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SENATE BILL NO. 643

AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE

(Proposed by the Joint Conference Committee

on March 14, 2026)

(Patron Prior to Substitute—Senator Surovell)

A BILL to amend and reenact § 18.2-308.7 of the Code of Virginia, relating to possession or transportation of certain firearms by certain persons; penalty.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That § 18.2-308.7 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 18.2-308.7. Possession, transportation, or purchase of certain firearms by certain persons; penalty.

A. For the purposes of this section:

"Assault firearm" means any (i) semi-automatic centerfire rifle or handgun that expels single or multiple projectiles by action of an explosion of a combustible material and is equipped at the time of the offense with a magazine that will hold more than 20 rounds of ammunition or designed by the manufacturer to accommodate a silencer or equipped with a folding stock or (ii) shotgun with a magazine that will hold more than seven rounds of the longest ammunition for which it is chambered.

"Handgun" means any pistol, revolver, or other firearm originally designed, made, and intended to fire single or multiple projectiles by means of an explosion of a combustible material from one or more barrels when held in one hand.

B. It shall be unlawful for any person under younger than 18 years of age to knowingly and intentionally possess or transport a handgun or assault firearm anywhere in the Commonwealth. For the purposes of this section, "handgun" means any pistol or revolver or other firearm originally designed, made and intended to fire single or multiple projectiles by means of an explosion of a combustible material from one or more barrels when held in one hand and "assault firearm" means any (i) semi-automatic centerfire rifle or pistol which expels single or multiple projectiles by action of an explosion of a combustible material and is equipped at the time of the offense with a magazine which will hold more than 20 rounds of ammunition or designed by the manufacturer to accommodate a silencer or equipped with a folding stock or (ii) shotgun with a magazine which will hold more than seven rounds of the longest ammunition for which it is chambered. A violation of this section shall be a Class 1 misdemeanor.

C. It is unlawful for any person younger than 21 years of age to knowingly and intentionally purchase a handgun or assault firearm anywhere in the Commonwealth.

D. A violation of this section is a Class 1 misdemeanor.

~~This section~~ E. The provisions of subsection B shall not apply to:

1. Any person ~~(i) while in his home or on his property;~~ (ii) while present in the his home or on the property of his parent, grandparent, or legal guardian; ~~or (iii) while on the property of another who has provided prior permission;~~ and with the prior permission possessing the firearm with the consent of his parent, grandparent, or legal guardian if the person has the landowner's written permission on his person while on such property who owns such firearm;

2. Any person who, while accompanied by an adult at least 21 years of age, is present at; ~~or going to and from;~~ a lawful shooting range or firearms educational class; provided that the weapons are unloaded while being transported;

3. Any person who, while accompanied by an adult at least 21 years of age, is actually engaged in lawful hunting ~~or going to and from a hunting area or preserve;~~ provided that the weapons are unloaded while being transported; and

4. Any person while engaged in official training or carrying out his duties ~~in~~ as a law-enforcement officer or as a member of the Armed Forces of the United States or the National Guard of ~~this~~ the Commonwealth or any other state;

5. Any cadet who is participating in training, competitive, or ceremonial activities as a member of the Corps of Cadets or the Reserve Officers' Training Corps at a public institution of higher education; and

6. Any active duty law-enforcement officer in the course of his duties or an active participant in a Trooper Basic Academy Session administered by the Virginia State Police.

2. That the provisions of this act may result in a net increase in periods of imprisonment or commitment. Pursuant to § 30-19.1:4 of the Code of Virginia, the estimated amount of the necessary appropriation cannot be determined for periods of imprisonment in state adult correctional facilities; therefore, Chapter 725 of the Acts of Assembly of 2025 requires the Virginia Criminal Sentencing Commission to assign a minimum fiscal impact of \$50,000. Pursuant to § 30-19.1:4 of the Code of Virginia, the estimated amount of the necessary appropriation cannot be determined for periods of commitment to the custody of the Department of Juvenile Justice.