



Fiscal Impact Statement for Proposed Legislation

Virginia Criminal Sentencing Commission

Senate Bill No. 97 (Patron – Marsden)

LD#: 16103098

Date: 12/17/2015

Topic: Limitation on handgun purchases to one per month

Fiscal Impact Summary:

- **State Adult Correctional Facilities:**
None (\$0)
- **Local Adult Correctional Facilities:**
Cannot be determined
- **Adult Community Corrections Programs:**
Cannot be determined

- **Juvenile Correctional Centers:**
None (\$0) *
- **Juvenile Detention Facilities:**
None (\$0) *

* Provided by the Department of Juvenile Justice

Summary of Proposed Legislation:

The proposal amends § 18.2-308.2:2 of the *Code of Virginia* to make the purchase of more than one handgun within a 30-day period a Class 1 misdemeanor. The proposed provisions would exempt licensed firearms dealers and persons approved by the Virginia State Police following an enhanced background check and a special application process. Additionally, certain other persons enumerated within the proposal would also be exempt.

This proposal would restore the limit on the handgun purchases to one per month as well as the Class 1 misdemeanor for violation of the purchase limit, which were removed from the *Code of Virginia* by the 2012 General Assembly.

In addition to the misdemeanor offense, pursuant to § 18.2-311.2, a third or subsequent Class 1 misdemeanor weapons violation (defined in Article 4, 5, 6, or 7 of Chapter 7 of Title 18.2) is punishable a Class 6 felony.

Analysis:

According to the General District Court Case Management System (CMS) for fiscal years (FY) 2007 through FY2012, there were six misdemeanor convictions under § 18.2-308.2:2 for purchasing more than one handgun within 30 days. Five of these offenders (83.3%) were not sentenced to an active term of incarceration. One (16.7%) of the offenders was sentenced to a local-responsible (jail) term of one month.

Based on Circuit Court CMS data for the same six-year period, five offenders were convicted of a felony, pursuant to § 18.2-311.2, for purchasing more than one handgun within 30 days (for these offenders, this

was the third or subsequent misdemeanor weapons violation). The felony offense was the primary, or most serious, offense in all of the cases. Two of these offenders (40%) were not sentenced to an active term of incarceration. The remaining three offenders were sentenced to a local-responsible (jail) term, for which the median sentence was one month.

A review of FY2010-FY2015 Circuit Court CMS data for all felony convictions 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.

Impact of Proposed Legislation:

State adult correctional facilities. The proposed legislation would restore a Class 1 misdemeanor removed in 2012 to the *Code* and, thereby, expand the applicability of a Class 6 felony for a third or subsequent misdemeanor violation. Offenders convicted of the misdemeanor offense could, in the future, be convicted of a Class 6 felony under § 18.2-311.2 if they accumulate three or more weapons convictions. However, during the most recent six-year period, none of the felony offenders convicted under § 18.2-311.2 received a state-responsible (prison) sentence. Therefore, the proposal is not expected to have an impact on the prison bed space needs of the Commonwealth during the six-year projection window specified by § 30-19.1:4 for legislative impact statements.

Local adult correctional facilities. By restoring a misdemeanor offense to the *Code* and expanding the applicability of a felony, the proposal may increase local-responsible (jail) bed space needs. However, since the number of new convictions resulting from the proposal cannot be determined, the magnitude of the impact on jail beds cannot be estimated.

Adult community corrections resources. Because the proposal could result in 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 affected cannot be determined, the potential impact on community corrections cannot be quantified.

Virginia's sentencing guidelines. Virginia's sentencing guidelines do not cover misdemeanor offenses when the misdemeanor is the primary, or most serious, offense in the case. In addition, the guidelines do not cover felony violations under § 18.2-311.2 as the primary offense. However, misdemeanor convictions under § 18.2-308.2:2 and felony convictions under § 18.2-311.2 may augment the guidelines recommendation if the most serious offense at sentencing is covered by the guidelines. No adjustment to the guidelines would be necessary under the proposal.

Juvenile correctional centers. According to the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), the proposal is not expected to increase juvenile correctional center bed space needs.

Juvenile detention facilities. The Department of Juvenile Justice reports that the proposal is not expected to increase the bed space needs of juvenile detention facilities.

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 \$0 for periods of commitment to the custody of the Department of Juvenile Justice.