



amount of time and money expended by any affected county criminal justice system on such matters is uncertain, but the magnitude of that change, whatever its direction, would be no more than minimal. In this case, "minimal" means an estimated cost or savings of no more than \$5,000 per year for any affected county criminal justice systems.

- **County revenues.** It seems unlikely that the bill will have any readily discernible effect on county revenues.

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## ***Detailed Fiscal Analysis***

### **Overview of the bill**

The bill amends current law to require the sentencing court to impose a mandatory prison term for the offense of importuning when the offense involves the solicitation of another by means of a telecommunications device.<sup>1</sup>

### **Mandatory prison terms**

Existing criminal law contains a series of prohibitions that relate, in a variety of circumstances, to a person's solicitation of another to engage in sexual activity. A violation of any of the prohibitions is the offense of "importuning," and the penalty for the offense varies, depending upon the prohibition violated. For purposes of this analysis, only those portions of section 2907.07 of the Revised Code that are affected by the bill will be discussed, specifically divisions (C) and (D). These two divisions deal exclusively with the offense of importuning when it involves a telecommunications device.

As Table 1 below indicates, importuning by means of a telecommunications device under current law could either be a felony of the third degree (F3) or a felony of the fifth degree (F5) on a first offense, depending on the circumstances present. On each subsequent offense, a violation is elevated by one degree to a felony of the second degree (F2) or a felony of the fourth degree (F4), respectively. Under the bill, these felonies remain the same degree as under existing law.

Under existing law, there is a presumption that a prison term must be imposed for an F3 or F2 described above. Relative to an F5 or F4 described above, current sentencing guidance provisions state a general preference against the imposition of a prison term unless certain factors are present and the offender is not amenable to other sanctions. The bill changes the sentencing guidance and presumptions relative to the above described felony importuning prohibitions when it involves a telecommunications device to require the imposition of a mandatory prison term.

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<sup>1</sup> "Telecommunications device" means any instrument, equipment, machine, or other device that facilitates telecommunication (i.e., the origination, emission, dissemination, transmission, or reception of data, images, signals, sounds, or other intelligence or equivalence of intelligence of any nature over any communications system by any method, including, but not limited to, a fiber optic, electronic, magnetic, optical, digital, or analog method) including, but not limited to, a computer, computer network, computer chip, computer circuit, scanner, telephone, cellular telephone, pager, personal communications device, transponder, receiver, radio, modem, or device that enables the use of a modem.

The practical effect on the sanctioning of such offenders appears likely to be twofold. First, presumably, there will be offenders sentenced to a prison term who would otherwise have been sentenced to community sanctioning under current law and sentencing practices. Generally, community sanctioning is a less expensive sentencing alternative than prison. Second, offenders who would have been sentenced to a prison term under current law and sentencing practices may, under similar circumstances in the future subsequent to the bill's enactment, serve longer stays in prison.

**Table 1  
Certain Importuning Prohibitions  
Comparison of Current Law to S.B. 183**

Importuning by Means of a Telecommunications Device	Penalties			
	1st Offense Current Law	1st Offense S.B. 183	Subsequent Offense Current Law	Subsequent Offense S.B. 183
<p>No person shall solicit another by means of a <b>telecommunications</b> device, as defined in section 2913.01 of the Revised Code, to engage in sexual activity with the offender when the offender is 18 years of age or older and either of the following applies:</p> <p><b>(1)</b> The other person is less than 13 years of age, and the offender knows that the other person is less than 13 years of age or is reckless in that regard.</p> <p><b>(2)</b> The other person is a law enforcement officer posing as a person who is less than 13 years of age, and the offender believes that the other person is less than 13 years of age or is reckless in that regard.</p>	<p>F3; Presumption for a prison term; Possible prison term of 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 years; Community sanctions available if prison term not imposed</p>	<p><b>F3; Mandatory prison term of 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 years; Community sanctions unavailable if prison term imposed</b></p>	<p>F2; Presumption for a prison term; Possible prison term of 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 or 8 years; Community sanctions available if prison term not imposed</p>	<p><b>F2; Mandatory prison term of 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, or 8 years; Community sanctions unavailable if prison term imposed</b></p>
<p>No person shall solicit another by means of a <b>telecommunications</b> device, as defined in section 2913.01 of the Revised Code, to engage in sexual activity with the offender when the offender is 18 years of age or older and either of the following applies:</p> <p><b>(1)</b> The other person is 13 years of age or older but less than 16 years of age, the offender knows that the other person is 13 years of age or older but less than 16 years of age or is reckless in that regard, and the offender is four or more years older than the other person.</p> <p><b>(2)</b> The other person is a law enforcement officer posing as a person who is 13 years of age or older but less than 16 years of age, the offender believes that the other person is 13 years of age or older but less than 16 years of age or is reckless in that regard, and the offender is four or more years older than the age the law enforcement officer assumes in posing as the person who is 13 years of age or older but less than 16 years of age.</p>	<p>F5; Preference against a prison term; Possible prison term of 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, or 12 months; Community sanctions available if prison term not imposed</p>	<p><b>F5; Mandatory prison term of 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 or 12, months; Community sanctions unavailable if prison term imposed</b></p>	<p>F4; Preference against a prison term; Possible prison term of 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, or 18 months; Community sanctions available if prison term not imposed</p>	<p><b>F4; Mandatory prison term of 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, or 18 months, but not less than 12 months; Community sanctions unavailable if prison term imposed</b></p>

## County criminal justice systems

**Case processing costs.** The bill will not create any additional felony cases to be processed by county criminal justice systems, but may change how certain importuning charges are resolved in the future from how those matters may have otherwise been resolved (i.e., bargain versus trial, prison versus jail and/or probation). For example:

- The threat of a mandatory prison term may affect certain importuning cases by expediting some through the bargaining process (potentially saving adjudication, prosecution, and indigent defense expenditures).
- The threat of a mandatory prison term may slow the resolution of certain importuning cases down, if there is an increased desire for offenders to pursue criminal trials to fight the prospect of facing a mandatory prison term (potentially increasing adjudication, prosecution, and indigent defense expenditures).

**Sanctioning costs.** It also seems likely that certain counties may realize some cost savings if a court that would otherwise have imposed community sanctions on certain offenders convicted of or pleading guilty to the offense of importuning under current law instead imposes the required mandatory prison term. Such a sentencing outcome shifts the sanctioning costs from the county to the state.

**Net cost effect.** In sum, as of this writing, it appears that the bill will trigger factors that may simultaneously increase and decrease the annual operating costs of any affected county criminal justice system. Although LSC fiscal staff is unable to quantify those factors, their net fiscal effect may be no more than minimal. For the purposes of this analysis, "minimal effect" means that whether the bill results in a net increase or decrease in the amount of time and money expended by any affected county criminal justice system on such matters is uncertain, but the magnitude of that change, whatever its direction, would be no more than minimal. In this case, "minimal" means an estimated cost or savings of no more than \$5,000 per year for any affected county criminal justice systems.

**Revenues.** It seems unlikely that the bill will have any readily discernible effect on county revenues.

## State fiscal effects

### Expenditures

Preliminary data obtained from the Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (DRC) indicates that the number of offenders sentenced to prison annually for the primary offense of importuning has, in recent years, been increasing. In FY 2002, the number of offenders sentenced to prison for the offense of importuning totaled seven. In FY 2007, the number of offenders sentenced to prison for the offense of importuning totaled 43. Also of note is the fact that more local jurisdictions in Ohio appear to be trained in, and conducting, clandestine investigative operations in an effort to expand their enforcement of Internet-based sex crimes.

The bill will likely have two effects on the offender population sentenced to prison each year. First, some offenders will be sentenced to a prison term that would otherwise have been sanctioned locally. Second, some offenders who would have been sentenced to a prison term under current law and sentencing practices could be incarcerated for a longer period of time. As of this writing, however, LSC fiscal staff does not have the data at hand that would permit one to estimate the bill's effect on: (1) the number of offenders sentenced to prison annually for violating various importuning prohibitions, or (2) the average time served for violating those importuning prohibitions.

That said, it seems more or less certain, all other conditions remaining the same, that the bill will increase the size of DRC's annual inmate population and that the fiscal consequences of that increase will exceed minimal. A minimal increase for the state herein means an expenditure in excess of \$100,000 per year. According to DRC's web site, the average incarceration cost per inmate is \$25,258 a year. Thus, it would only take four additional inmates serving at least one year in prison to increase DRC's annual expenditures by more than \$100,000.

The effects of the bill on the state's prison system will also be a function of: (1) the frequency with which individuals continue to violate existing importuning prohibitions, (2) the degree to which local law enforcement proactively enforce certain aspects of the state's Sex Offense Law, and (3) the local bargaining processes that have developed to manage criminal caseloads.

### **Revenues**

It seems unlikely that the bill will have any readily discernible effect on state revenues.

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