

VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY -- 2020 SPECIAL SESSION I

CHAPTER 19

An Act to amend and reenact § 2.2-520 of the Code of Virginia and to amend the Code of Virginia by adding a section numbered 2.2-511.1, relating to law-enforcement misconduct.

[S 5024]

Approved October 21, 2020

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That § 2.2-520 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted and that the Code of Virginia is amended by adding a section numbered 2.2-511.1 as follows:

§ 2.2-511.1. Public integrity; law-enforcement misconduct.

A. As used in this section:

"Law-enforcement officer" means the same as that term is defined in § 9.1-101.

"Locality" shall be construed to mean a county, city, or town as the context may require.

B. It is unlawful for the Commonwealth or any locality, or any agent thereof, or any person acting on behalf of the Commonwealth or any locality, to engage in a pattern or practice of conduct by law-enforcement officers of any agency of the Commonwealth or any locality that deprives persons of rights, privileges, or immunities secured or protected by the laws of the United States and the Commonwealth.

C. Whenever the Attorney General has reasonable cause to believe that a violation of subsection B has occurred, the Attorney General, for or in the name of the Commonwealth, may (i) file a civil action to obtain appropriate equitable and declaratory relief to eliminate the pattern or practice or (ii) inquire into or seek to conciliate any unlawful pattern and practice pursuant to § 2.2-520. The Attorney General may file a civil action to obtain appropriate relief to enforce a conciliation agreement arising out of such inquiry or conciliation. The Attorney General may include, as part of a conciliation agreement, a provision that the locality shall be ineligible for funding under Article 8 (§ 9.1-165 et seq.) of Chapter 1 of Title 9.1 upon a finding by any court of the Commonwealth that such locality is failing to comply with the conciliation agreement. Upon such a finding, the court shall declare the locality ineligible for funding until the locality comes into compliance with the conciliation agreement.

D. Whenever the Attorney General has reasonable cause to believe that a violation of subsection B has occurred, the Attorney General is empowered to issue a civil investigative demand. The provisions of § 59.1-9.10 shall apply mutatis mutandis to civil investigative demands issued pursuant to this section.

§ 2.2-520. Division of Human Rights created; duties.

A. There is created in the Department of Law a Division of Human Rights (the Division) to assist in the prevention of and relief from alleged unlawful discriminatory practices.

B. The powers and duties of the Division shall be to:

1. Receive, investigate, seek to conciliate, refer to another agency, hold hearings pursuant to the Virginia Administrative Process Act (§ 2.2-4000 et seq.), and make findings and recommendations upon complaints alleging unlawful discriminatory practices, including complaints alleging a pattern and practice of unlawful discriminatory practices, pursuant to the Virginia Human Rights Act (§ 2.2-3900 et seq.);

2. Adopt, promulgate, amend, and rescind regulations consistent with this article and the provisions of the Virginia Human Rights Act (§ 2.2-3900 et seq.) pursuant to the Virginia Administrative Process Act (§ 2.2-4000 et seq.). However, the Division shall not have the authority to adopt regulations on a substantive matter when another state agency is authorized to adopt such regulations;

3. Inquire into incidents that may constitute unlawful acts of discrimination or unfounded charges of unlawful discrimination under state or federal law and take such action within the Division's authority designed to prevent such acts;

4. Seek through appropriate enforcement authorities, prevention of or relief from an alleged unlawful discriminatory practice;

5. Appoint and compensate qualified hearing officers from the list of hearing officers maintained by the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court of Virginia;

6. Promote creation of local commissions to aid in effectuating the policies of this article and to enter into cooperative worksharing or other agreements with federal agencies or local commissions, including the deferral of complaints of discrimination to federal agencies or local commissions;

7. Make studies and appoint advisory councils to effectuate the purposes and policies of the article and to make the results thereof available to the public;

8. Accept public grants or private gifts, bequests, or other payments, as appropriate; and

9. Receive complaints, seek to conciliate, and inquire into incidents that may constitute an unlawful pattern or practice of conduct by law-enforcement officers that deprives persons of rights, privileges, or

immunities secured or protected by the laws of the United States and the Commonwealth and take such action within the Division's authority, including requesting the Attorney General to issue a civil investigative demand pursuant to subsection D of § 2.2-511.1, designed to prevent such conduct; and

10. Furnish technical assistance upon request of persons subject to this article to further comply with the article or an order issued thereunder.