



**S.B. 243**

124th General Assembly  
(As Introduced)

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**BILL SUMMARY**

- Authorizes a county sheriff to charge a registration fee each time an offender registers or registers a new residence address under the Sex Offender Registration and Notification (SORN) Law.
- Authorizes a county sheriff to charge a fee each time a person makes a periodic verification of the person's current residence address under the SORN Law.
- Establishes a \$100 limit per year on the fees a sheriff may collect under the bill from a person adjudicated a sexual predator.
- Establishes a \$50 limit per year on the fees a sheriff may collect under the bill from a person who is not adjudicated a sexual predator.
- Requires the Auditor of State to prescribe procedures for the collection of these fees.

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**CONTENT AND OPERATION**

**Sex Offender Registration and Notification Law--general background**

Existing law requires certain offenders who have been convicted of or pleaded guilty to a "sexually oriented offense" (see "Definitions," below) to register with a county sheriff, provide notification to specified sheriffs if there is a change in residence address, and periodically verify residence addresses with specified sheriffs. The law also provides for victim notification and community notification of the residence addresses of offenders who are also classified as "sexual predators" or, in certain circumstances, "habitual sex offenders" (see "Definitions," below). This law, contained in existing Chapter 2950. of the

Revised Code, is referred to generally as the Sex Offender Registration and Notification Law (the SORN Law) or the Ohio Megan's Law.

### **Duties and notifications under the SORN Law**

#### **Duty to register**

Existing law generally requires offenders convicted of a sexually oriented offense to register with a specified sheriff at a specified time. Generally, each offender must register, within seven days of his or her coming into any county in which he or she resides or temporarily is domiciled for more than seven days, with the sheriff of that county.<sup>1</sup> (R.C. 2950.04(A).)

An offender who is required to register personally must obtain from the sheriff or a designee of the sheriff a registration form, complete and sign the form, and return the completed form together with a photograph to the sheriff or designee. The sheriff or designee must sign the form and indicate on the form the date on which it is returned. After an offender registers with a sheriff, the sheriff must forward the signed, written registration form and photograph to the Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation (BCII). BCII includes the information and materials in the State Registry of Sex Offenders. (R.C. 2950.04(A), (B), (C), and (D).)

#### **Duties regarding change of residence address**

Under existing law, an offender who is required to register must, at least seven days before changing his or her residence address during the period of required registration (see **COMMENT 1**), do both of the following: (1) provide written notice of the residence address change to the sheriff with whom the offender most recently registered, and (2) register the new residence address with the sheriff of the county in which the new residence address is located. The provisions apply regardless of whether the person's new residence address is in Ohio or in another state. (R.C. 2950.05(A), (B), (C), and (F), not in the bill.)

A sheriff, upon receiving an offender's notice of a change of residence address, must promptly forward the new residence address to BCII if the new residence address is in another state or, if the offender's new residence address is located in another county in Ohio, to the sheriff of that county. BCII must include all information forwarded to it in the State Registry of Sex Offenders and forward

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<sup>1</sup> Existing law has similar registration requirements for certain delinquent children who committed a sexually oriented offense. For simplicity purposes, this analysis refers only to adult "offenders," however.

notice of the offender's new residence address to the appropriate officials in the other state. (R.C. 2950.05(D), not in the bill.)

### **Duties regarding address verification**

Existing law provides that an offender who is required to register must periodically verify his or her current residence address at a specified time and in a specified manner. Regardless of when the sexually oriented offense for which the offender is required to register was committed, if the offender has been adjudicated a sexual predator and has not been "declassified," the offender must verify his or her current residence address every 90 days after his or her initial registration date during the required registration period. In all other circumstances, the offender must verify his or her current residence address on each anniversary of his or her initial registration date during the required registration period. (R.C. 2950.06(A) and (B).)

An offender must verify his or her current residence address with the sheriff with whom he or she most recently registered by personally appearing before the sheriff or a designee, no earlier than ten days before the date on which the verification is required and no later than the date verification is required, to complete and sign a copy of the verification form prescribed by BCII. The sheriff or designee must sign the completed form and indicate the date on which it is completed. To facilitate the verification of an offender's current residence address, the sheriff with whom the offender most recently registered may mail a nonforwardable verification form prescribed by BCII to the offender's last reported address, with a notice that conspicuously states that the offender must personally appear before the sheriff or a designee to complete the form and the date by which it must be so completed. Regardless of whether a sheriff mails a form to an offender, each offender with an address verification duty must personally appear before the sheriff or a designee to verify the address as described in this paragraph. (R.C. 2950.06(C) and (D).)

Upon an offender's personal appearance and completion of a verification form, a sheriff must promptly forward a copy to BCII. BCII must include all information forwarded to it in the State Registry of Sex Offenders. (R.C. 2950.06(E).)

### **Sheriff's duty to collect fees**

#### **Existing law**

Existing law specifies that a sheriff must or may charge a number of fees which a court or its clerk must tax in the bill of costs against the judgment debtor or person legally liable for the fees. These fees generally pertain to actions taken

by the sheriff or a deputy sheriff before, during, or after civil or criminal proceedings in a court. When any of the services associated with the specified fees are rendered by a county officer or employee, the fees must be taxed as costs in the case and, when collected, paid into the general fund of the county. (R.C. 311.17.)

### **Changes proposed by the bill**

The bill adds to the list of fees a sheriff may collect, a fee for each time a person registers or registers a change of residence address under the SORN Law. Similarly, the bill permits a sheriff to collect a fee each time a person periodically verifies the person's current residence address under that law. The amount of these fees is not set by the bill and, except as mentioned below, appears to be within the sheriff's discretion. (R.C. 311.17(B)(6) and (7), 2950.04(B), and 2950.06(C)(1) and (E).) The bill states that the sheriff "shall collect the fee in accordance with procedures that the Auditor of State prescribes" (R.C. 311.171(C)). (See **COMMENT 2**.)

The bill provides that, if a sheriff charges a fee under either of the provisions it adds for a registration, change of residence address, or periodic verification of residence address, the sheriff shall not require a person to pay fees under those provisions that total more than \$100 annually if the person is adjudicated a sexual predator or more than \$50 annually if the person is not adjudicated a sexual predator. If a person's payment of any of these fees would cause their total amount to exceed the applicable maximum annual amount, the burden is on the person making the payment to establish that payment of the particular fee would exceed the maximum annual amount, by providing the sheriff with receipts for the previously paid fees; the sheriff is required under other provisions in the bill to provide, certain receipts to the offender. (R.C. 2950.04(A), 2950.04(B), and 2950.06(C)(1).) If the person establishes that the maximum annual amount would be exceeded, the sheriff may charge a lesser fee, provided that the person's total fees paid for the year, including the lesser fee, do not exceed the maximum annual amount (R.C. 311.171(A)).

Under the bill, if a person establishes that the person is indigent, the sheriff may waive payment of any fee under either or both of the bill's provisions or require the person to pay the fee pursuant to a payment schedule that the sheriff establishes based on the person's ability to pay (R.C. 311.171(B)).

### **Penalty for failure to pay fee**

Under existing law, a person who violates a prohibition in the SORN Law is guilty of a felony of the fifth degree if the most serious underlying sexually oriented offense is a felony, and is guilty of a misdemeanor of the first degree if

the most serious underlying sexually oriented offense is a misdemeanor. In addition, if the offender is on probation or parole, is subject to one or more post-release control sanctions, or is subject to any other type of supervised release at the time, the violation of the prohibition constitutes a violation of the terms and conditions of the probation, parole, post-release control sanction, or other type of supervised release. (R.C. 2950.99(A), not in the bill.)

Under the bill, without need for any amendment to these penalty provisions, the failure of an offender to pay a fee for registration, change of residence address, or periodic verification of residence address--when one is required--would constitute a violation of a SORN Law prohibition that is subject to these penalty provisions (R.C. 2950.04(E) and 2950.06(F); R.C. 2950.05(E), not in the bill).

### Definitions

Existing law provides a series of definitions for the SORN Law that are relevant to this analysis (R.C. 2950.01, not in the bill):

(1) "Habitual sex offender" generally means a person who is convicted of or pleads guilty to a sexually oriented offense and who previously has been convicted of or pleaded guilty to one or more sexually oriented offenses.

(2) "Sexually oriented offense" generally means any of the following offenses:

(a) Regardless of the age of the victim of the offense, a violation of R.C. 2907.02, 2907.03, or 2907.05;

(b) Any of the following offenses involving a minor, in the circumstances specified: (i) a violation of R.C. 2905.01, 2905.02, 2905.03, 2905.04, 2905.05, or 2907.04 when the victim of the offense is under 18 years of age, (ii) a violation of R.C. 2907.21 when the person who is compelled, induced, procured, encouraged, solicited, requested, or facilitated to engage in, paid or agreed to be paid for, or allowed to engage in the sexual activity in question is under 18 years of age, (iii) a violation of R.C. 2907.321(A)(1) or (3) or 2907.322, (iv) a violation of R.C. 2907.323(A)(1) or (2), or (v) a violation of R.C. 2919.22(B)(5) when the child who is involved in the offense is under 18 years of age.

(c) Regardless of the age of the victim, a violation of R.C. 2903.01, 2903.02, 2903.11, 2905.01, or 2903.04(A) that is committed with a purpose to gratify the sexual needs or desires of the offender;

(d) A sexually violent offense;

(e) A violation of any former Ohio law that was substantially equivalent to any offense listed in (2)(a) to (d), above;

(f) A violation of an existing or former municipal ordinance or law of another state or the United States, a violation under the law applicable in a military court, or a violation under the law applicable in an Indian tribal court that is or was substantially equivalent to any offense listed in (2)(a) to (d), above;

(g) An attempt to commit, conspiracy to commit, or complicity in committing any offense listed in (2)(a) to (f), above.

(3) "Sexual predator" means a person who has been convicted of or pleaded guilty to committing a sexually oriented offense and is likely to engage in the future in one or more sexually oriented offenses.

(4) An offender is "adjudicated as being a sexual predator" if: (a) the offender is convicted of or pleads guilty to committing, on or after January 1, 1997, a sexually oriented offense that is a sexually violent offense and also is convicted of or pleads guilty to a sexually violent predator specification that was included in the document charging the sexually violent offense, (b) regardless of when the sexually oriented offense was committed, on or after January 1, 1997, the offender is sentenced for a sexually oriented offense, and the sentencing judge determines pursuant to R.C. 2950.09(B) that the offender is a sexual predator, (c) prior to January 1, 1997, the offender was convicted of or pleaded guilty to, and was sentenced for, a sexually oriented offense, the offender is imprisoned in a state correctional institution on or after January 1, 1997, and the court determines pursuant to R.C. 2950.09(C) that the offender is a sexual predator, or (d) regardless of when the sexually oriented offense was committed, the offender is convicted of or pleads guilty to, or has been convicted of or pleaded guilty to, a sexually oriented offense in another state or in a federal court, military court, or an Indian tribal court, as a result of that conviction or plea of guilty, the offender is required, under the law of that jurisdiction, to register as a sex offender until the offender's death and to verify the offender's address on at least a quarterly basis each year, and, on or after July 1, 1997, the offender moves to and resides in Ohio or temporarily is domiciled in Ohio for more than seven days, unless a court of common pleas determines that the offender is not a sexual predator pursuant to R.C. 2950.09(F).

(5) "Sexually violent predator specification" and "sexually violent offense" have the same meanings as in existing R.C. 2971.01 (cross-reference in division (H) of R.C. 2950.01). R.C. 2971.01 (not in the bill) provides that "sexually violent predator specification" means a specification, as described in R.C. 2941.148, charging a person with being a sexually violent predator and that "sexually violent predator" means a person who has been convicted of or pleaded guilty to

committing, on or after January 1, 1997, a sexually violent offense and is likely to engage in the future in one or more sexually violent offenses.

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## COMMENT

1. Existing law, not in the bill, specifies that the duty of an offender who is convicted of or pleads guilty to a sexually oriented offense to comply with the registration, change of address, and address verification duties of the SORN Law *commences* on whichever of the following dates is applicable: (a) if the offender's duty to register is based on the offender's release from a prison term or other confinement on or after July 1, 1997, the offender's duty to comply commences on the date of his or her release or on July 1, 1997, whichever is later, (b) if the offender's duty to register is based on the offender being sentenced for a sexually oriented offense on or after July 1, 1997, and (a) above does not apply, the offender's duty to comply commences on the date of entry of the judgment of conviction of the offense or on July 1, 1997, whichever is later, (c) if the offender's duty to register is based on the offender having been required to register under former R.C. Chapter 2950., the offender's duty to comply commences 14 days after July 1, 1997, and (d) if the offender's duty to register is based on the offender's conviction of a sexually oriented offense in a jurisdiction other than Ohio, the offender's duty to comply commences on March 30, 1999, or on the date the offender begins to reside or becomes temporarily domiciled in Ohio, whichever is later. (R.C. 2950.07(A).)

The duty of an offender to comply with the registration, change of address, and address verification duties of the SORN Law *continues*, after the date of commencement, for whichever of the following periods is applicable: (a) *if the offender has been adjudicated a sexual predator relative to the sexually oriented offense, the offender's duty to comply continues until the offender's death*, provided that, if the judge who sentenced the offender or that judge's successor in office subsequently "declassifies" the offender, the offender's duty to comply continues for the period of time that otherwise would have been applicable to the offender, (b) if the judge who sentenced the offender for the sexually oriented offense determined pursuant to the SORN Law that the offender is a habitual sex offender, the offender's duty to comply continues for 20 years, and (c) if neither (a) nor (b) above applies, the offender's duty to comply continues for ten years (R.C. 2950.07(B)).

2. It is not clear what is intended by the bill's language in R.C. 311.171(C) that a sheriff who imposes a registration, change of address, or verification of address fee must collect the fee in accordance with Auditor of State prescribed procedures. Existing R.C. 311.17, and that section as amended by the bill, permit or require a sheriff to charge specified fees that are to be taxed as costs in a case

and paid into the general fund of the county if the service involved is rendered by an officer or employee of the county. Because no exception to these provisions is made by the bill, and the SORN Law fee collection authority is added to division (B) of this section, one might surmise that the "procedures" to be prescribed by the Auditor of State under R.C. 311.171(C) are something in addition to these provisions of R.C. 311.17--perhaps the form of acceptable payment or something along those lines. A clarifying amendment is necessary to explain what is contemplated by these "procedures" that is not already specified in R.C. 311.17 or whether these procedures actually are a substitute for the provisions of that section mentioned above.

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## **HISTORY**

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>JOURNAL ENTRY</b>
Introduced	02-26-02	p. 1509

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