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SENATE BILL NO. 1158

Offered January 14, 2015

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A BILL to amend and reenact §§ 18.2-85, 27-34.4, 27-95, 27-96.1, and 27-97 of the Code of Virginia, relating to the Statewide Fire Prevention Code; State Fire Marshal; consumer fireworks; penalties.

Patrons—Garrett and Lewis

Referred to Committee on General Laws and Technology

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That §§ 18.2-85, 27-34.4, 27-95, 27-96.1, and 27-97 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 18.2-85. Manufacture, possession, use, etc., of fire bombs or explosive materials or devices; fireworks penalties.

A. For the purpose of this section:

"Device" means any instrument, apparatus or contrivance, including its component parts, that is capable of producing or intended to produce an explosion but shall not include fireworks as defined in § 27-95.

"Explosive material" means any chemical compound, mechanical mixture or device that is commonly used or can be used for the purpose of producing an explosion and which contains any oxidizing and combustive agents or other ingredients in such proportions, quantities or packaging that an ignition by fire, friction, concussion, percussion, detonation or by any part of the compound or mixture may cause a sudden generation of highly heated gases. These materials include, but are not limited to, gunpowder, powders for blasting, high explosives, blasting materials, fuses (other than electric circuit breakers), detonators, and other detonating agents and smokeless powder.

"Fire bomb" means any container of a flammable material such as gasoline, kerosene, fuel oil, or other chemical compound, having a wick composed of any material or a device or other substance which, if set or ignited, is capable of igniting such flammable material or chemical compound but does not include a similar device commercially manufactured and used solely for the purpose of illumination or cooking.

"Hoax explosive device" means any device which by its design, construction, content or characteristics appears to be or to contain a bomb or other destructive device or explosive but which is an imitation of any such device or explosive.

B. Any person who (i) possesses materials with which fire bombs or explosive materials or devices can be made with the intent to manufacture fire bombs or explosive materials or devices or; (ii) manufactures, transports, distributes, possesses or uses a fire bomb or explosive materials or devices shall be guilty of a Class 5 felony. Any person who constructs, uses, places, sends, or causes to be sent any hoax explosive device so as to intentionally cause another person to believe that such device is a bomb or explosive shall be guilty of a Class 6 felony.

C. Any person who (i) causes damage to property or (ii) causes injury to another person due to the negligent use of fireworks as defined in § 27-95 shall be subject to prosecution under existing applicable criminal statutes.

D. Nothing in this section shall prohibit the authorized manufacture, transportation, distribution, use or possession of any material, substance, or device by a member of the armed forces of the United States, fire fighters or law-enforcement officers, nor shall it prohibit the manufacture, transportation, distribution, use or possession of any material, substance or device to be used solely for scientific research, educational purposes or for any lawful purpose, subject to the provisions of §§ 27-97 and 27-97.2.

§ 27-34.4. Inspection and review of plans of buildings under construction.

Inspection of buildings other than state-owned buildings under construction and the review and approval of building plans for these structures for enforcement of the Uniform Statewide Building Code shall be the sole responsibility of the appropriate local building inspectors. Upon completion of such structures, responsibility for fire safety protection, *including provisions relating to the handling, storage, and use of fireworks*, shall pass to the local fire marshal or official designated by the locality to enforce the Statewide Fire Prevention Code (§ 27-94 et seq.) in those localities ~~which~~ *that* enforce the Statewide Fire Prevention Code.

§ 27-95. Definitions.

As used in this chapter, unless the context or subject matter requires otherwise, the following words

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SB1158

59 or terms shall have the meaning herein ascribed to them requires a different meaning:

60 "Board" means the Board of Housing and Community Development.

61 "Code provisions" means the provisions of the Fire Prevention Code as adopted and promulgated by
62 the Board, and the amendments thereof as adopted and promulgated from time to time by such Board.

63 "Consumer fireworks" means small fireworks devices containing restricted amounts of pyrotechnic
64 composition designed primarily to produce visible or audible effects by combustion. Such fireworks are
65 classified and labeled as 1.4G explosives as set forth in 49 C.F.R. Parts 100 through 180 and meet the
66 composition and labeling regulations of the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission as set forth in
67 16 C.F.R. Parts 1500 and 1507.

68 "Display fireworks" means large fireworks devices that are explosive materials intended for use in
69 fireworks displays and designed to produce audible or visible effects by combustion, deflagration, or
70 detonation. Such fireworks are classified and labeled as 1.3G explosives as set forth in 49 C.F.R. Parts
71 100 through 180 and include firecrackers containing more than 130 milligrams (two grains) of explosive
72 composition, aerial shells containing more than 60 grams of pyrotechnic composition, and other display
73 devices that exceed the limits for classification as 1.4G fireworks.

74 "Enforcement agency" means the agency or agencies of any local governing body or the State Fire
75 Marshal charged with the administration or enforcement of the Fire Prevention Code.

76 "Fire Prevention Code" or "Code" means the Statewide Fire Prevention Code (§ 27-94 et seq.).

77 "Fire prevention regulation" means any law, rule, resolution, regulation, ordinance or code, general or
78 special, or compilation thereof to safeguard life and property from the hazards of fire or explosion
79 arising from the improper maintenance of life safety and fire prevention and protection materials,
80 devices, systems and structures, and the unsafe storage, handling and use of substances, materials and
81 devices, including explosives and blasting agents, wherever located, heretofore or hereafter enacted or
82 adopted by the Commonwealth or any county or municipality, including departments, boards, bureaus,
83 commissions or other agencies.

84 "Fire Services Board" means the Virginia Fire Services Board as provided for in § 9.1-202.

85 "Fireworks" means any firecracker, torpedo, skyrocket, or other substance or object, of whatever
86 form or construction, that contains any explosive or inflammable compound or substance, and is
87 intended, or commonly known as fireworks, and which explodes, rises into the air or travels laterally, or
88 fires projectiles into the air.

89 "Fireworks operator" or "pyrotechnician" means any person engaged in the design, setup, and firing
90 of any fireworks other than permissible fireworks either inside a building or structure or outdoors.

91 "Inspection warrant" means an order in writing, made in the name of the Commonwealth, signed by
92 any judge or magistrate whose territorial jurisdiction encompasses the building, structure or premises to
93 be inspected or entered, and directed to a state or local official, commanding him to enter and to
94 conduct any inspection, examination, testing or collection of samples for testing required or authorized
95 by the Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code.

96 "Local government" means the governing body of any city, county or town in this Commonwealth.

97 "Permissible fireworks" means ~~any~~ ground-based and handheld devices containing limited
98 pyrotechnic composition designed primarily to produce visible or audible effects by combustion but that
99 do not rise in the air, explode, or travel horizontally and are commonly known as sparklers, fountains,
100 Pharaoh's serpents, caps for pistols, or pinwheels commonly known as whirlygigs or, and spinning
101 jennies.

102 "State Fire Marshal" means the State Fire Marshal as provided for by § 9.1-206.

103 **§ 27-96.1. Chapter inapplicable to certain uses of fireworks.**

104 Unless prohibited by a local ordinance, the provisions of this chapter pertaining to fireworks shall not
105 apply to the sale of or to any person using, igniting, or exploding ~~permissible~~ consumer fireworks on
106 private residential or agricultural property with the consent of the owner of such property or when such
107 consumer fireworks are being transported from a locality where they were legally obtained to a locality
108 where they are legally permitted.

109 **§ 27-97. Adoption of Fire Prevention Code.**

110 The Board of Housing and Community Development is hereby empowered to adopt and promulgate
111 a Statewide Fire Prevention Code which shall be cooperatively developed with the Fire Services Board
112 pursuant to procedures agreed to by the two Boards. The Fire Prevention Code shall prescribe
113 regulations to be complied with for the protection of life and property from the hazards of fire or
114 explosion and for the handling, storage, sale and use of fireworks, explosives or blasting agents, and
115 shall provide for the administration and enforcement of such regulations. The Fire Prevention Code shall
116 require manufacturers of fireworks or explosives, as defined in the Code, to register and report
117 information concerning their manufacturing facilities and methods of operation within the
118 Commonwealth in accordance with regulations adopted by the Board. In addition to conducting criminal
119 background checks pursuant to § 27-97.2, the Board shall also establish regulations for obtaining permits
120 for the manufacturing, storage, handling, use, or sales of fireworks or explosives. In the enforcement of

such regulations, the enforcing agency may issue annual permits for such activities to any state regulated public utility. Such permits shall not apply to the storage, handling, or use of explosives or blasting agents pursuant to the provisions of Title 45.1.

The Fire Prevention Code shall prohibit any person, firm, or corporation from transporting, manufacturing, storing, selling, offering for sale, exposing for sale, or buying, using, igniting, or exploding any fireworks except for those persons, firms, or corporations that manufacture, store, market and distribute fireworks for the sole purpose of fireworks displays permitted by an enforcement agency or by any locality.

The Fire Prevention Code shall prohibit anyone younger than the age of 18 years from purchasing fireworks and shall prohibit anyone younger than the age of 18 years from possessing or using fireworks without adult supervision.

For the purposes of the Fire Prevention Code adopted pursuant to this section and the Uniform Statewide Building Code adopted pursuant to § 36-99, the storage and transportation of consumer fireworks shall be considered the same hazard class as 1.4G explosives.

The Fire Prevention Code shall supersede fire prevention regulations heretofore adopted by local governments or other political subdivisions. Local governments are hereby empowered to adopt fire prevention regulations that are more restrictive or more extensive in scope than the Fire Prevention Code provided such regulations do not affect the manner of construction, or materials to be used in the erection, alteration, repair, or use of a building or structure, including the voluntary installation of smoke alarms and regulation and inspections thereof in commercial buildings where such smoke alarms are not required under the provisions of the Code. The Fire Prevention Code shall prohibit any person not certified by the State Fire Marshal's Office as a fireworks operator or pyrotechnician to design, set up, or conduct or supervise the design, setup, or conducting of any fireworks display, either inside a building or structure or outdoors, and shall require that at least one person holding a valid certification is present at the site where the fireworks display is being conducted *unless such display is conducted using consumer fireworks on residential or agricultural property in accordance with § 27-96.1*. Certification shall not be required for the design, storage, sale, use, conduct, transportation, and set up of permissible *or consumer* fireworks or the supervision thereof or in connection with any fireworks display conducted by a volunteer fire department provided one member of the volunteer fire department holds a valid certification.

In formulating the Fire Prevention Code, the Board shall have due regard for generally accepted standards as recommended by nationally recognized organizations including, but not limited to, standards of the International Code Council, the National Fire Protection Association, and recognized organizations issuing standards for the protection of the public from the hazards of explosives and blasting agents. Such standards shall be based on the companion document to the model building code referenced by the Uniform Statewide Building Code.

The Fire Prevention Code shall require that buildings constructed prior to 1973 be maintained in accordance with state fire and public building regulations in effect prior to March 31, 1986, and that any building which is (i) more than 75 feet or more than six stories high and (ii) used, in whole or in part, as a dormitory to house students by any public or private institution of higher education shall be required to comply with the provisions of § 36-99.3. The Fire Prevention Code shall also require annual fire drills in all buildings having floors used for human occupancy located more than 75 feet above the lowest level of fire department vehicle access. The drills shall be conducted by building staff personnel or the owner of the building in accordance with a plan approved by the appropriate fire official and shall not affect other current occupants. The Board may modify, amend or repeal any Code provisions as the public interest requires. Any such Code changes shall be developed in cooperation with the Fire Services Board pursuant to procedures agreed to by the two Boards.

2. That the provisions of this act shall become effective on January 1, 2016.

3. That the provisions of this act may result in a net increase in periods of imprisonment or commitment. Pursuant to § 30-19.1:4, the estimated amount of the necessary appropriation is \$0 for periods of imprisonment in state adult correctional facilities and cannot be determined for periods of commitment to the custody of the Department of Juvenile Justice.