



Fiscal Impact Statement for Proposed Legislation

Virginia Criminal Sentencing Commission

Senate Bill No. 641 **(Patron – Stuart)**

LD#: 18100260

Date: 11/6/2017

Topic: Possession of firearms by persons voluntarily admitted to inpatient mental health facility

Fiscal Impact Summary:

- **State Adult Correctional Facilities:**
\$50,000 *
- **Local Adult Correctional Facilities:**
Cannot be determined
- **Adult Community Corrections Programs:**
Cannot be determined

- **Juvenile Correctional Centers:**
Cannot be determined **
- **Juvenile Detention Facilities:**
Cannot be determined **

** Provided by the Department of Juvenile Justice

* The estimated amount of the necessary appropriation cannot be determined for periods of imprisonment in state adult correctional facilities; therefore, Chapter 836 of the 2017 Acts of Assembly requires the Virginia Criminal Sentencing Commission to assign a minimum fiscal impact of \$50,000.

Summary of Proposed Legislation:

The proposal adds § 18.2-308.1:6 to the *Code of Virginia*, relating to the possession, purchase, or transportation of firearms by persons voluntarily admitted to an inpatient mental health facility. Under the proposal, it would be a Class 1 misdemeanor for any person not subject to a temporary detention order who is voluntarily admitted to a state hospital for mental health treatment or admitted to a public or private mental health facility for inpatient treatment to purchase, possess, or transport a firearm during the time he or she receives inpatient treatment and for two weeks following discharge from inpatient treatment.

Pursuant to § 18.2-311.2, a third or subsequent Class 1 misdemeanor firearm violation (defined in Article 4, 5, 6, or 7 of Chapter 7 of Title 18.2) is punishable as a Class 6 felony.

The proposal also expands the applicability of several existing felony offenses to include offenders prohibited from possessing or transporting a firearm under § 18.2-308.1:6. Under the proposed modifications to § 18.2-308.2:1, for instance, individuals who sell, barter, give, or furnish a firearm to a person who is prohibited from possessing a firearm under the proposed § 18.2-308.1:6 would be guilty of a Class 4 felony. Also, additional individuals would be ineligible to receive a firearm from a licensed firearms dealer. Currently, under § 18.2-308.2:2(M), purchasing a firearm with the intent to transfer it to an individual who is ineligible to purchase a firearm from a dealer is a Class 4 felony that carries a mandatory minimum term of one year. Offenders who transfer more than one firearm in violation of § 18.2-308.2:2(M) are subject to a mandatory minimum term of five years. Subsection N of § 18.2-308.2:2 makes it a Class 4 felony for any person ineligible to purchase or possess a firearm to solicit, employ, or assist any person in purchasing a firearm in violation of § 18.2-308.2:2(M); a violation of this subsection also carries a mandatory minimum term of five years.

Under § 18.2-308.2:2(K), making a materially false statement on a consent form that is required to purchase a firearm from a licensed dealer is a Class 5 felony. The proposal would amend the Virginia consent form to ask a prospective buyer if he has been voluntarily admitted to an inpatient mental health facility and is prohibited from purchasing a firearm pursuant to § 18.2-308.1:6. An individual making a materially false statement in response to this question would be subject to conviction for a Class 5 felony.

Analysis:

According to the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS), the Virginia Hospital and Healthcare Association (VHHA), and Virginia Health Information (VHI), information regarding the number of individuals not subject to a temporary detention order who were 1) voluntarily admitted to a state hospital for mental health treatment, or 2) admitted to a public or private mental health facility for inpatient treatment is not readily available. Therefore, it is unknown how many individuals would be prohibited from possessing, etc., a firearm under the proposal.

Existing data sources do not contain sufficient detail to predict how many additional convictions may result from the proposal's enactment. However, affected offenders may be sentenced similarly to those who are currently convicted of a felony under existing provisions (see table below).

Offenders convicted of the proposed Class 1 misdemeanor who accumulate three or more firearm convictions could be found guilty of a Class 6 felony under § 18.2-311.2. A review of fiscal year (FY) 2012 through FY2017 Circuit Court Case Management System (CMS) data for all felony convictions under § 18.2-311.2 resulting from a third or subsequent misdemeanor firearms violation revealed that, during the six-year period, none of the offenders received a state-responsible (prison) sentence.

Offenders Convicted of Select Felony Firearm Offenses, FY2016-FY2017

Primary Offense	Total Number of Cases	Percent Sentenced to Probation	Percent Sentenced to Jail	Median Jail Sentence	Percent Sentenced to Prison	Median Prison Sentence
Sell, give, etc., firearm to ineligible person (§ 18.2-308.2:1)	7	57.1%	14.3%	12 months	28.6%	2.3 years
False statement on firearm consent form (§ 18.2-308.2:2(K))	188	77.7%	14.4%	7 months	8.0%	2.0 years
Dealer sell/transfer firearm in violation of section (§ 18.2-308.2:2(L))	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Solicit, etc., dealer to transfer firearm to another (§ 18.2-308.2:2(L1))	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Provide > 1 firearm to ineligible person (§ 18.2-308.2:2(M))	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Purchase firearm to provide to ineligible person (§ 18.2-308.2:2(M,i))	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Transport firearm out of state to provide to ineligible person (§ 18.2-308.2:2(M,ii))	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Offenders Convicted of Select Felony Firearm Offenses, continued

Primary Offense	Total Number of Cases	Percent Sentenced to Probation	Percent Sentenced to Jail	Median Jail Sentence	Percent Sentenced to Prison	Median Prison Sentence
Solicit violation of § 18.2-308.2:2(M) (§ 18.2-308.2:2(N))	2	0%	0%	N/A	100%	3.5 years
False statement on affidavit (§ 18.2-308.2:3(C,1))	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
False statement on required personal descriptive information (§ 18.2-308.2:3(J))	1	100%	0%	N/A	0%	N/A

Note: The analysis is based on cases in which the specified offense was the primary, or most serious, offense in the sentencing event.

Sources: Supreme Court of Virginia - Circuit Court Case Management System (CMS), FY2016-FY2017 and Virginia Criminal Sentencing Commission - Sentencing Guidelines Database, FY2016-FY2017

Impact of Proposed Legislation:

State adult correctional facilities. Offenders convicted of the proposed Class 1 misdemeanor offense under § 18.2-308.1:6 could, in the future, be convicted of a Class 6 felony under § 18.2-311.2 if they accumulate three or more weapon convictions. In the six most recent fiscal years, however, no offender convicted of a felony under § 18.2-311.2 has received a state-responsible (prison) sentence. Therefore, this portion of the proposal is not expected to have an impact on the state-responsible (prison) bed space needs of the Commonwealth during the six-year window specified by § 30-19.1:4 for legislative impact statements.

However, by expanding the applicability of other existing felony offenses, the proposal may increase the future state-responsible (prison) bed space needs of the Commonwealth. Existing data do not provide sufficient detail to estimate the number of new felony convictions that would result from enactment of the proposal. Therefore, the impact on prison bed space needs cannot be determined.

Local adult correctional facilities. By creating a new Class 1 misdemeanor offense and expanding certain felony offenses, the proposal may increase local-responsible (jail) bed space needs. Because the number of new convictions that may result from enactment of the proposal cannot be determined, the magnitude of the impact on jail bed space needs cannot be estimated.

Adult community corrections programs. Because the proposal could result in both misdemeanor and felony convictions and subsequent supervision requirements for an additional number of offenders, the proposal may increase the need for adult community corrections resources. Since the number of cases that may be affected cannot be determined, the potential impact on community corrections cannot be quantified.

Virginia's sentencing guidelines. Felony violations of § 18.2-308.2:2(K) are covered by the sentencing guidelines. Felony convictions under the other affected sections of the *Code* are not covered by the sentencing guidelines as the primary, or most serious, offense. Such a conviction, however, could augment the guidelines recommendation if the most serious offense at sentencing is covered by the guidelines. No adjustment to the guidelines is necessary under the proposal.

Juvenile direct care. According to the Department of Juvenile Justice, the impact of the proposal on direct care (juvenile correctional center or alternative commitment placement) bed space needs cannot be determined.

Juvenile detention facilities. The Department of Juvenile Justice reports that the proposal's impact on the bed space needs of juvenile detention facilities cannot be determined.

Pursuant to § 30-19.1:4, the estimated amount of the necessary appropriation cannot be determined for periods of imprisonment in state adult correctional facilities; therefore, Chapter 836 of the 2017 Acts of Assembly requires the Virginia Criminal Sentencing Commission to assign a minimum fiscal impact of \$50,000.

Pursuant to § 30-19.1:4, the estimated amount of the necessary appropriation cannot be determined for periods of commitment to the custody of the Department of Juvenile Justice.

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