

Department of Planning and Budget
2026 General Assembly Session
State Fiscal Impact Statement

This proposal would increase the interaction that most prosecutors would have regarding the use of confidential informants in criminal investigations. That is primarily because a “confidential informant” is not defined in this amended code section and thus a court would apply the plain meaning of the terms. “Confidential” means “intended for or restricted to the use of a particular person, group or class.” “Informant” means “a person who gives information to another.” Thus, a “confidential informant” is anyone who gives information that is only intended to be used by the recipient of that information. This definition would cover a range of persons, from a criminal defendant who passes information to law enforcement in hopes of a better plea deal to any person who is an anonymous witness to a crime. Under this proposal, a confidential informant is not simply one who conducts controlled purchases of controlled substances. The bill would require prosecutors to learn if any person who wished to remain anonymous was on probation and notify that person’s probation officer.

The Virginia Commonwealth’s Attorneys’ Services Council (CASC) expects that it would take 30 minutes of attorney work, on average, per case involving an informant to verify whether or not the informant was on probation, pretrial, or not, notify the probation, pretrial services, or parole office if applicable, determine if the informant had recent convictions or violations related to the use of controlled substances, and finally approve the use of the informant. CASC estimates that true “confidential informants” (i.e. a person who is receiving a benefit in exchange for his work with law enforcement) have some level of involvement in approximately 10% of felony drug cases as the law exists currently. However, due to the expanded definition of “informant” under this bill, CASC estimates that 20% of cases would feature an “informant” in some capacity (including a citizen calling in with a “tip” to law enforcement). Thus, the average number of informant cases per year would be 2,721 cases. At 2,721 cases per year, with 30 minutes per case, the bill would likely create an additional 1,360 work hours. However, the fiscal impact of the engrossed bill on Commonwealth’s Attorneys is indeterminate at this time.

Other: None