



Office of Governor Bob Ferguson

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SSB 5855 (2026): Concerning the use of face coverings by law enforcement officers.

What does the law do?

All state, local and federal law enforcement officers are prohibited from wearing facial coverings while interacting with the public in the performance of their duties.

How does enforcement work under the law?

This new law permits anyone detained by a masked officer to file a civil lawsuit against the officer for monetary damages.

A person detained by an unlawfully masked peace officer or federal law enforcement officer may sue that officer in their official capacity, but an officer is not liable if, at the time of detention, the officer was in compliance with state law requiring them to be reasonably identifiable. A successful plaintiff can recover compensatory damages, punitive damages, attorneys' fees, injunctive relief, and any other relief deemed appropriate by the court.

The law does not criminalize masking by state, local or federal law enforcement officers, including ICE.

How is this law different from SB 627 in California?

In California, SB 627, known as the "No Secret Police Act," applied only to federal officers. In Washington state, SSB 5855 applies to all law enforcement officers.

What are the exceptions to this law?

There are two exceptions to this law to be aware of:

1. The prohibition on facial coverings does not apply to:
 - a. Officers acting as undercover operatives;
 - b. Officers using protective gear necessary to protect their faces from harm while acting as members of a special weapons and tactics team; and
 - c. Officers using personal protective equipment as required or authorized under the law.
2. Facial coverings as defined under this law do not include:
 - a. Clear face shields or clear masks;
 - b. N95 medical masks or surgical masks that protect against disease transmission;
 - c. Masks or other devices, such as air-purifying respirators, that are necessary to protect against exposure to hazardous environmental conditions;
 - d. Helmets used to protect wearers' heads; and
 - e. Head and face coverings worn for religious purposes.