
UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Bill No: SB 701
Author: Wahab (D), et al.
Amended: 7/3/25 in Assembly
Vote: 21

SENATE PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE: 6-0, 4/8/25
AYES: Arreguín, Seyarto, Caballero, Gonzalez, Pérez, Wiener

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 6-0, 5/23/25
AYES: Caballero, Seyarto, Cabaldon, Grayson, Richardson, Wahab
NO VOTE RECORDED: Dahle

SENATE FLOOR: 38-0, 6/4/25
AYES: Allen, Alvarado-Gil, Archuleta, Arreguín, Ashby, Becker, Blakespear, Cabaldon, Caballero, Cervantes, Choi, Cortese, Dahle, Durazo, Gonzalez, Grayson, Grove, Hurtado, Jones, Laird, Limón, McGuire, McNerney, Menjivar, Niello, Ochoa Bogh, Padilla, Pérez, Richardson, Rubio, Seyarto, Stern, Strickland, Umberg, Valladares, Wahab, Weber Pierson, Wiener
NO VOTE RECORDED: Reyes, Smallwood-Cuevas

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 75-0, 9/8/25 - See last page for vote

SUBJECT: Signal jammers

SOURCE: California Police Chiefs Association

DIGEST: This bill establishes several violations and penalties relating to the use of signal jammers, as specified.

Assembly Amendments reduce the penalty for manufacturing, transferring or using a signal jammer, add a knowledge requirement to the crime of using a signal jammer to block public safety communications, remove criminal liability for an individual who merely possesses a signal jammer in conjunction with the commission of a crime, and require the forfeiture of a signal jammer used in the commission of any of the crimes created by the bill.

ANALYSIS:

Existing federal law:

- 1) Prohibits a person from willfully or maliciously interfering with or causing interference to radio communications. (47 United States Code (U.S.C.), § 333.)
- 2) Prohibits a person from manufacturing, importing, selling, offering for sale, or shipping a device that interferes with radio communications. (47 U.S.C., § 302a, subds. (a)-(b).)
- 3) Provides that any person who willfully and knowingly violates specified requirements related to wire and radio communication, including the prohibitions above, shall be punished by a fine of not more than \$10,000 or by imprisonment for a term not exceeding one year, or both, or up to two years for a subsequent offense. (47 U.S.C., § 501.)
- 4) Provides that any electronic, electromagnetic, radio frequency, or similar device, or component thereof, used, sent, carried, manufactured, assembled, possessed, offered for sale, sold, or advertised with willful and knowing intent to violate § 302a, cited above, may be seized and forfeited to the United States. (47 U.S.C., § 510.)
- 5) Prohibits the intentional or malicious interference to satellite communications, including GPS, and subjects the operator to possible fines, imprisonment, or both. (18 U.S.C., § 1367, subd. (a).)

Existing state law:

- 1) Provides that a person who unlawfully and maliciously removes, injures, destroys, damages, or obstructs the use of any wireless communication device with the intent to prevent the use of the device to summon assistance or notify law enforcement or any public safety agency of a crime is guilty of a misdemeanor. (Penal Code (Pen. Code), § 591.5.)
- 2) Provides that any person not authorized by the sender, who intercepts any public safety radio service communication, as defined, by use of a scanner or any other means, for the purpose of using that communication to assist in the commission of a criminal offense or to avoid or escape arrest, trial, conviction, or punishment or who divulges to any person he or she knows to be a suspect in the commission of any criminal offense, the existence, contents, substance, purport, effect or meaning of that communication concerning the offense with

the intent that the suspect may avoid or escape from arrest, trial, conviction, or punishment is guilty of a misdemeanor. (Pen. Code, § 636.5.)

- 3) Establishes the Legislature's intent to provide an efficient law enforcement communications network available to all public agencies of law enforcement, and that such a network be established and maintained in a condition adequate to the needs of law enforcement. (Government Code (Gov. Code), § 15151).
- 4) Requires the Department of Justice to maintain a statewide telecommunications system of communication for the use of law enforcement agencies (CLETS), and provides that CLETS shall be under the direction of the Attorney General, and shall be used exclusively for the official business of the state and any city, county, city and county, or other public agency. (Gov. Code, §§ 15152 and 15153).
- 5) Makes it an infraction for a vehicle to be equipped with any device that is designed for, or is capable of, jamming, scrambling, neutralizing, disabling, or otherwise interfering with radar, laser, or any other electronic device used by a law enforcement agency to measure the speed of moving objects. (Vehicle Code (Veh. Code), § 28150, subd. (a).)
- 6) Makes it an infraction for any person to use, buy, possess, manufacture, sell, or otherwise distribute any device that is designed for jamming, scrambling, neutralizing, disabling, or otherwise interfering with radar, laser, or any other electronic device used by a law enforcement agency to measure the speed of moving objects. Possession of four or more of these devices is a misdemeanor. (Veh. Code, § 28150, subds. (b), (d).)

This bill:

- 1) Provides that a person who manufactures, imports, markets, purchases, sells, or operates a signal jammer, unless authorized to do so by the Federal Communications Commission, is guilty of an infraction, punishable by a fine not to exceed five hundred dollars (\$500) for a first offense.
- 2) Provides that a second or subsequent violation of the above provision is a misdemeanor, punishable by imprisonment in a county jail not exceeding year, by a fine not to exceed one thousand dollars (\$1,000), or by both that fine and imprisonment.
- 3) Provides that a person who operates a signal jammer in conjunction with the commission of a misdemeanor or felony is guilty of a misdemeanor, punishable

by imprisonment in the county jail not exceeding one year, or by a fine not to exceed \$1,000 or by both that fine and imprisonment.

- 4) Provides that a person who willfully or maliciously uses a signal jammer to block state or local public safety communications, and who knows or should know that using the signal jammer is likely to result in death or great bodily injury and great bodily injury is sustained by any person as a result of that use, is guilty of an alternate misdemeanor/realigned felony, punishable, in the case of the misdemeanor, by imprisonment in county jail not to exceed 1 year, or in the case of the realigned felony, by imprisonment in county jail not to exceed 16 months, two years, or three years.
- 5) Provides that a conviction for a crime prescribed under this bill requires the forfeiture of the signal jamming device.
- 6) Specifies that the above prohibitions do not apply to the authorized and lawful use of signal jammers by local or state law enforcement.
- 7) This bill sets forth the following definitions for terms used therein:
 - a) “Signal jammer” means a device that intentionally blocks, jams, or interferes with authorized radio or wireless communications.
 - b) “Public safety communications” means the systems, technologies, and methods used by emergency response agencies, firefighters, and EMS, to communicate with each other.

Comments

The Federal Communications Commission is responsible for assigning licenses to individual law enforcement agencies for the operation of their radio systems on the “public safety spectrum,” which serves the telecommunications needs of most public safety agencies across the country. Until very recently, most police radio communications in California have been unencrypted, which means that the public can access police radio transmissions using a radio scanning device. With the development of online radio streaming, many unencrypted police radio channels have become accessible via internet websites that provide a livestream.

The FCC is also responsible for the regulation of signal jammers and the enforcement of laws and regulations related to these devices. The FCC’s primary regulatory authority is derived from the Communications Act of 1934 (hereinafter, “the Act”), which established the agency and, among other things, generally prohibits the operation, manufacture, importation, marketing and sale of equipment

designed to jam or otherwise interfere with authorized radio communications, such as radar, GPS and cell phone communications. The Act also imposes significant penalties for a violation of its provisions, including substantial fines and imprisonment, and allows the FCC to seize unlawful equipment. To assist state and local jurisdictions and the public at-large with jammer-related issues, the FCC has a process by which a local law enforcement official or member of the public can file complaints directly with the agency. Additionally, the Department of Homeland Security, primarily through its subsidiary Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency, provides guidance to public safety organizations on mitigating radio frequency interference threats.

The Author asserts that “existing California law does not make any mention of signal jamming technology.” While it is true that no provision pertains specifically to communications signal jamming, existing law does make it an infraction for a vehicle to be equipped with a device that is capable of jamming or interfering with law enforcement speed detection devices, and additionally makes it an infraction to use, purchase, manufacture or sell such a device. Existing law also makes it a misdemeanor to obstruct the use of any wireless communication device with the intent to prevent the use of the device to summon assistance or notify law enforcement. Similarly, existing law makes it a misdemeanor to intercept any public safety radio communication for the purposes of committing a crime, escaping arrest, trial, conviction or punishment, or warn a suspect they are being investigated.

This bill creates three violations related to various conduct involving signal jammers, which the bill defines as “a device that intentionally blocks, jams, or interferes with authorized radio or wireless communications.” First, the bill makes it an infraction for a first offense and a misdemeanor for a second or subsequent offense to manufacture, import, market, purchase, sell, or operate a signal jammer unless authorized by the FCC. This offense is punishable by a fine of \$500 in the case of the infraction, or by that fine and jail time in the case of a misdemeanor. Second, the bill prohibits the operation of a signal jammer in conjunction with the commission of a crime, a violation of which is punishable as a misdemeanor, the penalty for which is up to a year in jail or a fine of up to \$1,000, or both the fine and imprisonment. Finally, the bill makes it a wobbler to willfully or maliciously use a signal jammer to block state or local public safety communications when the individuals knows or should know that the conduct is likely to result in great bodily injury or death and does indeed cause great bodily injury or death. The punishment for this crime involves various terms in county jail depending on whether the crime is charged as a misdemeanor or felony. Conviction for any of these crimes requires the forfeiture of the signal jamming device.

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: Yes

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee:

- Cost pressures (Trial Court Trust Fund, General Fund) of an unknown but potentially significant amount to the courts to adjudicate criminal charges resulting from this bill. A defendant charged with a misdemeanor or felony is entitled to a jury trial and, if the defendant is indigent, legal representation provided by the government. Actual court costs will depend on the number of violations, prosecutorial discretion, and the amount of court time needed to adjudicate each case. Although courts are not funded on the basis of workload, increased pressure on the Trial Court Trust Fund may create a demand for increased funding for courts from the General Fund. The fiscal year 2025-26 state budget provides \$82 million ongoing General Fund to the Trial Court Trust Fund for court operations.
- Costs (local funds, General Fund) to the counties and the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to incarcerate people convicted of the crimes created by this bill. Actual incarceration costs will depend on the number of convictions, the length of each sentence, and whether each sentence must be served in county jail or state prison. The average annual cost to incarcerate one person in county jail is approximately \$29,000, though costs are higher in larger counties. The Legislative Analyst's Office estimates the average annual cost to incarcerate one person in state prison is \$133,000. County incarceration costs are not subject to reimbursement by the state. However, overcrowding in county jails creates cost pressure on the General Fund because the state has historically granted new funding to counties to offset overcrowding resulting from public safety realignment.

SUPPORT: (Verified 9/8/25)

Arcadia Police Officers' Association

Brea Police Association

Burbank Police Officers' Association

California Association of School Police Chiefs

California Coalition of School Safety Professionals

California District Attorneys Association

California Narcotic Officers' Association

California Police Chiefs Association
California Reserve Peace Officers Association
California State Sheriffs' Association
City of Los Alamitos
City of Los Angeles
City of Santa Clara
City of Sunnyvale
Claremont Police Officers Association
Corona Police Officers Association
Culver City Police Officers' Association
Fullerton Police Officers' Association
League of California Cities
Los Angeles School Police Management Association
Los Angeles School Police Officers Association
Murrieta Police Officers' Association
Newport Beach Police Association
Palos Verdes Police Officers Association
Placer County Deputy Sheriffs' Association
Pomona Police Officers' Association
Riverside Police Officers Association
Riverside Sheriffs' Association

OPPOSITION: (Verified 9/8/25)

ACLU California Action
California Civil Liberties Advocacy
California Public Defenders Association
Californians United for a Responsible Budget
Initiate Justice
Justice2jobs Coalition
LA Defensa
San Francisco Public Defender

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 75-0, 9/8/25

AYES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Arambula, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Chen, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Ellis, Flora, Fong, Gabriel, Gallagher, Garcia, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Irwin, Jackson, Johnson, Krell, Lackey, Lee,

Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel,
Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Celeste
Rodriguez, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Sanchez, Schiavo,
Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Ta, Tangipa, Valencia, Wallis,
Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas
NO VOTE RECORDED: Bonta, Bryan, Elhawary, Kalra, Nguyen

Prepared by: Alex Barnett / PUB. S. /
9/8/25 19:42:30

**** END ****