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Office

H.B. 462
134th General Assembly

Fiscal Note & Local Impact Statement

[Click here for H.B. 462's Bill Analysis](#)

Version: As Introduced

Primary Sponsor: Reps. K. Miller and Carfagna

Local Impact Statement Procedure Required: No

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Highlights

- The bill may shift a very small number of cases from the misdemeanor jurisdiction of a county or municipal court to the felony jurisdiction of a court of common pleas. As a result, there may be a negligible increase in county adjudication costs, a potential shift in incarceration expenditures from secure local facilities to state-run facilities, and a negligible revenue increase in the form of fines and court costs and fees.
- Court-ordered reimbursements may generate money for a law enforcement agency or emergency services provider involved in the emergency response to an act of swatting. The timing and magnitude of such reimbursements is unpredictable.

Detailed Analysis

Swatting

The bill creates the offense of “swatting” that prohibits a person by means of a telecommunications device or service from purposely triggering an emergency response when none is warranted by reporting false or misleading information to a law enforcement agency, emergency services provider, or public safety answering point. A violation of the prohibition is a third degree felony, unless the violation results in serious physical harm, then a violation is a first degree felony.

The practical effect of the new offense is that it will likely serve as a penalty enhancement by creating felony status for conduct that is already prohibited in the Revised Code. Currently, conduct that would be classified as “swatting” under the bill would most likely be charged as “making false alarms” (R.C. 2917.32) or “falsification” (R.C. 2921.13). A violation of either is

generally a first degree misdemeanor and under the subject matter jurisdiction of county or municipal courts.¹

The following table shows the fine and term of incarceration applicable under current law for making false alarms, falsification, and the new offense of “swatting.”

Felony and Misdemeanor Sentences and Fines Generally		
Offense Level	Fine	Term of Incarceration
Felony 1 st degree*	Up to \$20,000	3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, or 11 years prison term
Felony 3 rd degree	Up to \$10,000	9, 12, 18, 24, 30, or 36 month definite prison term
Misdemeanor 1 st degree	Up to \$1,000	Jail, not more than 180 days

*In the case of a first degree felony that is not subject to life imprisonment, a judge imposes both a minimum and maximum prison term. Release is presumed at the expiration of the minimum prison term. The judge selects a minimum prison term from the range; the maximum prison term is generally calculated as the minimum prison term plus 50% of itself.

Expenditures

By creating the felony offense of “swatting,” the bill would shift what is likely to be a very small number of cases from the misdemeanor jurisdiction of a county or municipal court to the felony jurisdiction of a court of common pleas. Generally, felony cases tend to be more time consuming and expensive to adjudicate however, conversations with the Ohio Judicial Conference suggest that cases involving “swatting” are rarely seen. That said, any cost shifting that may occur from municipal to county criminal justice systems because of the bill is likely to be negligible.

Additionally, if an offender is sentenced for “swatting” under the bill, that offender could be sentenced to a term of incarceration in a state-run prison or juvenile correctional facility instead of local confinement in a jail, detention center, or community-based corrections facility. This means that the departments of Rehabilitation and Correction and Youth Services could incur minimal additional costs to incarcerate a very small number of additional offenders and those local confinement facilities may experience a corresponding decrease in costs. The magnitude of any increase or decrease in incarceration expenditures is expected to be negligible, as very few cases are expected to be impacted.

Revenues

Depending on the amount that an offender is fined and whether or not they pay that amount, it is possible that certain counties where there is a “swatting” conviction could experience an increase in fine revenue. There may also be a negligible increase in the amount of

¹ While the penalty for violations of R.C. 2917.32 and 2921.13 can elevate to a fifth, fourth, or third degree felony depending on the circumstances of the violation, the penalty for conduct prohibited by the bill under current law would most likely be a first degree misdemeanor.

court costs and fees assessed, as those amounts are generally higher for felonies than for misdemeanors.

Reimbursement for emergency response costs

The bill provides that the court may order an offender to reimburse a law enforcement agency or emergency services provider involved in an emergency response to an act of swatting for all or a portion of the costs incurred by the agency or provider. The timing and magnitude of such reimbursements is unpredictable.