

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES FINAL BILL ANALYSIS

BILL #:	CS/CS/HB 667 (CS/SB 872)	FINAL HOUSE FLOOR ACTION:	
SPONSOR(S):	Judiciary Committee; Criminal Justice Subcommittee; Corcoran and others (Criminal Justice and Fasano)	116 Y's	0 N's
COMPANION BILLS:	CS/SB 872	GOVERNOR'S ACTION:	Pending

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

CS/CS/HB 667 passed the House on February 23, 2012, and subsequently passed the Senate on March 2, 2012.

The bill creates the "Deputy John C. Mecklenburg Act," and amends s. 782.04, F.S., to add "aggravated fleeing or eluding with serious bodily injury or death" to the lists of offenses contained in the first, second, and third degree murder statutes. As a result, when a death occurs as a result of aggravated fleeing or eluding with serious bodily injury or death, a person could be charged with either first or second degree murder but would no longer be able to be charged with third degree murder. The bill also makes conforming changes to the offense severity ranking chart.

The bill also amends s. 782.065, F.S., to require a life sentence for defendants convicted of specified murder offenses if the victim of the offense is a correctional officer or correctional probation officer (current law only requires such sentence when the victim is a law enforcement officer).

The Criminal Justice Impact Conference did not meet to determine the prison bed impact of the bill, as amended by the Criminal Justice Subcommittee and the Judiciary Committee. However, it is likely that this bill, as amended, will have an insignificant prison bed impact on the Department of Corrections.

Subject to the Governor's veto powers, the effective date of the bill is October 1, 2012.

I. SUBSTANTIVE INFORMATION

A. EFFECT OF CHANGES:

Current Situation

Aggravated Fleeing and Eluding

Section 316.1935, F.S., relates to fleeing or eluding law enforcement officers. Fleeing or eluding is generally a third degree felony,¹ and occurs when the operator of any vehicle, having knowledge that he or she has been ordered to stop such vehicle by a duly authorized law enforcement officer, willfully refuses or fails to stop the vehicle in compliance with such order or, having stopped in knowing compliance with such order, willfully flees in an attempt to elude the officer.

The penalty for fleeing or eluding is enhanced in certain instances. For example, it is a second degree felony² for a person to flee or elude a law enforcement officer who is in an authorized law enforcement patrol vehicle, with agency insignia and other jurisdictional markings prominently displayed on the vehicle, with siren and lights activated, if during the course of the fleeing or eluding the person drives at high speed, or in any manner which demonstrates a wanton disregard for the safety of persons or property.³ This act becomes a first degree felony⁴, with a three-year minimum mandatory sentence if the person causes serious bodily injury or death to another person.⁵

Subsection (4) of the statute, provided below, establishes the crimes of “aggravated fleeing or eluding” and “aggravated fleeing or eluding with serious bodily injury or death.”

- (4) Any person who, in the course of unlawfully leaving or attempting to leave the scene of a crash in violation of s. 316.027, F.S. (crash involving death or personal injury), or s. 316.061, F.S. (crashes involving damage to vehicle or personal property), having knowledge of an order to stop by a duly authorized law enforcement officer, willfully refuses or fails to stop in compliance with such an order, or having stopped in knowing compliance with such order, willfully flees in an attempt to elude such officer and, as a result of such fleeing or eluding:
- (a) Causes injury to another person or causes damage to any property belonging to another person, commits aggravated fleeing or eluding, a second degree felony.⁶
 - (b) Causes serious bodily injury or death to another person, including any law enforcement officer involved in pursuing or otherwise attempting to effect a stop of the person’s vehicle, commits aggravated fleeing or eluding with serious bodily injury or death, a first degree felony.⁷ The court is required to sentence any person convicted of committing aggravated fleeing or eluding with serious bodily injury or death to a mandatory minimum sentence of 3 years imprisonment.⁸

First Degree Murder

Section 782.04(1)(a)2., F.S., defines first degree murder as the unlawful killing of a human being when committed by a person engaged in the perpetration of, or in the attempt to perpetrate:

- Trafficking offense prohibited by s. 893.135(1), F.S.;
- Arson;
- Sexual battery;
- Robbery;

¹ A third degree felony is punishable by up to 5 years imprisonment and a \$5,000 fine. Sections 775.082 and 775.083, F.S.

² A second degree felony is punishable by up to 15 years imprisonment and a \$10,000 fine. Sections 775.082 and 775.083, F.S.

³ Section 316.1935(3)(a), F.S.

⁴ A first degree felony is punishable by up to 30 years imprisonment and a \$10,000 fine. Sections 775.082 and 775.083, F.S.

⁵ Section 316.1935(3)(b), F.S.

⁶ A second degree felony is punishable by up to 15 years imprisonment and a \$10,000 fine. Sections 775.082 and 775.083, F.S.

⁷ A first degree felony is punishable by up to 30 years imprisonment and a \$10,000 fine. Sections 775.082 and 775.083, F.S.

⁸ The court is authorized to impose a greater sentence as authorized by law. Section 316.1935(4)(b), F.S.

- Burglary;
- Kidnapping;
- Escape;
- Aggravated child abuse;
- Aggravated abuse of an elderly person or disabled adult;
- Aircraft piracy;
- Unlawful throwing, placing, or discharging of a destructive device or bomb;
- Carjacking;
- Home-invasion robbery;
- Aggravated stalking;
- Murder of another human being;
- Resisting an officer with violence to his or her person; or
- Felony that is an act of terrorism or is in furtherance of an act of terrorism.

First degree murder is a capital felony punishable by death if the proceeding held to determine sentence according to the procedure set forth in s. 921.141, F.S.,⁹ results in findings by the court that such person shall be punished by death. If such proceeding results in findings by the court that the person shall not be punished by death, such person must be punished by life imprisonment and is ineligible for parole. Currently, a person who commits aggravated fleeing or eluding with serious bodily injury or death could not be charged with first degree murder since the offense is not contained in the above list.

Second Degree Murder

Section 782.04(3), F.S., provides that when a person is killed in the perpetration of, or in the attempt to perpetrate, any of the following offenses by a person other than the person engaged in the perpetration of or in the attempt to perpetrate such felony, the person perpetrating or attempting to perpetrate such felony is guilty of second degree murder:

- Trafficking offense prohibited by s. 893.135(1), F.S.;
- Arson;
- Sexual battery;
- Robbery;
- Burglary;
- Kidnapping;
- Escape;
- Aggravated child abuse;
- Aggravated abuse of an elderly person or disabled adult;
- Aircraft piracy;
- Unlawful throwing, placing, or discharging of a destructive device or bomb;
- Carjacking;
- Home-invasion robbery;
- Aggravated stalking;
- Murder of another human being;
- Resisting an officer with violence to his or her person; or
- Felony that is an act of terrorism or is in furtherance of an act of terrorism.

⁹ Section 921.141, F.S., requires a court, upon conviction or adjudication of guilt of a defendant of a capital felony, to conduct a separate sentencing proceeding to determine whether the defendant should be sentenced to death or life imprisonment. The proceeding must be conducted by the trial judge before the trial jury as soon as practicable. After hearing all the evidence, the jury must deliberate and render an advisory sentence to the court, based upon specified aggravating and mitigating circumstances. Notwithstanding the recommendation of a majority of the jury, the court, after weighing the aggravating and mitigating circumstances, must enter a sentence of life imprisonment or death, but if the court imposes a sentence of death, it must set forth in writing its findings upon which the sentence of death is based.

Second degree murder is a first degree felony punishable by imprisonment for a term of years not exceeding life or by up to 30 years imprisonment and a \$10,000 fine. Currently, a person who commits aggravated fleeing or eluding with serious bodily injury or death could not be charged with second degree murder since the offense is not contained in the above list.

Third Degree Murder

Section 782.04(4), F.S., defines third degree murder as the unlawful killing of a human being, when perpetrated without any design to effect death, by a person engaged in the perpetration of, or in the attempt to perpetrate, any felony other than any:

- Trafficking offense prohibited by s. 893.135(1), F.S.;
- Arson;
- Sexual battery;
- Robbery;
- Burglary;
- Kidnapping;
- Escape;
- Aggravated child abuse;
- Aggravated abuse of an elderly person or disabled adult;
- Aircraft piracy;
- Unlawful throwing, placing, or discharging of a destructive device or bomb;
- Unlawful distribution of any substance controlled under s. 893.03(1), F.S., cocaine as described in s. 893.03(2)(a)4., F.S., or opium or any synthetic or natural salt, compound, derivative, or preparation of opium by a person 18 years of age or older, when such drug is proven to be the proximate cause of the death of the user;
- Carjacking;
- Home-invasion robbery;
- Aggravated stalking;
- Murder of another human being;
- Resisting an officer with violence to his or her person; or
- Felony that is an act of terrorism or is in furtherance of an act of terrorism.

Third degree murder is a second degree felony punishable by up to 15 years imprisonment and a \$10,000 fine. Currently, a person who commits aggravated fleeing or eluding with serious bodily injury or death could be charged with third degree murder since the offense is not contained in the above list.

Life Sentences for Murder of a Law Enforcement Officer

Section 782.065, F.S., requires that a life sentence be imposed on defendants convicted of the following murder offenses if the victim of the offense is a law enforcement officer, part-time law enforcement officer, or an auxiliary law enforcement officer:¹⁰

- First degree murder where a death sentence is not imposed;
- Second or third degree murder;
- Attempted first or second degree murder; or
- Attempted felony murder.

Effect of the Bill

The bill creates the “Deputy John C. Mecklenburg Act,” and adds “aggravated fleeing or eluding with serious bodily injury or death” to the lists of offenses contained in s. 782.04(1)(a)2., (3), and (4), F.S. As a result, when a death occurs as a result of aggravated fleeing or eluding with serious bodily injury or death, a person could be charged with either first or second degree murder, but would no longer be able to be charged with third degree murder. The bill also makes conforming changes to s. 921.0022,

¹⁰ The terms “law enforcement officer,” “part-time law enforcement officer,” and “auxiliary law enforcement officer” are defined in s. 943.10, F.S.

F.S., the Criminal Punishment Code offense severity ranking chart and reenacts the following statutes to incorporate changes made to s. 782.04, F.S.:

- Section 775.0823, F.S. (violent offenses committed against law enforcement and correctional officers, state attorneys, assistant state attorneys, justices, or judges);
- Section 782.051, F.S. (attempted felony murder);
- Section 782.065, F.S. (murder; law enforcement officer); and
- Section 947.146, F.S. (Control Release Authority).

The bill also amends s. 782.065, F.S., to require a life sentence for defendants convicted of specified murder offenses if the victim of the offense is a correctional or correctional probation officer, a part-time correctional or correctional probation officer, or an auxiliary correctional or correctional probation officer.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

The bill does not appear to have any impact on state revenues.

2. Expenditures:

The Criminal Justice Impact Conference (CJIC) did not meet to determine the prison bed impact of the bill, as amended by the Criminal Justice Subcommittee and the Judiciary Committee. However, based on CJIC's December 14, 2011, determination that the bill, as originally filed, would have an insignificant prison bed impact, it is likely that the bill, as amended, will have an insignificant prison bed impact on the Department of Corrections.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

The bill does not appear to have any impact on local government revenues.

2. Expenditures:

The bill does not appear to have any impact on local government expenditures.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

None.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

None.