

H.R. 5143 Would Reverse DC Law, Increasing Dangerous Police Chases

What the bill does:

- H.R. 5143, the District of Columbia Policing Protection Act, would **repeal D.C.'s law limiting police car chases**.
- Current DC law allows pursuits if (1) there has been a **violent crime** or attempt or there is an **imminent risk of death or serious bodily injury**, (2) the pursuit is **necessary to mitigate that risk**, and (3) the pursuit is **not likely to cause death or serious injury** to anyone other than the "fleeing suspects."
- **H.R. 5143 would flip the presumption**, requiring officers to pursue unless they believe (1) it would be futile, (2) it would risk harming someone other than the suspect, or (3) there's a more effective way to apprehend the person. The bill would also require the US Attorney General to report on the cost and benefit of technology capable of alerting the public about pursuits in their immediate vicinity.

Why this matters:

- According to the [DOJ](#) and other [policing experts](#), **police car chases are one of the most dangerous law enforcement tactics**, causing thousands of deaths a year.
- Most deaths caused by pursuits are of [bystanders and passengers](#). In a heavily populated urban area like DC, cars driving upwards of 80 miles an hour will endanger children, pedestrians, bicyclists, and others. **This is an unacceptable risk to life.**
- **Restricting car chases does not result in surges in police evasion.** Cities that implemented restrictive policies, such as [Los Angeles](#), [Phoenix](#), and [Orlando](#), reduced police pursuits and associated injuries and deaths without seeing escalations in crime.
- Although [most chases begin for traffic or other minor rule-breaking](#), the cost to life and DC taxpayers is immense. Families have filed wrongful death suits seeking tens of millions, residents have sued for injuries and property damage, and an MPD captain who objected to an unsafe pursuit sued for \$1 million. Every case also racks up attorney hours, discovery costs, and court time, all paid by taxpayers.

What the numbers say:

- [Six in 10 recent Park Police chases in DC and the DMV ended in crashes](#). All of the pursuits involved traffic or minor offenses.
- [A San Francisco Chronicle study](#) showed that, between 2017 and 2022,
 - 3,336 people died in police car chases across the U.S.
 - Black people were killed at four times the rate of white people. [In DC, since 2017, four out of five people killed in police chases were Black.](#)
 - Between 2017 and 2022, [82 percent](#) of deadly pursuits began as traffic stops or a nonviolent offense.

Further reading:

- [WUSA 9: Report on Park Police chasing cars and crashing](#)
- [WaPo: Ten car chases. Six crashes. Park Police have new rules in Trump's D.C.](#)
- [DC Justice Library: Car Chases](#)

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