



Fiscal Impact Statement for Proposed Legislation

Virginia Criminal Sentencing Commission

House Bill No. 1845

(Patron – Gilbert)

LD#: 15102607

Date: 12/30/2014

Topic: Harassment by computer

Fiscal Impact Summary:

- **State Adult Correctional Facilities:**
\$50,000 *
- **Local Adult Correctional Facilities:**
Cannot be determined
- **Adult Community Corrections Programs:**
Cannot be determined

- **Juvenile Correctional Centers:**
Cannot be determined**
 - **Juvenile Detention Facilities:**
Cannot be determined**
- ** Provided by the Department of Juvenile Justice

* The estimated amount of the necessary appropriation cannot be determined for periods of imprisonment in state adult correctional facilities; therefore, Chapter 2 of the 2014 Acts of Assembly, Special Session I, requires the Virginia Criminal Sentencing Commission to assign a minimum fiscal impact of \$50,000.

Summary of Proposed Legislation:

The proposed legislation amends § 18.2-152.7:1, relating to harassment by computer. Currently, any person who uses a computer or computer network to harass another is guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor. Under the proposal, any person who commits harassment with the intent to defraud is also guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor. Harassment by computer while knowingly and intentionally assuming the identity of another living person would be punishable as a Class 6 felony under the proposed amendments.

Analysis:

According to fiscal year (FY) 2013 and FY2014 data from the General District Court Case Management System (CMS), 83 offenders were convicted of misdemeanor computer harassment under § 18.2-152.7:1. Of these, the majority (73%) did not receive an active term of incarceration to serve after sentencing. The remaining 27% received a local-responsible (jail) term with a median sentence of one month.

Existing data sources do not contain sufficient detail to identify instances in which an offender committed harassment by computer with the intent to defraud or while having assumed the identity of another living person.

Impact of Proposed Legislation:

State adult correctional facilities. By increasing the penalty for harassment by computer from a Class 1 misdemeanor to a Class 6 felony if the offender assumes the identity of another living person, the proposal may increase the future state-responsible (prison) bed space needs of the Commonwealth.

However, data are not sufficiently detailed to estimate how many additional felony convictions may result if the proposal is enacted. Therefore, the magnitude of the impact cannot be quantified.

Local adult correctional facilities. By defining harassment with the intent to defraud as a Class 1 misdemeanor and increasing the penalty for certain acts to a felony, the proposal may also increase local-responsible (jail) bed space needs; however, the magnitude of the impact cannot be determined.

Adult community corrections resources. Because the proposal could result in additional convictions with subsequent supervision requirements for the offenders, the proposal may increase the need for adult community corrections resources. Since the number of cases that may be affected cannot be determined, the potential impact on community corrections cannot be quantified.

Virginia's sentencing guidelines. Convictions resulting from the proposed felony would not be covered by the sentencing guidelines when the offense is the primary (most serious) offense in a case; however, a conviction under this provision may augment the guidelines recommendation if the most serious offense at sentencing is covered by the guidelines. No adjustment to the guidelines would be necessary under the proposal.

Juvenile correctional centers. The Department of Juvenile Justice reports the impact of this proposal on bed space needs for juvenile correctional centers cannot be determined.

Juvenile detention facilities. The Department of Juvenile Justice reports that this proposal's impact on detention center bed space needs cannot be determined.

Pursuant to § 30-19.1:4, the estimated amount of the necessary appropriation cannot be determined for periods of imprisonment in state adult correctional facilities; therefore, Chapter 2 of the 2014 Acts of Assembly, Special Session I, requires the Virginia Criminal Sentencing Commission to assign a minimum fiscal impact of \$50,000.

Pursuant to § 30-19.1:4, the estimated amount of the necessary appropriation cannot be determined for periods of commitment to the custody of the Department of Juvenile Justice.

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