

# The Star-Ledger

## **Murphy vetoes bills requiring cops to use body cameras, citing cost and privacy concerns**

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Gov. Phil Murphy says he won't sign two bills expanding the use of police body cameras unless lawmakers make several changes.

The proposals are part of a wave of policing reforms gaining traction since George Floyd's death. Most New Jersey departments do not have body cameras, according to a recent state survey, and even those that do don't always have enough for every officer.

In conditional vetoes announced late Monday, Murphy agreed body cameras are "a wise public investment," but he said the bills are currently too flawed to approve.

The first (S1163) would generally require cops to wear body cameras at all times, although exceptions include working undercover.

Murphy said he couldn't approve the bill unless departments unable to afford them could be exempt, according to his conditional veto statement.

New Jersey would need up to \$55.8 million to equip tens of thousands more officers with cameras, Murphy said. That estimate includes initial storage costs but not ongoing maintenance.

Lawmakers said cameras could be paid for using forfeiture funds, which is money seized from suspected criminals. Yet the state had less than \$2 million in forfeiture funds as of August, and more than half had already been called for, Murphy wrote.

The second bill (A4312) sets rules for body cameras, such as requiring any footage of police using force be kept for at least three years.

More needed to be done to protect the privacy of residents caught on camera, Murphy wrote.

The proposal needed more restrictions on video taken in schools, hospitals or places of worship, and someone asking for emergency medical help should be able to request the camera be turned off, he said. Murphy also pushed back against proposed limits on when supervisors could view the footage.

Both bills passed overwhelmingly in the state Legislature. Lawmakers will have to re-approve any changes before the bills can go back to the governor's desk. They also have the option of trying to override Murphy's vetoes.

*NJ Advance Media staff writer Riley Yates contributed to this report.*