



Fiscal Impact Statement for Proposed Legislation

Virginia Criminal Sentencing Commission

House Bill No. 2360 Amendment in the Nature of a Substitute (Patron – Webert)

LD#: 23105395

Date: 01/26/2023

Topic: Use or display of a firearm in commission of a felony

Fiscal Impact Summary:

- **State Adult Correctional Facilities:**
\$48,346 (1 bed)
- **Local Adult Correctional Facilities:**
None (\$0)
- **Adult Community Corrections Programs:**
None (\$0)

- **Juvenile Direct Care:**
Cannot be determined*
- **Juvenile Detention Facilities:**
Cannot be determined*

*Provided by the Department of Juvenile Justice

Summary of Proposed Legislation:

Currently, under § 18.2-53.1, using a firearm in the commission of certain felonies carries a three-year mandatory minimum term of incarceration for the first offense, while a second or subsequent offense carries a five-year mandatory term. These mandatory terms must run consecutively with any punishment received for the primary or triggering felony.

Under the proposal, the mandatory minimum for a second or subsequent offense would increase from five to ten years.

Analysis:

According to fiscal year (FY) 2021 and FY2022 Circuit Court Case Management System (CMS) data, 54 offenders were convicted of a completed felony for using a firearm during the commission of certain felonies as a second or subsequent offense in violation of § 18.2-53.1. The firearm conviction was most frequently accompanied by a robbery, felony assault, or murder conviction.

Impact of Proposed Legislation:

State adult correctional facilities. By increasing existing mandatory minimum penalty for a second or subsequent offense under § 18.2-53.1, the proposal is expected to increase the state-responsible (prison) bed space needs of the Commonwealth. Raising the mandatory minimum term from five to ten years for a second or subsequent conviction under this section is expected to increase bed space needs by approximately one bed by FY2029. Pursuant to § 30-19.1:4, the estimated amount of the necessary appropriation is \$ 48,346. The majority of the impact would occur beyond the six-year forecast window required by § 30-19.1:4.

Estimated Six-Year Impact in State-Responsible (Prison) Beds

FY24	FY25	FY26	FY27	FY28	FY29
0	0	0	0	0	1

Local adult correctional facilities. The proposal is not expected to impact the need for local-responsible (jail) beds, since offenders who are currently convicted of a completed offense under § 18.2-53.1 must be sentenced to a state-responsible (prison) term.

Adult community corrections resources. The proposal is not expected to increase the need for community corrections resources and will delay the need for services for some offenders affected by the proposal, as they will stay in prison longer prior to being released to the community.

Virginia's Sentencing Guidelines. Convictions under § 18.2-53.1 are covered by the Sentencing Guidelines when this offense is the primary, or most serious, offense in a case. In any case in which the Guidelines recommended range is less than the mandatory minimum sentence required by law, the mandatory minimum sentence takes precedence over the Guidelines. No adjustment to the Guidelines would be necessary under the proposal.

Juvenile direct care. According to the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), 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 is \$48,346 for periods of imprisonment in state adult correctional facilities and cannot be determined for periods of commitment to the custody of the Department of Juvenile Justice.

Assumptions underlying the analysis include:

General Assumptions

1. State and local responsibility is based on § 53.1-20 as analyzed for the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security's Committee on Offender Population Forecasting in 2022.
2. New cases resulting in state-responsible sentences were based on forecasts developed by the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security's Committee on Offender Population Forecasting and approved in 2022.
3. Cost per prison bed was assumed to be \$48,958 per year as provided by the Department of Planning and Budget to the Commission pursuant to § 30-19.1:4. *Where the estimated bed space impact included a portion (or fraction) of a bed, a prorated cost was included in the estimated amount of necessary appropriation.*

Assumptions relating to offenders

1. Analysis includes all cases involving a completed for a second or subsequent offense under § 18.2-53.1 as the primary (most serious) offense in the case or as an additional offense to a more serious felony.

Assumptions relating to sentencing and time served

1. The impact of the proposed legislation, assumed to be effective on July 1, 2023, is phased in to account for case processing time.
2. It was assumed that all eligible offenders under §18.2-53.1 would be sentenced to the proposed mandatory minimum term of imprisonment that would run consecutively with any other sentence upon a conviction as proposed. Identified offenders who received sentences less than the proposed mandatory minimums were assumed to serve the mandatory minimum term specified in the proposal. Offenders currently receiving sentences exceeding the proposed mandatory minimum were assumed to be unaffected by the proposed legislation.

3. The state-responsible bed-space impact was derived by estimating the difference between expected dates of release under current law and under the proposed legislation. Release dates were estimated based on the average rates at which inmates in Department of Corrections' facilities were earning sentence credits as of February 28, 2020. At that time, felons could earn a maximum of 4.5 days for every 30 days served. Beginning July 1, 2022, most nonviolent felons were eligible for higher rates of earned sentence credits (up to 15 days for every 30 days served). Violent felons continue to earn a maximum of 4.5 days for every 30 days served. For affected offenders sentenced during the forecast horizon, the overall average rate of sentence credits earned by these individuals was estimated to be 8.1% of the total sentence.

Limitations

1. The analysis does not include cases from Alexandria as data from that jurisdiction are unavailable.

firearm46_5395