



Police reform bill would ban no-knock warrants

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A push for police reform in the wake of George Floyd's death two weeks ago comes in the form of a group of proposals called the "Justice in Policing Act of 2020."

The legislation, which was introduced by Democrats in Congress, calls for banning specific actions taken by police that are currently legal, including no-knock warrants.

No-knock warrants allow police to raid a home without knocking at the front door or ringing a doorbell. Officers simply bash through the door and yell "law enforcement" at the same time. When done correctly, police get their suspect in a matter of seconds. When executed incorrectly, the wrong person could end up hurt or killed.

Those types of warrants are used in Jacksonville. Video of a drug raid on the city's Westside shows law enforcement officers who are executing a search warrant knocking first and announcing themselves before bashing in the front door. Had the officers been armed with a no-knock warrant, they would have simply bashed in the door without knocking.

News4Jax crime and safety expert Ken Jefferson, who's a retired police officer, said no-knock warrants are necessary when it comes to closing in on high profile suspects who may be dangerous. But he cautioned lawmakers' effort to totally ban the tactic.

"I wouldn't say do totally away with the no-knock warrant because you have some fugitives that will be waiting to ambush you," Jefferson said.

Democratic lawmakers want to end no-knock warrants after **Louisville police mistakenly shot and killed 27-year-old Breonna Taylor in her home.**

"They went to the wrong house. The person they were looking for was already incarcerated," Jefferson said.

Jefferson said that's a good example of law enforcement officers not doing their homework before getting a judge to sign off on a no-knock warrant. Jefferson said when officers bust down the wrong door and are met with gunfire from a homeowner who thinks they're being robbed, "that's a sad day."

According to the Cato Institute in Washington, 40 innocent people have died during the execution of no-knock warrants since the 1980s. Taylor was the latest casualty.

Jefferson said another controversy surrounding no-knock warrants is that crooks have been known to pretend to be cops executing a no-knock warrant to pull off home invasions.

In addition to banning no-knock warrants, Congressional Democrats have also proposed banning chokeholds, like the ones used on George Floyd and Eric Garner, and banning religious and racial profiling.

They have also proposed putting an end to what's called police qualified immunity. Police officers are currently immune from being sued in civil court. Jefferson said eliminating police immunity will curb incidents of alleged police brutality and excessive force.

"It's going to be a motivating factor if they start digging into their pockets if people now have the ability to sue them for their actions once they've committed these acts," Jefferson said.

These proposals have to be voted on and passed in Congress before they could be sent to the president's desk for him to sign into law or veto.