

Office of the Governor
State of Louisiana

JOHN BEL EDWARDS
GOVERNOR



June 27, 2023

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VIA HAND DELIVERY

Honorable Clay J. Schexnayder
Speaker of the House
Louisiana House of Representatives
Post Office Box 94062
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70804-9062

RE: Veto of House Bill 85 of the 2023 Regular Session

Dear Speaker Schexnayder:

Please be advised that I have vetoed House Bill 85 of the 2023 Regular Session.

House Bill 85 would have created the misdemeanor crime of approaching a law enforcement officer lawfully engaged in law enforcement duties. The penalty for violating the crime is a fine up to \$500, imprisonment up to 60 days in jail, or both.

First, House Bill 85 is unnecessary since La. R.S. 14:329, which provides for the crime of interfering with a law enforcement investigation. Enacted in August 2010, it carries a penalty of 6 months in jail, a \$500 fine, or both, when the offender intentionally interferes with a police officer investigating the scene of a crime or the scene of an accident by refusing to move or leave the immediate location of the crime or the accident when ordered to do so by the law enforcement officer when the offender has reasonable grounds to believe the officer is acting in the performance of his official duties.

Further, and perhaps unintentional, the effect of this bill were it to become law would be to chill exercise of First Amendment rights and prevent bystanders from observing and recording police action. Each of us has a constitutional right to freely observe public servants as they function in public and within the course and scope of their official duties. Observations of law enforcement, whether by witnesses to an incident with officers, individuals interacting with officers, or members of the press, are invaluable in promoting transparency.

Therefore, House Bill 85 is not needed and it will not become law.

For these reasons, I have vetoed the bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Bel Edwards".

John Bel Edwards
Governor

enclosure

cc: Honorable Patrick Page Cortez
Louisiana Senate President