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November 1st, 2022

## **An Act Relating to Use-of-Force by Law Enforcement Officers**

Governor Tony Evers recently signed Wisconsin Act 75, which creates use-of-force standards law enforcement must follow when intervening in certain situations. This act requires law officers to only use force when it is objectively reasonable based on the totality of circumstances. This could be the severity of the crime, whether the suspect is an imminent threat, and whether the suspect is evading or resisting arrest. If a suspect does not fit into these categories, an officer is not permitted to use force. A law enforcement officer must only use deadly force if his or another patron's life is being threatened, and must give a verbal warning before using deadly force.

The act also introduces new duties officers must abide by which include the duty to report and intervene. The duty to report requires all officers, who witnessed another officer use force that does not comply with new use-of-force standards to report the behavior immediately. Officers who do not report improper use-of-force practice may receive a misdemeanor or up to 6 months in jail depending on the severity of the force used. The duty to intervene requires that officers intervene in a situation where another officer is using improper use-of-force practices. A law officer must then report this intervention to a supervisor immediately.

When the bill was first introduced, many law enforcement officers opposed it because of adverse employment actions. Many worried that if they reported or intervened with a superior, they could lose their jobs. A section was added to the act that protects Whistleblowers stating they cannot be “discharged, disciplined, demoted, or denied promotion, transfer, or reassignment” (Wisconsin). This protects officers that report incidents that do not comply with the above use-of-force standards.

Those who support this new act, like the Speaker's Task Force on Racial Disparities, say it is the first step in enhancing transparency in law enforcement. They believe law enforcement officers must hold each other accountable as well as uphold the sanctity of life standards. The bill was bi-partisan and supported by both Democrats and Republicans. Although many interest groups like the National Association of Police Organizations (NAPO) first opposed it, once the bill was reformed to protect officers' employment, it was more widely accepted.

Overall, I can see why the reform was added to the bill and why police officers were initially hesitant in supporting it. I do believe this act will prevent the use of unnecessary force and violence and reduce police brutality incidents in Wisconsin. The added duties of reporting and intervening will allow law enforcement officers to hold each other accountable. I feel the responsibility to wield a deadly weapon should not be taken lightly, and officers must only use force when necessary to protect the sanctity of lives for themselves and others.

### Sources

*Wisconsin Legislature: 2021 Wisconsin Act 75,*  
<https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2021/related/acts/75>.