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**N.J. policing has changed since George Floyd's death but some major reforms are still on the table**

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In the months between George Floyd's death last May and Tuesday's murder conviction against former Minneapolis Officer Derek Chauvin, New Jersey made significant changes to how local police do their jobs.

The use of body cameras has expanded, as has the public's access to information about violent encounters with police. There will soon be new limits on when cops can use physical force, and officers face stiff penalties if they illegally search a young person caught with marijuana.

More reforms may be on the horizon, even as some changes continue to be debated by lawmakers and judges.

"We must seize this moment, when the nation's focus has turned to how our communities are policed, to ensure something meaningful comes from a man's unnecessary death, and to continue with urgency the reforms we have begun to policing practices in New Jersey," state Attorney General Gurbir Grewal said in a statement shortly after Chauvin's verdict was read.

During a briefing in Trenton, Gov. Phil Murphy commented on the Chauvin verdict and its potential impact on reform.

"If there's an opportunity, as a result of this tragedy, to take steps that we have not yet been able to take? Count me in," Murphy said Wednesday.

Advocates say there should be changes on a range of issues.

Some civil rights and law enforcement organizations have called for police dogs to be banned during arrests, and Grewal has yet to make a final decision.

Dozens of people testified last month in support of a bill to create civilian complaint review boards statewide, which could review allegations of excessive force and compel police to turn over internal documents.

Many law enforcement leaders have long argued more civilian oversight could hurt a department's ability to effectively investigate its own, and the bill (A4656) has yet to be voted on by the full Legislature.

There is also a push for departments to release more information about internal investigations.

Unlike many states, New Jersey almost never discloses when cops are disciplined. One bill (S2656) would make internal disciplinary records public, but the proposal has stalled in committee.

At the same time, the state Supreme Court could rule any day on whether the attorney general's office can legally identify hundreds of troopers who were suspended after being found guilty of misconduct during the last two decades. Police unions have argued identifying those officers could both embarrass and endanger people who may have only made minor mistakes years ago.

All of the proposed reforms would come on top of changes that have already been enacted.

Many were in the works before Floyd's death, including the re-write of the rules governing when cops can hit, tackle or shoot somebody.

Officials have said Floyd's death informed the new policy, which takes effect at the end of this year. One section explicitly warns officers against putting "sustained pressure on the neck or back" for "a prolonged period of time."

New Jersey also launched a new website earlier this month detailing every instance of physical force. That data already shows a small number of cops accounting for a large share of all combative encounters.

Furthermore, while Chauvin's trial centered on footage of the arrest, there isn't always video of police force.

During a recent five-month period, New Jersey officers noted on nearly 1,000 use-of-force reports that there was no footage of any kind documenting the encounter, according to state data. That should change in coming months, since lawmakers set aside tens of millions of dollars to equip almost every officer in the state with a body camera.

The pace of change has led some to question whether New Jersey needs to pump the brakes.

During a recent budget hearing, state Sen. Steve Oroho, R-Sussex, raised concerns that some reforms might do more harm than good. Could cops "lose trust in our leadership or in the public that they serve?" he asked.

Police leaders have said morale is low. More cops have called helplines in recent months, and some local departments are struggling to recruit.

Lawmakers also continue to debate new limits on when and how officers can detain young people found with marijuana. Law enforcement leaders have described the

restrictions as a “gut punch” that stops cops from doing their jobs, and Grewal has raised concerns that the law could lead to “de-policing.”

A bill (S3577) introduced last month would roll back some of the limits. It has not yet been heard in committee.