

Lujan Grisham signs public safety accountability bill

Written by Staff Reports
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SANTA FE—Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham signed legislation July 8 that requires New Mexico police officers to wear body cameras as a deterrent against unlawful use of force and establishes strengthened accountability measures in instances of inappropriate excessive force.

The camera requirement applies to city police, county sheriff's agencies as well as state police and the Department of Public Safety.

Law enforcement agencies must maintain the body camera footage for at least 120 days.

Police who interfere with the devices or otherwise flout the camera requirement could face penalties for withholding evidence.

In addition, Senate Bill 8 establishes that the Law Enforcement Academy Board will now permanently revoke the certification of any police officer who is found guilty, pleads guilty or pleads no contest to a crime involving unlawful use or threatened use of force in the line of duty, or if he or she failed to intervene in a police action involving unlawful use of force.

The measure sponsored by Sen. Joseph Cervantes, D-Las Cruces passed the Senate 31-11 and the House 44-26 in the June special session, which centered primarily on repairing a \$2 billion hole in the state's COVID-damaged budget.

The governor added the policing legislation to the agenda following the May 25 murder of George Floyd, who died while pleading for breath as a Minneapolis police officer knelt on his neck for eight minutes and 46 seconds.

Senate Bill 8 pairs with another bill signed by the governor after the special session establishing a state Civil Rights Commission, which will provide recommendations to the Legislature about other public safety reforms, as well as qualified immunity.

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