

ORDINANCE

CITY OF NEW ORLEANS

CITY HALL: September 25, 2025

CALENDAR NO. 35,242

NO. _____ MAYOR COUNCIL SERIES

BY: COUNCILMEMBERS MORRELL AND MORENO

AN ORDINANCE to ordain section 30-1721 of the Code of the City of New Orleans to prohibit agreements authorizing the production of reality-based programming featuring city first responders; and otherwise to provide with respect thereto.

WHEREAS, the City of New Orleans has periodically contracted with television networks and production companies to feature the City's first responders on various television programs, including *Bait Car*, *Night Watch*, and *Homicide Squad*; and

WHEREAS, although these shows purport to be educational in nature, they are routinely edited for dramatic effect and entertainment and, therefore, are not a reliable source for learning accurate procedures or understanding the full scope of a first responder's job; and

WHEREAS, in the case of police reality shows, the shows tend to focus on the most dramatic elements of police work, such as hot pursuit of suspects, and neglect or ignore the less theatrical parts of the job, including paperwork and uneventful patrols, and this editing results in a public perception that police work is more glamorous and exciting than it typically is; and

WHEREAS, first-responder reality shows necessarily include footage depicting victims, suspects, witnesses, bystanders and other civilians; and

WHEREAS, the entertainment format of first-responder reality shows not only undermines the claimed educational value of this type of programming, but it also raises serious

questions related to civilians' rights to privacy and consent, and the normalization of professional misconduct by first responders; and

WHEREAS, the American Medical Association Code of Medical Ethics urges caution when it comes to reality TV, pointing out that “recording poses challenges for protecting patient autonomy, privacy and confidentiality” and that “filming cannot benefit a patient medically and may cause harm”; and

WHEREAS, research indicates that partnering reality tv film crews with police departments increases the likelihood of an officer using force; and

WHEREAS, a 2020 investigation by the *Austin American-Statesman* found the use of force by Williamson County sheriff deputies nearly doubled the year after the department partnered with *Live PD*, a first-responder reality show, and that deputies used significantly more force during the weeks *Live PD* camera crews filmed; and

WHEREAS, Texas Governor Greg Abbott signed a law in 2021 banning reality TV shows from partnering with peace officers after district attorneys in Austin, Texas, fought to get deleted *Live PD* footage of the May 2019 arrest of Javier Ambler II, a 40-year-old black man, depicting a pursuit that began because he failed to dim his headlights and led to Ambler's death after he was handcuffed, tased and forced to the ground; and

WHEREAS, considering the multitude of constitutional concerns and the questionable educational value of first-responder reality television, the Council believes it to be in the best interest of the City, its residents, and visitors to prohibit contracts or cooperative endeavor agreement where the purpose is to produce first-responder focused reality television programming; and

21 (b) Nothing herein shall be deemed to prohibit or restrict journalistic coverage of emergency
22 situations or other constitutionally protected expressive activities occurring in public
23 areas.”

ADOPTED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW ORLEANS _____

PRESIDENT OF THE CITY COUNCIL

DELIVERED TO THE MAYOR ON _____

APPROVED:
DISAPPROVED: _____

MAYOR

RETURNED BY THE MAYOR ON _____ **AT** _____

CLERK OF COUNCIL

ROLL CALL VOTE:
YEAS:

NAYS:

ABSENT:

RECUSED:

REDLINE VERSION:

Sec. 30-1721. –City participation in programs featuring first responders.

- (a) The City shall not enter into any agreement authorizing or related to the filming or production of a motion picture, documentary, television program, reality show, or other media production that features first responders engaged in the course and scope of their official duties. For the purposes of this section, first responder means any full or part-time city employee whose duties include responding rapidly to an emergency and includes the following: peace officers, fire protection personnel, emergency medical services personnel, or an emergency response operator or services dispatcher who provides communication support services for an agency by responding to requests for assistance in emergencies. No first responder may be compelled to participate in a film or production subject to the prohibition in this section.
- (b) Nothing herein shall be deemed to prohibit or restrict journalistic coverage of emergency situations or other constitutionally protected expressive activities occurring in public areas.