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HOUSE BILL NO. 736

Offered January 12, 2022

Prefiled January 11, 2022

A BILL to amend and reenact § 19.2-56 of the Code of Virginia, relating to search warrants; execution.

Patron—Bell

Referred to Committee for Courts of Justice

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**1. That § 19.2-56 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:****§ 19.2-56. To whom search warrant directed; what it shall command; warrant to show date and time of issuance; copy of affidavit to be part of warrant and served therewith; warrants not executed within 15 days.**

A. The judge, magistrate, or other official authorized to issue criminal warrants, shall issue a search warrant only if he finds from the facts or circumstances recited in the affidavit that there is probable cause for the issuance thereof.

Every search warrant shall be directed (i) to the sheriff, sergeant, or any policeman of the county, city, or town in which the place to be searched is located; (ii) to any law-enforcement officer or agent employed by the Commonwealth and vested with the powers of sheriffs and police; or (iii) jointly to any such sheriff, sergeant, policeman, or law-enforcement officer or agent and an agent, special agent, or officer of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms of the United States Treasury, the United States Naval Criminal Investigative Service, the United States Department of Homeland Security, any inspector, law-enforcement official, or police personnel of the United States Postal Service, or the Drug Enforcement Administration. The warrant shall (a) name the affiant, (b) recite the offense or the identity of the person to be arrested for whom a warrant or process for arrest has been issued in relation to which the search is to be made, (c) name or describe the place to be searched, (d) describe the property or person to be searched for, and (e) recite that the magistrate has found probable cause to believe that the property or person constitutes evidence of a crime (identified in the warrant) or tends to show that a person (named or described therein) has committed or is committing a crime or that the person to be arrested for whom a warrant or process for arrest has been issued is located at the place to be searched.

The warrant shall command that the place be forthwith searched, *either in day or night*, and that the objects or persons described in the warrant, if found there, be seized. An inventory shall be produced before a court having jurisdiction of the offense or over the person to be arrested for whom a warrant or process for arrest has been issued in relation to which the warrant was issued as provided in § 19.2-57.

Any such warrant as provided in this section shall be executed by the policeman or other law-enforcement officer or agent into whose hands it shall come or be delivered. If the warrant is directed jointly to a sheriff, sergeant, policeman, or law-enforcement officer or agent of the Commonwealth and a federal agent or officer as otherwise provided in this section, the warrant may be executed jointly or by the policeman, law-enforcement officer, or agent into whose hands it is delivered. No other person may be permitted to be present during or participate in the execution of a warrant to search a place except (1) the owners and occupants of the place to be searched when permitted to be present by the officer in charge of the conduct of the search and (2) persons designated by the officer in charge of the conduct of the search to assist or provide expertise in the conduct of the search.

Any search warrant for records or other information pertaining to a subscriber to, or customer of, an electronic communication service or remote computing service, whether a domestic corporation or foreign corporation, that is transacting or has transacted any business in the Commonwealth, to be executed upon such service provider may be executed within or outside the Commonwealth by hand, United States mail, commercial delivery service, facsimile, or other electronic means upon the service provider. Notwithstanding the provisions of § 19.2-57, the officer executing a warrant pursuant to this paragraph shall endorse the date of execution thereon and shall file the warrant, with the inventory attached (or a notation that no property was seized) and the accompanying affidavit, unless such affidavit was made by voice or videotape recording, within three days after the materials ordered to be produced are received by the officer from the service provider. The return shall be made in the circuit court clerk's office for the jurisdiction wherein the warrant was (A) executed, if executed within the Commonwealth, and a copy of the return shall also be delivered to the clerk of the circuit court of the county or city where the warrant was issued or (B) issued, if executed outside the Commonwealth. Saturdays, Sundays, or any federal or state legal holiday shall not be used in computing the three-day

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59 filing period.

60 Electronic communication service or remote computing service providers, whether a foreign or
61 domestic corporation, shall also provide the contents of electronic communications pursuant to a search
62 warrant issued under this section and § 19.2-70.3 using the same process described in the preceding
63 paragraph.

64 Notwithstanding the provisions of § 19.2-57, any search warrant for records or other information
65 pertaining to a customer of a financial institution as defined in § 6.2-604, money transmitter as defined
66 in § 6.2-1900, commercial business providing credit history or credit reports, or issuer as defined in
67 § 6.2-424 may be executed within the Commonwealth by hand, United States mail, commercial delivery
68 service, facsimile, or other electronic means upon the financial institution, money transmitter,
69 commercial business providing credit history or credit reports, or issuer. The officer executing such
70 warrant shall endorse the date of execution thereon and shall file the warrant, with the inventory
71 attached (or a notation that no property was seized) and the accompanying affidavit, unless such
72 affidavit was made by voice or videotape recording, within three days after the materials ordered to be
73 produced are received by the officer from the financial institution, money transmitter, commercial
74 business providing credit history or credit reports, or issuer. The return shall be made in the circuit court
75 clerk's office for the jurisdiction wherein the warrant was executed. Saturdays, Sundays, or any federal
76 or state legal holiday shall not be used in computing the three-day filing period. For the purposes of this
77 section, the warrant will be considered executed in the jurisdiction where the entity on which the
78 warrant is served is located.

79 Every search warrant shall contain the date and time it was issued. However, the failure of any such
80 search warrant to contain the date and time it was issued shall not render the warrant void, provided that
81 the date and time of issuing of said warrant is established by competent evidence.

82 The judge, magistrate, or other official authorized to issue criminal warrants shall attach a copy of
83 the affidavit required by § 19.2-54, which shall become a part of the search warrant and served
84 therewith. However, this provision shall not be applicable in any case in which the affidavit is made by
85 means of a voice or videotape recording or where the affidavit has been sealed pursuant to § 19.2-54.

86 Any search warrant not executed within 15 days after issuance thereof shall be returned to, and
87 voided by, the officer who issued such search warrant.

88 B. No law-enforcement officer shall seek, execute, or participate in the execution of a no-knock
89 search warrant, *unless authorized by a judge for good cause shown by particularized facts*. A search
90 warrant for any place of abode authorized under this section shall require that *a at least one*
91 law-enforcement officer be recognizable and identifiable as a uniformed law-enforcement officer and
92 provide audible notice of his authority and purpose reasonably designed to be heard by the occupants of
93 such place to be searched prior to the execution of such search warrant.

94 After entering and securing the place to be searched and prior to undertaking any search or seizure
95 pursuant to the search warrant, the executing law-enforcement officer shall give a copy of the search
96 warrant and affidavit to the person to be searched or the owner of the place to be searched or, if the
97 owner is not present, to any occupant of the place to be searched. If the place to be searched is
98 unoccupied, the executing law-enforcement officer shall leave a copy of the search warrant and affidavit
99 in a conspicuous place within or affixed to the place to be searched.

100 Search warrants authorized under this section for the search of any place of abode shall be executed
101 by initial entry of the abode only ~~in the daytime hours between 8:00 6:00 a.m. and 5:00 9:00 p.m.~~
102 ~~unless (i) a judge or a magistrate, if a judge is not available, authorizes the execution of such search~~
103 ~~warrant at another time for good cause shown by particularized facts in an affidavit as necessary for~~
104 ~~law-enforcement officers to obtain the objects or persons described in the warrant or in the interest of~~
105 ~~public safety or (ii) prior to the issuance of the search warrant, law-enforcement officers lawfully entered~~
106 ~~and secured the place to be searched and remained at such place continuously.~~

107 A law-enforcement officer shall make reasonable efforts to locate a judge before seeking
108 authorization to execute the warrant at another time, ~~unless circumstances require the issuance of the~~
109 ~~warrant after 5 p.m., pursuant to the provisions of this subsection, in which case the law-enforcement~~
110 ~~officer may seek such authorization from a magistrate without first making reasonable efforts to locate a~~
111 ~~judge. Such reasonable efforts shall be documented in an affidavit and submitted to a magistrate when~~
112 ~~seeking such authorization.~~

113 Any evidence obtained from a search warrant executed in violation of this subsection shall not be
114 admitted into evidence for the Commonwealth in any prosecution.

115 C. For the purposes of this section:

116 "Foreign corporation" means any corporation or other entity, whose primary place of business is
117 located outside of the boundaries of the Commonwealth, that makes a contract or engages in a terms of
118 service agreement with a resident of the Commonwealth to be performed in whole or in part by either
119 party in the Commonwealth, or a corporation that has been issued a certificate of authority pursuant to
120 § 13.1-759 to transact business in the Commonwealth. The making of the contract or terms of service

121 agreement or the issuance of a certificate of authority shall be considered to be the agreement of the
122 foreign corporation or entity that a search warrant or subpoena, which has been properly served on it,
123 has the same legal force and effect as if served personally within the Commonwealth.
124 "Properly served" means delivery of a search warrant or subpoena by hand, by United States mail, by
125 commercial delivery service, by facsimile or by any other manner to any officer of a corporation or its
126 general manager in the Commonwealth, to any natural person designated by it as agent for the service
127 of process, or if such corporation has designated a corporate agent, to any person named in the latest
128 annual report filed pursuant to § 13.1-775.