

SENATE THIRD READING
SB 480 (Archuleta)
As Amended August 10, 2020
Majority vote

SUMMARY:

Prohibits a state and local law enforcement agency from authorizing or allowing its employees to wear camouflage, or any uniform that is substantially similar, as defined, to any uniform of the United States Armed Forces or state active militia.

Major Provisions

- 1) Declares that a uniform is "substantially similar" if it "so resembles an official uniform of the United States Armed Forces or state active militia as to cause an ordinary reasonable person to believe that the person wearing the uniform is a member of the United States Armed Forces of state active militia."
- 2) States that a uniform is not substantially similar if it includes at least two of three components: a) a band or star facsimile mounted on the chest area, b) a patch on one or both sleeves displaying the insignia of the employing agency or entity, and c) the word "Police or Sheriff" prominently displayed across the back or chest area of the uniform.
- 3) States that this section applies to personnel who are assigned to uniformed patrol, uniformed crime suppression, or uniformed duty at an event or disturbance, and not to members of a swat team, sniper team, or tactical team engaged in a tactical response or operation.

COMMENTS:

National Guard Recently Deployed to California Cities: The streets of Bay Area, Sacramento, Los Angeles, San Diego, and other cities across the state have recently been occupied by the National Guard as protests over George Floyd's killing dominated the streets. State and local law enforcement officers were also heavily deployed on the streets, prior to and after the National Guard presence. Similar scenes played out across the country.

At the same time, there have been reports across the country that state and local law enforcement officials have been wearing military-presenting uniforms. "I see officers from @MenloParkPD, @SMCSheriff, @SanMateoPD, @HillsboroughPD and others. They have batons out and have zip ties, tear gas and flash bangs in their kits. Some in the background from the sheriff's office are decked out in camo." (See <https://twitter.com/aldo29/status/1268007934308442112>, last accessed July 24, 2020.)

The author cites to an article discussing the psychological effect of law enforcement officers wearing military-like fatigues: "When we dress our police officers in camouflage before deploying them to a peaceful protest, the result will be police who think more like soldiers. This likely includes heightening their perception of physical threats, and increasing the likelihood that they react to those threats with violence. Simply put, dressing police up like soldiers potentially changes how they see a situation, changing protesters into enemy combatants, rather than what they are: civilians exercising their democratic rights." (See Geordie McRuer, *Cops' Deadly Identity Problem: How Police Officers' Military Uniforms Affect Their Mental State*, Salon, Sept. 12, 2014, available at <https://www.salon.com/2014>

/09/12/cops_deadly_identity_problem_how_police_officers_military_uniforms_affect_their_mental_state/.)

This bill would prohibit the use of camouflage fatigues by state and local law enforcement officers, and also uniforms that appear substantially similar to military uniforms, in responding to events and protests.

According to the Author:

"SB 480 seeks to protect our service members, law enforcement officers, and civilians by ensuring that there are clear identifying features on police uniforms that distinguishes them from the military and prohibits the use of camouflage unless it is being worn by tactical teams. In light of the recent protests, it has been made clear that the uniforms of our local law enforcement agencies bear a striking resemblance to those of the United States Armed Forces. In these cases, it is not only easy for civilians to confuse the uniforms which can cause problems for our State National Guard whose presence had been requested by mayors across the state to support law enforcement, but studies suggest these visuals can also send a wrong message of aggression.

"SB 480 would ensure there are identifying features on law enforcement uniforms to prevent any further confusion between our United States military and police departments in order to protect the public, our police officers, and our men and women in uniform."

Arguments in Support:

According to the *Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department*, "The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department does not allow the use of uniforms substantially similar to the armed forces to be used by our members of uniformed patrol, crime suppression, or uniformed duty at an event or disturbance."

Arguments in Opposition:

None on file

FISCAL COMMENTS:

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee, likely minor costs to state law enforcement agencies to update policies regarding uniforms, specifically prohibiting camouflage.

VOTES:

SENATE FLOOR: 37-0-2

YES: Allen, Archuleta, Bates, Beall, Borgeas, Bradford, Caballero, Dahle, Dodd, Durazo, Galgiani, Glazer, Lena Gonzalez, Grove, Hertzberg, Hill, Hueso, Hurtado, Jackson, Jones, Leyva, McGuire, Mitchell, Monning, Moorlach, Morrell, Nielsen, Pan, Portantino, Roth, Rubio, Skinner, Stern, Umberg, Wieckowski, Wiener, Wilk

ABS, ABST OR NV: Atkins, Chang

ASM PUBLIC SAFETY: 7-1-0

YES: Jones-Sawyer, Lackey, Bauer-Kahan, Kamlager, Quirk, Santiago, Mark Stone

NO: Diep

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 12-6-0

YES: Gonzalez, Bauer-Kahan, Bloom, Bonta, Calderon, Carrillo, Chau, Eggman, Gabriel, Eduardo Garcia, Quirk, Robert Rivas

NO: Bigelow, Megan Dahle, Diep, Fong, Petrie-Norris, Voepel

UPDATED:

VERSION: August 10, 2020

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