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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

SPONSOR: Heaton DATE TYPED: 03/06/03 HB 30/aHJC

SHORT TITLE: Law Enforcement Safe Pursuit Act SB _____

ANALYST: Fox-Young

APPROPRIATION

Appropriation Contained		Estimated Additional Impact		Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
FY03	FY04	FY03	FY04		
			.1 Significant	Recurring	General Fund

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

Relates to HB 87

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Responses Received From

Administrative Office of the District Attorneys (AODA)

Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC)

LFC Files

No Response

Attorney General (AG)

Public Defender Department (PDD)

Department of Public Safety (DPS)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of HJC Amendment

The House Judiciary Committee Amendment to House Bill 30 reduces the requirement for in-service law enforcement training from eight to four hours.

Synopsis of Original Bill

House Bill 30 enacts the Law Enforcement Safe Pursuit Act, requiring law enforcement agencies to formulate policies and develop and incorporate training regarding high speed pursuits. The bill creates the crime of aggravated fleeing a law enforcement officer, making it a fourth degree felony.

“High speed pursuit” is defined as an attempt by a law enforcement officer in an authorized emergency vehicle to apprehend an occupant of a motor vehicle, the driver of which is actively attempting to avoid apprehension by exceeding the speed limit.

The bill requires that no later than December 31, 2004, the New Mexico Law Enforcement Academy Board develop and incorporate into the training program at least sixteen hours of instruction regarding the safe initiation and conduct of high speed pursuits.

The bill provides that in-service law enforcement training, as required pursuant to Section 29-7-7.1 NMSA 1978, shall include at least eight hours of instruction regarding high pursuits. Section 29-7-7.1 provides that certified police officers shall “during each twenty-four month period of employment, complete a minimum of forty hours of in-service law enforcement training in courses approved by the board.”

The bill requires that the chief law enforcement officer of every state, county and municipal law enforcement agency establish and enforce a written policy regarding high speed pursuits.

The bill enacts a new section of the criminal code creating the crime of aggravated fleeing a law enforcement officer, a fourth degree felony.

Significant Issues

This bill details requisite components, including instructional hours and content, of the curriculum at the law enforcement academy. With the exception of the statutory requirement that basic law enforcement training include a section on domestic abuse incident training, the Legislature has traditionally operated under the theory that the Law Enforcement Academy Board determines the Academy’s curriculum. Mandating the number of hours to be spent in a given area of training is unprecedented.

The bill includes specific guidelines for policies governing high speed pursuits, effectively limiting agency and officer discretion.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

Although the bill does not include an appropriation to cover increasing costs at the Department of Public Safety (DPS), it will require the training division to develop a curriculum for basic and in-service training that is in compliance (a nonrecurring cost) and to provide this training on an ongoing basis (a recurring cost).

The Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) reports that there will be a minimum administrative cost for statewide update, distribution and documentation of statutory changes. The fiscal implications for the courts, district attorneys and the public defender shall depend on the amount of litigation generated by the Act.

The Administrative Office of the District Attorneys (AODA) reports that it may be necessary to shift personnel from misdemeanor courts to district courts to prosecute cases resulting from this Act.

Creating the crime of aggravated fleeing a law enforcement officer as a fourth degree felony will

likely have a significant impact on the Corrections Department (CD). Felony convictions for this offense will result in an overall increase in incarceration and probation costs. In previous years, CD has estimated that this Act would result in five to ten convictions per year. CD has also estimated that approximately half of these convictions would result in sentences of incarceration and the other half in probation and that the period of probation would likely increase from one year to eighteen months. Based on FY02 actual expenditures, the annual cost to house a male inmate at a private correctional facility is \$23,552 and the annual cost per female client is \$25,117. The cost per client for a standard supervision program in probation and parole is \$1,533 annually. Based on these figures, the increased cost to the CD would be between \$100,000 and \$150,000 annually.

RELATIONSHIP

The bill partially duplicates HB 87, but HB 87 includes data collection and reporting requirements.

TECHNICAL ISSUES

Section 2 of the bill refers to an “authorized emergency vehicle” while section 6 refers to an “appropriately marked law enforcement vehicle.” These terms are not defined, and it is unclear whether they have the same meaning. It is unclear whether unmarked vehicles are included.

AODA reports that the bill sets forth two different legal standards for determining when a high speed chase should be initiated as well as two different grounds for initiation of a high speed pursuit. The relevant language in the bill reads as follows:

“The written policy shall, at a minimum, require that:

(1) a law enforcement officer may initiate a high speed pursuit to apprehend a suspect who the officer has *reasonable grounds* to believe poses a clear and immediate threat of death or serious injury to others or who the officer has *probable cause* to believe poses a clear and immediate threat to the safety of others that *is ongoing and that existed prior to the high speed pursuit;*”

AODA suggests rewriting the language to use one legal standard, as follows:

(1) a law enforcement officer may initiate a high speed pursuit to apprehend a suspect who the officer has *reasonable grounds* to believe poses a clear and immediate threat of death or serious injury to others; or *reasonable grounds* to believe poses an immediate threat to the safety of others that *existed prior to the pursuit and continues to exist during the pursuit;*

JCF/njw