

Assembly Bill No. 524

CHAPTER 449

An act to amend Section 1708.8 of the Civil Code, relating to privacy.

[Approved by Governor October 11, 2009. Filed with
Secretary of State October 11, 2009.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 524, Bass. Privacy.

Existing law provides that a person is liable for constructive invasion of privacy when the defendant attempts to capture, in a manner that is offensive to a reasonable person, or knowingly trespasses or commits assault with the intent to capture, as specified, any type of visual image, sound recording, or other physical impression of the plaintiff engaging in a personal or familial activity under circumstances in which the plaintiff had a reasonable expectation of privacy, through the use of a visual or auditory enhancing device, as specified. The person who commits the act is liable for up to 3 times the amount of general and special damages, and may be liable for punitive damages. However, the sale, transmission, publication, broadcast, or use of any image or recording of the type, or under the circumstances, described does not itself constitute a violation of that provision.

This bill would create an exception to the latter provision regarding the first sale, offer for sale, transmission, publication, broadcast, or other use of any visual image, sound recording, or other physical impression, if the person sold, transmitted, published, broadcast, or used any image or recording of the type described in the provision above with actual knowledge, as defined, that the images or recordings were obtained in violation of specified provisions and provided compensation, consideration, or remuneration, monetary or otherwise, for the rights to the unlawfully obtained visual image, sound recording, or other physical impression. The bill would specify that those provisions apply only to a visual image, sound recording, or other physical impression that is captured or taken in California after January 1, 2010. The bill would also make technical changes.

The bill would provide that a person who violates the provisions described above, or who directs, solicits, actually induces, or actually causes another person to violate any of those provisions would be subject to a civil fine of not less than \$5,000 and not more than \$50,000.

The bill would authorize a county counsel or a city attorney to recover those civil fines, as specified. The bill would specify the allocation of the fines collected pursuant to the foregoing provision, including $\frac{1}{2}$ to the prosecuting agency. The bill would also establish the Arts and Entertainment Fund in the State Treasury for the deposit of $\frac{1}{2}$ of the fines, for expenditure

by the California Arts Council, upon appropriation by the Legislature, as specified.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(a) Individuals and their families have been harassed and endangered by being persistently followed or chased in a manner that puts them in reasonable fear of bodily injury, and in danger of serious bodily injury or even death, by photographers, videographers, and audio recorders attempting to capture images or other reproductions of their private lives for commercial purposes.

(b) The legitimate privacy interests of individuals and their families have been violated by photographers, videographers, and audio recorders who physically trespass in order to capture images or other reproductions of their private lives for commercial purposes, or who do so constructively through intrusive modern visual or auditory enhancement devices, such as powerful telephoto lenses and hyperbolic microphones that enable invasion of private areas that would otherwise be impossible without trespassing.

(c) Such harassment and trespass threaten not only professional public persons and their families, but also private persons and families for whom personal tragedies or circumstances beyond their control create media interest.

(d) There is no right, under the United States Constitution or the California Constitution, to persistently follow or chase another in a manner that creates a reasonable fear of bodily injury, to trespass, or to constructively trespass through the use of intrusive visual or auditory enhancement devices.

(e) The right to privacy and respect for private lives of individuals and their families must be balanced against the right of the media to gather and report the news. The right of a free press to report details of an individual's private life must be weighed against the rights of the individual to enjoy liberty and privacy.

SEC. 2. Section 1708.8 of the Civil Code is amended to read:

1708.8. (a) A person is liable for physical invasion of privacy when the defendant knowingly enters onto the land of another person without permission or otherwise committed a trespass in order to physically invade the privacy of the plaintiff with the intent to capture any type of visual image, sound recording, or other physical impression of the plaintiff engaging in a personal or familial activity and the physical invasion occurs in a manner that is offensive to a reasonable person.

(b) A person is liable for constructive invasion of privacy when the defendant attempts to capture, in a manner that is offensive to a reasonable person, any type of visual image, sound recording, or other physical impression of the plaintiff engaging in a personal or familial activity under circumstances in which the plaintiff had a reasonable expectation of privacy, through the use of a visual or auditory enhancing device, regardless of

whether there is a physical trespass, if this image, sound recording, or other physical impression could not have been achieved without a trespass unless the visual or auditory enhancing device was used.

(c) An assault committed with the intent to capture any type of visual image, sound recording, or other physical impression of the plaintiff is subject to subdivisions (d), (e), and (h).

(d) A person who commits any act described in subdivision (a), (b), or (c) is liable for up to three times the amount of any general and special damages that are proximately caused by the violation of this section. This person may also be liable for punitive damages, subject to proof according to Section 3294. If the plaintiff proves that the invasion of privacy was committed for a commercial purpose, the defendant shall also be subject to disgorgement to the plaintiff of any proceeds or other consideration obtained as a result of the violation of this section. A person who comes within the description of this subdivision is also subject to a civil fine of not less than five thousand dollars (\$5,000) and not more than fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000).

(e) A person who directs, solicits, actually induces, or actually causes another person, regardless of whether there is an employer-employee relationship, to violate any provision of subdivision (a), (b), or (c) is liable for any general, special, and consequential damages resulting from each said violation. In addition, the person that directs, solicits, actually induces, or actually causes another person, regardless of whether there is an employer-employee relationship, to violate this section shall be liable for punitive damages to the extent that an employer would be subject to punitive damages pursuant to subdivision (b) of Section 3294. A person who comes within the description of this subdivision is also subject to a civil fine of not less than five thousand dollars (\$5,000) and not more than fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000).

(f) (1) The transmission, publication, broadcast, sale, offer for sale, or other use of any visual image, sound recording, or other physical impression that was taken or captured in violation of subdivision (a), (b), or (c) shall not constitute a violation of this section unless the person, in the first transaction following the taking or capture of the visual image, sound recording, or other physical impression, publicly transmitted, published, broadcast, sold or offered for sale, the visual image, sound recording, or other physical impression with actual knowledge that it was taken or captured in violation of subdivision (a), (b), or (c), and provide compensation, consideration, or remuneration, monetary or otherwise, for the rights to the unlawfully obtained visual image, sound recording, or other physical impression.

(2) For the purposes of paragraph (1), “actual knowledge” means actual awareness, understanding, and recognition, obtained prior to the time at which the person purchased or acquired the visual image, sound recording, or other physical impression, that the visual image, sound recording, or other physical impression was taken or captured in violation of subdivision

(a), (b), or (c). The plaintiff shall establish actual knowledge by clear and convincing evidence.

(3) Any person that publicly transmits, publishes, broadcasts, sells or offers for sale, in any form, medium, format or work, a visual image, sound recording, or other physical impression that was previously publicly transmitted, published, broadcast, sold or offered for sale, by another person, is exempt from liability under this section.

(4) If a person's first public transmission, publication, broadcast, or sale or offer for sale, of a visual image, sound recording, or other physical impression that was taken or captured in violation of subdivision (a), (b), or (c), does not constitute a violation of this section, that person's subsequent public transmission, publication, broadcast, sale or offer for sale, in any form, medium, format or work, of the visual image, sound recording, or other physical impression, does not constitute a violation of this section.

(5) This section applies only to a visual image, sound recording, or other physical impression that is captured or taken in California in violation of subdivision (a), (b), or (c) after January 1, 2010, and shall not apply to any visual image, sound recording, or other physical impression taken or captured outside of California.

(6) Nothing in this subdivision shall be construed to impair or limit a special motion to strike pursuant to Section 425.16, 425.17, or 425.18 of the Code of Civil Procedure.

(7) This section shall not be construed to limit all other rights or remedies of the plaintiff in law or equity, including, but not limited to, the publication of private facts.

(g) This section shall not be construed to impair or limit any otherwise lawful activities of law enforcement personnel or employees of governmental agencies or other entities, either public or private who, in the course and scope of their employment, and supported by an articulable suspicion, attempt to capture any type of visual image, sound recording, or other physical impression of a person during an investigation, surveillance, or monitoring of any conduct to obtain evidence of suspected illegal activity or other misconduct, the suspected violation of any administrative rule or regulation, a suspected fraudulent conduct, or any activity involving a violation of law or business practices or conduct of public officials adversely affecting the public welfare, health or safety.

(h) In any action pursuant to this section, the court may grant equitable relief, including, but not limited to, an injunction and restraining order against further violations of subdivision (a), (b), or (c).

(i) The rights and remedies provided in this section are cumulative and in addition to any other rights and remedies provided by law.

(j) It is not a defense to a violation of this section that no image, recording, or physical impression was captured or sold.

(k) For the purposes of this section, "for a commercial purpose" means any act done with the expectation of a sale, financial gain, or other consideration. A visual image, sound recording, or other physical impression shall not be found to have been, or intended to have been captured for a

commercial purpose unless it is intended to be, or was in fact, sold, published, or transmitted.

(l) For the purposes of this section, “personal and familial activity” includes, but is not limited to, intimate details of the plaintiff’s personal life, interactions with the plaintiff’s family or significant others, or other aspects of the plaintiff’s private affairs or concerns. “Personal and familial activity” does not include illegal or otherwise criminal activity as delineated in subdivision (g). However, “personal and familial activity” shall include the activities of victims of crime in circumstances under which subdivision (a), (b), or (c) would apply.

(m) (1) A proceeding to recover the civil fines specified in subdivision (d) or (e) may be brought in any court of competent jurisdiction by a county counsel or city attorney.

(2) Fines collected pursuant to this subdivision shall be allocated, as follows:

(A) One-half shall be allocated to the prosecuting agency.

(B) One-half shall be deposited in the Arts and Entertainment Fund, which is hereby created in the State Treasury.

(3) Funds in the Arts and Entertainment Fund created pursuant to paragraph (2) may be expended by the California Arts Council, upon appropriation by the Legislature, to issue grants pursuant to the Dixon-Zenovich-Maddy California Arts Act of 1975 (Chapter 9 (commencing with Section 8750) of Division 1 of Title 2 of the Government Code).

(4) The rights and remedies provided in this subdivision are cumulative and in addition to any other rights and remedies provided by law.

(n) The provisions of this section are severable. If any provision of this section or its application is held invalid, that invalidity shall not affect other provisions or applications that can be given effect without the invalid provision or application.