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AB-856 Invasion of privacy. (2015-2016)

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Assembly Bill No. 856

CHAPTER 521

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

[Approved by Governor October 06, 2015. Filed with Secretary of State October 06, 2015.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 856, Calderon. Invasion of privacy.

Under existing law, except as specified, a person is liable for physical invasion of privacy when that person knowingly enters onto the land of another person without permission or otherwise trespasses to capture any type of visual image, sound recording, or other physical impression of a person engaging in a private, personal, or familial activity and the invasion occurs in a manner that is offensive to a reasonable person. Under existing law, a person is liable for constructive invasion of privacy for the same activity, as specified, through the use of any device, regardless of whether there is a physical trespass. Existing law subjects a person who commits physical or constructive invasion of privacy to specified damages and civil fines.

This bill would expand liability for physical invasion of privacy to additionally include a person knowingly entering into the airspace above the land of another person without permission, as provided.

Vote: majority Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: no Local Program: no

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. 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 person knowingly enters onto the land or into the airspace above the land of another person without permission or otherwise commits a trespass in order to capture any type of visual image, sound recording, or other physical impression of the plaintiff engaging in a private, personal, or familial activity and the invasion occurs in a manner that is offensive to a reasonable person.

(b) A person is liable for constructive invasion of privacy when the person 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 private, personal, or familial activity, through the use of any 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 device was used.

(c) An assault or false imprisonment 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 person 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 provided 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) (1) For the purposes of this section, "private, personal, and familial activity" includes, but is not limited to:

(A) Intimate details of the plaintiff's personal life under circumstances in which the plaintiff has a reasonable expectation of privacy.

(B) Interaction with the plaintiff's family or significant others under circumstances in which the plaintiff has a reasonable expectation of privacy.

(C) If and only after the person has been convicted of violating Section 626.8 of the Penal Code, any activity that occurs when minors are present at any location set forth in subdivision (a) of Section 626.8 of the Penal Code.

(D) Any activity that occurs on a residential property under circumstances in which the plaintiff has a reasonable expectation of privacy.

(E) Other aspects of the plaintiff's private affairs or concerns under circumstances in which the plaintiff has a reasonable expectation of privacy.

(2) "Private, personal, and familial activity" does not include illegal or otherwise criminal activity as delineated in subdivision (g). However, "private, 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.