

2014 -- S 2657

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2014

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A N A C T

RELATING TO CRIMINAL PROCEDURE -- SEARCH WARRANTS

Introduced By: Senators Nesselbush, and Miller

Date Introduced: March 04, 2014

Referred To: Senate Judiciary

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1           SECTION 1. Chapter 12-5 of the General Laws entitled "Search Warrants" is hereby  
2 amended by adding thereto the following section:

3           **12-5-11. Portable electronic devices.** – (a) The general assembly finds and declares the  
4 following:

5           (1) The right to privacy is fundamental in a free and civilized society.

6           (2) The number of Rhode Island residents utilizing and carrying portable electronic  
7 devices is growing at a rapidly increasing rate. Users of portable electronic devices have a  
8 reasonable and justifiable expectation of privacy in the information these devices contain and  
9 access through the Internet.

10           (3) Once in the exclusive control of the police, portable electronic devices do not  
11 ordinarily pose a threat to officer safety. Concerns about destruction of evidence contained in a  
12 portable electronic device can ordinarily be addressed through simple evidence preservation  
13 methods and prompt application to a magistrate for a search warrant and, therefore, do not justify  
14 a blanket exception to the warrant requirement. Moreover, good forensic evidence practice  
15 supports the use of search warrants to obtain information contained in a portable electronic device  
16 seized incident to arrest.

17           (b) The information contained in a portable electronic device shall not be subject to  
18 search by a law enforcement officer incident to a lawful custodial arrest except pursuant to a  
19 warrant issued by a duly authorized magistrate using the procedures established by this chapter.

1           (c) As used in this section, “portable electronic device” means any portable device that is  
2 capable of creating, receiving, accessing, or storing electronic data or communications.

3           (d) Except as provided in subsection (b), nothing in this section shall be deemed to  
4 restrict or affect law enforcement reliance on established exceptions to the warrant requirement.

5           SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF  
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RELATING TO CRIMINAL PROCEDURE -- SEARCH WARRANTS

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- 1           This act would require search warrants be issued, subject to established exceptions, prior
- 2   to obtaining information contained in portable electronic devices.
- 3           This act would take effect upon passage.

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