remaining provisions.

87 2. That an emergency exists and this act is in force from its passage.