

## VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY — CHAPTER

*An Act to amend and reenact §§ 2.2-436, 2.2-4001, 2.2-4103, and 58.1-205 of the Code of Virginia, to amend the Code of Virginia by adding a section numbered 2.2-4103.1, and to repeal § 2.2-4008 of the Code of Virginia, relating to the Virginia Register Act; guidance documents.*

[S 916]

Approved

**Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**

**1. That §§ 2.2-436, 2.2-4001, 2.2-4103, and 58.1-205 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted and that the Code of Virginia is amended by adding a section numbered 2.2-4103.1 as follows:**

**§ 2.2-436. Approval of electronic identity standards.**

A. The Secretary of Technology, in consultation with the Secretary of Transportation, shall review and approve or disapprove, upon the recommendation of the Identity Management Standards Advisory Council pursuant to § 2.2-437, guidance documents that adopt (i) nationally recognized technical and data standards regarding the verification and authentication of identity in digital and online transactions; (ii) the minimum specifications and standards that should be included in an identity trust framework, as defined in § 59.1-550, so as to warrant liability protection pursuant to the Electronic Identity Management Act (§ 59.1-550 et seq.); and (iii) any other related data standards or specifications concerning reliance by third parties on identity credentials, as defined in § 59.1-550.

B. Final guidance documents approved pursuant to subsection A shall be posted on the Virginia Regulatory Town Hall and published in the Virginia Register of Regulations as a general notice. The Secretary of Technology shall send a copy of the final guidance documents to the Joint Commission on Administrative Rules established pursuant to § 30-73.1 at least 90 days prior to the effective date of such guidance documents. The Secretary of Technology shall also annually file a list of available guidance documents developed pursuant to this chapter pursuant to § ~~2.2-4008~~ 2.2-4103.1 of the Virginia Administrative Process Act (§ 2.2-4000 et seq.) and shall send a copy of such list to the Joint Commission on Administrative Rules.

**§ 2.2-4001. Definitions.**

As used in this chapter, unless the context requires a different meaning:

"Agency" means any authority, instrumentality, officer, board or other unit of the state government empowered by the basic laws to make regulations or decide cases.

"Agency action" means either an agency's regulation or case decision or both, any violation, compliance, or noncompliance with which could be a basis for the imposition of injunctive orders, penal or civil sanctions of any kind, or the grant or denial of relief or of a license, right, or benefit by any agency or court.

"Basic law" or "basic laws" means provisions of the Constitution and statutes of the Commonwealth authorizing an agency to make regulations or decide cases or containing procedural requirements therefor.

"Case" or "case decision" means any agency proceeding or determination that, under laws or regulations at the time, a named party as a matter of past or present fact, or of threatened or contemplated private action, either is, is not, or may or may not be (i) in violation of such law or regulation or (ii) in compliance with any existing requirement for obtaining or retaining a license or other right or benefit.

"Guidance document" means any document developed by a state agency or staff that provides information or guidance of general applicability to the staff or public to interpret or implement statutes or the agency's rules or regulations, excluding agency minutes or documents that pertain only to the internal management of agencies. Nothing in this definition shall be construed or interpreted to expand the identification or release of any document otherwise protected by law.

"Hearing" means agency processes other than those informational or factual inquiries of an informal nature provided in §§ 2.2-4007.01 and 2.2-4019 and includes only (i) opportunity for private parties to submit factual proofs in formal proceedings as provided in § 2.2-4009 in connection with the making of regulations or (ii) a similar right of private parties or requirement of public agencies as provided in § 2.2-4020 in connection with case decisions.

"Hearing officer" means an attorney selected from a list maintained by the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court in accordance with § 2.2-4024.

"Public assistance and social services programs" means those programs specified in § 63.2-100.

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"Registrar" means the Registrar of Regulations appointed as provided in § 2.2-4102.

"Rule" or "regulation" means any statement of general application, having the force of law, affecting the rights or conduct of any person, adopted by an agency in accordance with the authority conferred on it by applicable basic laws.

"Subordinate" means (i) one or more but less than a quorum of the members of a board constituting an agency, (ii) one or more of its staff members or employees, or (iii) any other person or persons designated by the agency to act in its behalf.

"Virginia Register of Regulations" means the publication issued under the provisions of Article 6 (§ 2.2-4031 et seq.).

"Virginia Regulatory Town Hall" means the website operated by the Department of Planning and Budget, which has online public comment forums and displays information about regulatory actions under consideration in the Commonwealth and sends this information to registered public users.

**§ 2.2-4103. Agencies to file regulations with Registrar; other duties; failure to file.**

It shall be the duty of every agency to have on file with the Registrar the full text of all of its currently operative regulations, together with the dates of adoption, revision, publication, or amendment thereof and such additional information requested by the Commission or the Registrar for the purpose of publishing the Virginia Register of Regulations and the Virginia Administrative Code. Thereafter, coincidentally with the issuance thereof, each agency shall from day to day so file, date, and supplement all new regulations and amendments, repeals, or additions to its previously filed regulations. The filed regulations shall (i) indicate the laws they implement or carry out, (ii) designate any prior regulations repealed, modified, or supplemented, (iii) state any special effective or terminal dates, and (iv) be accompanied by a statement or certification, either in original or electronic form, that the regulations are full, true, and correctly dated. No regulation or amendment or repeal thereof shall be effective until filed with the Registrar.

Orders condemning or closing any shellfish, finfish or crustacea growing area and the shellfish, finfish or crustacea located thereon pursuant to Article 2 (§ 28.2-803 et seq.) of Chapter 8, of Title 28.2, which are exempt from the requirements of the Administrative Process Act (§ 2.2-4000 et seq.) as provided in subsection B of § 2.2-4002, shall be effective on the date specified by the promulgating agency. Such orders shall continue to be filed with the Registrar either before or after their effective dates in order to satisfy the need for public availability of information respecting the regulations of state agencies.

An order setting a date of closure for the Chesapeake Bay purse seine fishery for Atlantic menhaden for reduction purposes pursuant to § 28.2-1000.2, which is exempt from the requirements of the Administrative Process Act as provided by subsection A of § 2.2-4002, shall be effective on the date specified. Such orders shall be filed with the Registrar for prompt publication.

In addition, each agency shall itself (i) maintain a complete list of all of its currently operative regulations for public consultation, (ii) make available to public inspection a complete file of the full texts of all such regulations, and (iii) allow public copying thereof or make copies available either without charge, at cost, or on payment of a reasonable fee. Each agency shall also maintain as a public record a complete file of its regulations that have been superseded on and after June 1, 1975.

It shall be the duty of every agency to annually file with the Registrar for publication in the Virginia Register of Regulations a list of any guidance documents upon which the agency currently relies. The filing shall be made on or before January 1 of each year in a format to be developed by the Registrar. Each agency shall also (i) maintain a complete list of all of its currently operative guidance documents and make such list available for public inspection; (ii) make available for public inspection the full texts of all such guidance documents to the extent such inspection is permitted by law; and (iii) upon request, make copies of such lists or guidance documents available without charge, at cost, or on payment of a reasonable fee.

Where regulations adopt textual matter by reference to publications other than the Federal Register or Code of Federal Regulations, the agency shall (i) file with the Registrar copies of the referenced publications, (ii) state on the face of or as notations to regulations making such adoptions by reference the places where copies of the referred publications may be procured, and (iii) make copies of such referred publications available for public inspection and copying along with its other regulations.

Unless he finds that there are special circumstances requiring otherwise, the Governor, in addition to the exercise of his authority to see that the laws are faithfully executed, may, until compliance with this chapter is achieved, withhold the payment of compensation or expenses of any officer or employee of any agency in whole or part whenever the Commission certifies to him that the agency has failed to comply with this section or this chapter in stated respects, to respond promptly to the requests of the Registrar, or to comply with the regulations of the Commission.

**§ 2.2-4103.1. Guidance documents; duty to file with Registrar.**

A. For the purposes of this section, "agency" means any authority, instrumentality, officer, board, or

other unit of the government of the Commonwealth other than the General Assembly, courts, municipal corporations, counties, other local or regional governmental authorities including sanitary or other districts and joint state-federal, interstate or intermunicipal authorities, the Virginia Resources Authority, the Virginia Code Commission with respect to minor changes made under the provisions of § 30-150, and educational institutions operated by the Commonwealth with respect to regulations that pertain to (i) their academic affairs; (ii) the selection, tenure, promotion, and disciplining of faculty and employees; (iii) the selection of students; and (iv) rules of conduct and disciplining of students.

B. It shall be the duty of every agency to annually file with the Registrar for publication in the Virginia Register of Regulations a list of any guidance documents upon which the agency currently relies. The filing shall be made on or before January 1 of each year in a format to be developed by the Registrar. Each agency shall also (i) maintain a complete list of all of its currently operative guidance documents and make the list available for public inspection, (ii) make available for public inspection the full texts of all guidance documents to the extent inspection is permitted by law, and (iii) upon request, make copies of such lists or guidance documents available without charge, at cost, or upon payment of a reasonable fee.

C. Nothing in this section is intended to nor shall it confer or impose any regulatory authority upon an agency, nor shall this section create any rights to appeal or challenge a guidance document adopted by an agency.

**§ 58.1-205. Effect of regulations, rulings, etc., and administrative interpretations.**

In any proceeding relating to the interpretation or enforcement of the tax laws of this Commonwealth, the following rules shall apply:

1. Any assessment of a tax by the Department shall be deemed prima facie correct.  
2. Any regulation promulgated as provided by subsection B of § 58.1-203 shall be sustained unless unreasonable or plainly inconsistent with applicable provisions of law.

3. Rulings issued in conformity with § 58.1-203, tax bulletins, guidelines, and other documents published as provided in § 58.1-204, and guidance documents listed in the Virginia Register of Regulations as provided in §§ ~~2.2-4008~~ and ~~2.2-4103~~ § 2.2-4103.1 shall be accorded judicial notice.

4. In any proceeding commenced under § 58.1-1821, 58.1-1824 or 58.1-1825, rulings and administrative interpretations other than those described in subdivisions 2 and 3 shall not be admitted into evidence and shall be accorded no weight, except that an assessment made pursuant to any such ruling or interpretation shall be entitled to the presumption of correctness specified in subdivision 1.

**2. That § 2.2-4008 of the Code of Virginia is repealed.**