

CRIME TO RECKLESSLY OBSTRUCT ROAD; PENALTIES

Mitchell Bean, Director
Phone: (517) 373-8080
<http://www.house.mi.gov/hfa>

House Bill 4456

Sponsor: Rep. Tom Pearce

House Bill 5663

Sponsor: Rep. Marie Donigan

Committee: Transportation

Complete to 2-21-08

A SUMMARY OF HOUSE BILL 4456 AS INTRODUCED ON 3-13-07 & HOUSE BILL 5663 AS INTRODUCED ON 1-23-08

The bills would create a new crime of "reckless endangerment" that prohibits the placement of an obstruction in a roadway, provide penalties for that crime depending upon the severity of injury to a victim, and establish felony sentencing guidelines for judges to follow when deciding upon punishment for the crime.

House Bill 4456 would amend the Michigan Penal Code (MCL 750.394b) to prohibit a person from endangering another person by recklessly placing (or causing the placement of) an obstruction in a roadway. A person who violated this prohibition would be guilty of a crime as follows:

- A misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment for not more than 93 days or a fine of not more than \$100, or both.
- If the violation causes property damage, a misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment for not more than one year or a fine of up to \$500, or both.
- If the violation causes injury to any person (other than serious impairment or death), a felony punishable by imprisonment for not more than four years and/or a fine of not more than \$2,000.
- If the violation causes serious impairment, a felony punishable by imprisonment for not more than 10 years and/or a fine of not more than \$5,000.
- If the violation causes death, a felony punishable by imprisonment for not more than 15 years and/or a fine of not more than \$10,000.

The bill specifies that a criminal penalty could be imposed in addition to any penalty for any other criminal offenses arising from the same conduct, or for any contempt of court arising from the same conduct.

The bill defines "serious impairment" to mean serious impairment of a body function as that term is defined in section 58c of the Michigan Vehicle Code (MCL 257.58c). [There, "serious impairment of a body function" includes, but is not limited to, one or more of the following: a) loss of a limb or loss of use of a limb; b) loss of a foot, hand, finger, or thumb, or loss of use of a foot, hand, finger, or thumb; c) loss of an eye or ear, or loss of

use of an eye or ear; d) loss or substantial impairment of a bodily function; e) serious visible disfigurement; f) a comatose state that lasts for more than three days; g) measurable brain or mental impairment; h) a skull fracture or other serious bone fracture; i) a subdural hemorrhage or subdural hematoma; and j) loss of an organ.]

House Bill 5663 would make complementary amendments to sentencing guidelines provisions in the Code of Criminal Procedure (MCL 777.16s) to create three new felony crimes against persons as follows:

- A class F crime of "reckless endangerment causing injury" having a maximum punishment of four years in prison.
- A class D crime of "reckless endangerment causing serious impairment" having a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison.
- A class C crime of "reckless endangerment causing death" having a maximum sentence of 15 years in prison.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The bills would provide for new misdemeanor and felony offenses; the fiscal impact on state and local correctional systems would depend on how they affected numbers of convictions and severity of sentences. Generally, felons are a state responsibility (except when serving a sentence in the county jail), and misdemeanants are a local responsibility. To the extent that misdemeanor convictions increased, local costs of jail incarceration or misdemeanor probation supervision, both of which vary by jurisdiction, could increase.

To the extent that more offenders were sentenced to prison or to felony probation supervision, the state could incur increased costs. The average appropriated cost of incarceration in a state prison is about \$32,000 per prisoner annually, a figure that includes allocated portions of various fixed administrative and operational costs. Costs of parole and probation supervision average about \$2,000 per supervised offender per year. To the extent that more offenders were sentenced to jail, affected counties could experience increased costs; jail costs vary by county.

Any increase in penal fine revenues could benefit local libraries, which are the constitutionally-designated recipients of such revenues.

Legislative Analyst: J. Hunault
Fiscal Analyst: Marilyn Peterson

■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House staff for use by House members in their deliberations, and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.