

Staff Summary: Florida's Halo Law and Other States' Similar Laws and Legislation

LAW AND JUSTICE INTERIM COMMITTEE
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SENATE BILL 184 (FL)

ENACTMENT

Florida's new "[Halo Law](#)", which took effect on January 1, 2025, establishes a protective 25-foot buffer zone around enforcement officers, correctional probation officers, firefighters, and emergency medical crews while they carry out their official duties. According to this law, an individual is prohibited from being within 25 feet of a first responder engaged in their lawful duties after receiving a verbal warning from the first responder. This restriction applies if the person intends to:

- interfere with the first responders official duties;
- threaten the first responder with physical harm; or
- harass the first responder.

The law defines "harass" as, "...willfully engag[ing] in a course of conduct directed at a first responder, which intentionally causes substantial emotional distress in that first responder and serves no legitimate purpose."¹

Failing to comply with the verbal warning is a misdemeanor of the second degree, which, under Florida state law, can result in up to 60 days of imprisonment and a potential fine of \$500.²

RESPONSE

Some state law enforcement officials support the act, applauding it for maintaining a safe distance for first responders to perform their duties without unnecessary distractions or risks to their safety.³ However, critics of the measure argue it will criminalize bystanders and empower police to shield themselves from public scrutiny.^{4 5} Some attorneys criticize the law, not for its intent but for its structure and constitutionality,^{6 7} contending, "[w]hile the law's intent is clearly stated in writing, its use and interpretation leave open concerns about its effect on citizens' right to broadcast, monitor their government, witness wrongdoing, or assemble."⁸

The law does not include specific protections for anyone recording or observing police or firefighters within 25 feet. As of April 2025, at least 11 individuals have been arrested for violating the law since its enactment.⁹

¹ Fla. Stat. 843.31(1)(b)

² Fla. Stat. 775.082 & Fla. Stat. 775.083

³ *New 'Halo Law' makes it a crime to get too close to first responders in Florida*. WESH Orlando (Jan 2025)

⁴ *Florida's new law shields responders; critics say it's aimed at curbing videos of cops*. Miami Herald (Dec 2024)

⁵ *ACLU Florida opposition to SB184*

⁶ *Florida's New "Halo Law": Balancing First Responder Safety and First Amendment Rights*. The Bonderud Law Firm P.A. (March 2025)

⁷ *Understanding Florida's New "Halo Law" and Its Impact on First Amendment Rights*. MUSCA LAW Criminal Defense Attorneys (Dec 2024)

⁸ *NEW LAW 2025 – Florida's Halo Law*. Landman Law (Jan 2025)

⁹ *Florida begins prosecutions under new law intended to protect law enforcement from harassment*. The Gainesville Sun (April 2025)

BUFFER ZONE LAW-RELATED LEGISLATION IN OTHER STATES

ARIZONA

In 2022, the Arizona Legislature became the first state to enact a buffer zone law by passing [House Bill 2319](#). This law prohibits individuals from video-recording police from a distance of less than eight feet. Specifically, it creates an offense for anyone to be within 8 feet of law enforcement activities and to record these activities after receiving a verbal warning. A violation is a Class 3 Misdemeanor, which in Arizona law carries a 30-day imprisonment, \$500 fine, and up to one year of probation.¹⁰

The legislation provides an exception for private property and those authorized to be there, unless law enforcement determines that the person is interfering or poses a safety risk, in which case they can be ordered to leave. Additionally, the law allows individuals who are not interfering with lawful police actions or being subjected to a police stop to record the encounter.

Shortly after the law was enacted, it faced a federal lawsuit. The U.S. District Court for the District of Arizona upheld the ruling to permanently block enforcement of the law, stating it was unconstitutional.¹¹

INDIANA

In 2023, the state of Indiana enacted [House Bill 1186](#), which allows police officers to keep citizens 25 feet away from an ongoing investigation. The law provides that people who knowingly or intentionally get within 25 feet of law enforcement officers doing their jobs after being asked to back off commit “unlawful encroachment on an investigation”, a Class C misdemeanor which carries a 60-day imprisonment and up to \$500 fine. However, the new law was challenged in two separate lawsuits, and the Southern District of Indiana U.S. District Court issued a preliminary injunction blocking the law because the court found it unconstitutionally vague.¹²

In response, the 2025 Indiana General Assembly enacted [House Bill 1122](#) to clarify the law. The bill clarifies that a law enforcement officer may only order an individual to stop approaching if they reasonably believe that a person’s presence within 25 feet will interfere with the performance of their duties. However, the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals issued a decision on August 5, 2025, to uphold the preliminary injunction, finding that the law still lacks clear standards for police conduct.¹³

LOUISIANA

The 2024 Regular Session of the Louisiana State Legislature considered [House Bill 173](#), which creates the crime of approaching a peace officer lawfully engaged in law enforcement duties. Initially attempted in 2023,¹⁴ and similar to other states’ legislation, the bill provides that an individual cannot knowingly or intentionally approach within 25

¹⁰ [Arizona Revised Statutes 13-707, 13-802, and 13-902](#)

¹¹ [Arizona Broadcasters Association v. Kris Mayes](#), No. CV-22-01431

¹² [Federal judge blocks police buffer zone law in media lawsuit](#). Indiana Capital Chronicle (Sept 2024)

¹³ [Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press v. Attorney General of Indiana](#) (No. 24-2927) 7th Circuit Court

¹⁴ [Louisiana House Bill 85](#) (2023)

feet of a law enforcement officer who is engaged in official duties after being ordered to stop approaching or retreat. Violators face a fine of up to \$500 and 60 days of imprisonment.

The law, however, does provide an affirmative defense if the individual can establish that the command was neither received nor understood, nor capable of being received or understood under the conditions and circumstances that existed at the time the order was given.

The bill was enacted and became effective on August 1, 2024. A group of Louisiana news organizations filed a lawsuit in July 2024, challenging the law.¹⁵ In January 2025, the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Louisiana granted a preliminary injunction, which calls the law “unconstitutionally void for vagueness” and prevents police from enforcing it. However, Louisiana has appealed that ruling to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit.

SOUTH CAROLINA

Proposed [Senate Bill 175](#), known as the “Helping Alleviate Lawful Obstruction (HALO) Act”, aimed to create a new offense for impeding, interfering, threatening, or harassing a first responder while they are performing their lawful duties. Similar to Halo Laws in other states, the South Carolina version establishes a 25-foot barrier around first responders engaged in official duties that prohibits individuals from approaching within that distance after receiving a verbal warning. An individual violating this law is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, must be fined up to \$500 and imprisoned up to 60 days.

The bill defines first responders as firefighters, law enforcement officers, paramedics, emergency medical technicians, or other individuals with specialized training and skills who, in the course of their professional duties, respond to fire, medical, hazardous material, or other similar emergencies.

Though the bill died during the 126th South Carolina General Assembly, the state’s Lieutenant Governor continues to support the concept, emphasizing that the legislation is intended to provide police and first responders more space and security when responding to calls.¹⁶

MASSACHUSETTS

[House No. 2057](#) was introduced into the Massachusetts General Court on January 9, 2025. The legislation is similar to other HALO bills in that a person may not knowingly or willfully approach and remain within 25 feet of a first responder who is engaged in official duties after receiving a verbal warning. However, the state of Massachusetts version increases the violation fine to a cap of \$1,000 for a first offense, and subsequent violations face a cap of \$5000 for each offense, up to one year imprisonment, or both.

The bill was referred to the Joint Committee on the Judiciary on March 12, 2025, and remains in the committee awaiting a hearing.¹⁷

¹⁵ Deep South Today v. Murrill, 3:24-cv-00623

¹⁶ [Lt. Gov. Evette backs Halo Act to boost first responder safety throughout state. ABC4 News \(Aug 2025\)](#)

¹⁷ [Joint Committee on the Judiciary, 195th General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts](#)

OHIO

The 136th General Assembly of Ohio is considering a similar measure. On January 27, 2025, the Ohio Legislature introduced [House Bill 20](#) - Prohibit harassing or impeding an emergency service responder. The legislation was introduced with language that would create a 14-foot barrier around police, firefighters, and EMS responders to prevent harassment while in the performance of their duties. The term 'harass' was also defined as:

- engaging in a course of conduct that is directed at and causes substantial emotional distress to an emergency service responder, and interferes with the emergency service responder lawfully performing a legal duty; and
- interrupts, disrupts, hinders, impedes, or interferes with an emergency service responder's ability to lawfully perform their legal duty.

However, the bill was amended in its first committee hearing. The revised version uses established law regarding the obstruction of public official business and inserts language specific to emergency service responders.¹⁸ The new version provides that an individual obstructing the official business of an emergency services responder after receiving a warning faces a misdemeanor of the first degree. A 'warning' is defined as a verbal command made by an emergency service responder that states a person to maintain the person's distance, to stay away, to back away, not to interfere, or another similar instruction.

If an individual violates this provision after receiving a warning not to approach, they face a misdemeanor of the first degree: up to 180 days in jail and \$1000 fine.¹⁹

The bill was referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee on March 25, 2025, and is still awaiting a hearing.²⁰

TENNESSEE

[Senate Bill 30/House Bill 55](#) creates a Class B misdemeanor offense for individuals who intentionally approach a law enforcement officer, within a distance of 25 feet, while the officer is lawfully engaged in their official duties after the officer has ordered the individual to stop approaching or to retreat. However, similar to Louisiana's HB 173, the legislation provides an affirmative defense. If an individual violates the order but can demonstrate that they did not receive or understand the verbal warning, or that the circumstances at the time of the warning hindered their ability to comprehend the order, these facts, if proven, can negate the legal consequences of the otherwise unlawful conduct.

The Tennessee General Assembly passed the measure in April 2025, and the law took effect July 1, 2025. On July 22, 2025, several Tennessee news media organizations filed a federal lawsuit challenging part of the new state law. They argue that it restricts their ability to report on critical issues of public safety by allowing police officers to create a 25-foot buffer zone around themselves.²¹ As of August 2025, the case is ongoing.

¹⁸ [Ohio Revised Code 2921.31](#)

¹⁹ [Ohio Revised Codes 2929.24](#) and [2929.28](#)

²⁰ [Ohio Legislature – House Bill 20 Status page](#)

²¹ [Gannett Co., INC. v. Long, 3:25-cv-00830](#)