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S.B. 357
136th General Assembly

Fiscal Note & Local Impact Statement

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Version: As Introduced

Primary Sponsor: Sen. Gavarone

Local Impact Statement Procedure Required: No

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Highlights

Violent offender database

- County criminal justice systems may experience an increase in workload and costs as additional offenders become subject to violent offender database (VOD) enrollment requirements and related sanctions. These costs are expected to be minimal and absorbed within existing resources, although the enrolled population will increase over time before leveling off after about ten years when enrollment duties begin to expire. Affected entities include sheriffs, courts, prosecutors, public defenders, probation departments, and sanctioning programs and facilities.
- The Attorney General will incur minimal costs to expand the existing VOD to include second degree strangulation offenders. There will also be one-time, indeterminate costs to create an online portal through which the public may access VOD records.
- To the extent that additional VOD enrollment violations occur, a few additional offenders may be sentenced to a prison term annually. The marginal annual incarceration costs incurred by the Department of Rehabilitation and Correction to add a small number of offenders to an existing prison population of around 46,000 is $6,000 per inmate.

Law Enforcement Automated Data System (LEADS)

- Any additional costs incurred by county sheriffs to enter the required additional information into LEADS are expected to be negligible.
- If the bill's violent offender requirements can be achieved utilizing existing resources, any impact on the Ohio State Highway Patrol would be negligible. However, if changes to

LEADS are necessary, related costs are expected to total around $268,000 with an additional $26,000 per year for ongoing maintenance.

Detailed Analysis

The bill expands the violent offender database (VOD) by adding second degree strangulation as a designated offense for purposes of the definition of "violent offender." The bill also requires the Attorney General's Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) to establish and maintain a publicly available online database similar to that of the Sex Offender Registry. Additionally, it provides for the availability of VOD information through the Ohio Law Enforcement Automated Data System (LEADS) platform and requires the State Highway Patrol to ensure that a "flag" will prominently display when a law enforcement officer is directed to the main information page of a violent offender who is registered in the VOD.

Violent Offender Database expansion

Under continuing law, a person classified as a "violent offender" is subject to certain duties to enroll in the VOD maintained by BCI. The bill's expansion of the definition of "violent offender" to include persons convicted of second degree felony level strangulation will increase the number of offenders required to enroll and re-enroll annually with a county sheriff.

For background, violent offenders must annually re-enroll in the VOD for ten years following their initial enrollment. After an offender enrolls or re-enrolls in the VOD, the sheriff forwards the offender's signed written enrollment form, photograph, fingerprints, palm prints, and other materials to BCI. Available data suggests that the number of annual second degree strangulation convictions are relatively small. According to FY 2026 commitment data from the Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (DRC), 14 offenders were committed to prison with strangulation as their most serious offense. The Ohio Supreme Court estimated 49 convictions in 2024 and 59 in 2025 by extrapolating data from the Ohio Courts Network.

Fiscal effect

Local criminal justice systems

To the extent that additional offenders are added to the VOD, county criminal justice systems (sheriffs, courts of common pleas, prosecutors, probation departments) may experience an increase in workload related to registration requirements and the filing of certain motions with the courts (e.g., the filing of offender motions and the termination of duties). Because of the bill's expanded definition of violent offender, courts of common pleas are likely to experience some increase in the hearings to rebut the presumption to enroll. There will likely also be some number of new failure to register criminal charges filed annually which could result in sanctions, which is a fifth degree felony for which an offender could be sentenced to prison.[1] However, the costs associated with adjudication, prosecution, indigent defense (if applicable), and sanctioning, will be minimal at most annually for any single jurisdiction. There may be a negligible gain in local

[1] An offender being sentenced for failure to comply with VOD duties is eligible for the Targeting Community Alternatives to Prison (T-CAP) Program, meaning that any term of confinement imposed for the offense would be served in a local correctional facility. Generally, a person convicted of a fifth degree felony otherwise is ineligible for T-CAP if previously convicted of a felony offense of violence.

court costs, fees, and fines collected from persons convicted of the offense, as well as state court costs forwarded for deposit in the state treasury to the credit of the Indigent Defense Support Fund (Fund 5DY0) and the Victims of Crime/Reparations Fund (Fund 4020).

According to the Buckeye State Sheriffs' Association, county sheriffs generally will not incur significant costs to incorporate the duty to enroll second degree strangulation offenders into their existing VOD responsibilities.

Attorney General

BCI's existing VOD became operational in March 2019.[2] BCI currently contracts with Watch Systems to manage the data within the registry. This vendor also manages the state's sex offender (SORN) and arson registries.

The bill is unlikely to noticeably increase the number of offenders and related information entered into the VOD annually. As of June 2025, there were approximately 5,000 violent offenders in the VOD. According to staff of the Attorney General, the fiscal impact on its operations will be minimal, because the VOD is already operational and no major modifications would be required to add offenses. Potentially, there may be some increase in amending the existing contract to create an online portal through which the public may access VOD records, similar to SORN. Any related increase in contracting costs would likely be expended from the General Reimbursement Fund (Fund 1060) through line item 055612, Attorney General Operating.

Department of Rehabilitation and Correction

Continuing law prohibits an offender with VOD duties from recklessly failing to enroll, re-enroll, or notify the sheriff of a change of address during the ten-year enrollment period or any extended enrollment period. A violation of this prohibition is a fifth degree felony. A conviction or guilty plea may result in a definite prison term of 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, or 12 months, a fine of not more than $2,500, or both.

To the extent there are additional convictions, there may be a slight increase in the number of persons subsequently sentenced to a term of incarceration in state prison. The associated annual operating cost increase for DRC is expected to be minimal at most. The marginal cost for DRC to add a small number of offenders to its total inmate population is estimated at around $6,000 per offender per year.[3]

Law Enforcement Automated Data System changes

Under continuing law, after a violent offender or out-of-state violent offender enrolls in the VOD with a sheriff or sheriff's designee, the sheriff or designee must forward the offender's signed, written enrollment form, photograph, fingerprints, palm prints, and other materials to BCI.

The bill requires the sheriff to also enter all VOD offenders' signed, written enrollment form, photograph, fingerprints, palm prints, and other materials into LEADS. The State Highway

[2] S.B. 231 of the 132nd General Assembly.

[3] Marginal costs are those that increase or decrease directly on a per-person basis with changes in prison population. Such costs include medical care, food service, clothing and bedding (for inmates), and mental health services (DRC FY 2026 Annual Report).

Patrol must ensure that LEADS contains all of the information provided by the sheriff for entry into LEADS and must ensure that a flag is prominently displayed when a law enforcement officer is directed to the main information page of a VOD registrant.

Fiscal effect

County sheriffs

Based on feedback received from the Buckeye State Sheriffs Association, any costs incurred by county sheriffs to enter the required additional information into LEADS are expected to be negligible.

State Highway Patrol

According to the State Highway Patrol, there is a possibility that the bill's requirements could be achieved utilizing existing resources, in which case any impact would be negligible. However, if LEADS needs to be modified to accommodate an additional query, the Patrol will incur one-time costs of around $268,000 and ongoing maintenance costs of around $26,000 per year.

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