



Fiscal Impact Statement for Proposed Legislation

Virginia Criminal Sentencing Commission

House Bill 1524 Amendment in the Nature of a Substitute Proposed by the Governor (Patron Prior to Substitute — McGuire)

LD#: 26110168

Date: 04/07/2026

Topic: Carrying certain firearms in public areas

Fiscal Impact Summary:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State Adult Correctional Facilities: \$50,000* • Local Adult Correctional Facilities: Cannot be determined • Adult Community Corrections Programs: Cannot be determined 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Juvenile Direct Care: Cannot be determined** • Juvenile Detention Facilities: Cannot be determined** <p>**Provided by the Department of Juvenile Justice</p>
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* 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, fiscal impact statements prepared by the Virginia Criminal Sentencing Commission only include the estimated increase in operating costs associated with additional state-responsible prison beds and do not reflect any other costs or savings that may be associated with the proposed legislation.

Summary of Proposed Legislation:

The proposal expands § 18.2-287.4 of the *Code of Virginia* to prohibit the carrying of assault firearms in any public place. The proposal provides that the prohibition applies to an assault firearm as defined in § 18.2-308.2:2 regardless of whether such firearm is loaded or unloaded. The proposal specifies that any member of a cadet corps who is recognized by a public institution of higher education would be exempted from the prohibition if such member is in the performance of sanctioned military training or is participating in an official ceremonial event for the Commonwealth. The proposal also specifies that law-enforcement officers would be exempted from the prohibition when they are engaged in the performance of their official duties. Lastly, the proposal also removes the exemptions for licensed security guards, the persons with valid concealed handgun permits, and any retired law-enforcement officer pursuant to § 18.2-308.016 provided in current *Code*.

Currently, under § 18.2-287.4, it is a Class 1 misdemeanor for a person to carry a loaded semi-automatic firearm with specified features and equipped with a magazine that holds more than 20 rounds, or a shotgun with a magazine that will hold more than seven rounds, in public areas in the cities of Alexandria, Chesapeake, Fairfax, Falls Church, Newport News, Norfolk, Richmond, or Virginia Beach or in the counties of Arlington, Fairfax, Henrico, Loudoun, or Prince William.

The proposal expands the existing Class 1 misdemeanor to include additional types of firearms, places, circumstances, and all Virginia localities. Pursuant to § 18.2-311.2, a third or subsequent Class 1 misdemeanor weapon violation (defined in Article 4, 5, 6, or 7 of Chapter 7 of Title 18.2) is punishable as a Class 6 felony.¹

Analysis:

Existing databases do not provide sufficient detail to identify the number of new convictions likely to result from enactment of the proposal.

According to fiscal year (FY) 2020 through FY2025 General District Court Case Management System (CMS) data, 462 offenders were convicted of a Class 1 misdemeanor under §18.2-287.4 for carrying a loaded firearm into a prohibited area. The Class 1 misdemeanor violation of §18.2-287.4 was the most serious offense in all but one case. Of these offenders, the majority (68.5%) did not receive an active term of incarceration to serve. The median sentence for the 31.5% who were sentenced to a local-responsible (jail) term was one month.

Offenders convicted of the affected Class 1 misdemeanor who accumulate three or more weapon convictions could be found guilty of a Class 6 felony under § 18.2-311.2. According to Circuit Court CMS data for the same six-year period, 12 offenders were convicted of a felony under § 18.2-311.2 for a third or subsequent weapon offense. The felony violation of § 18.2-311.2 was the primary, or most serious, offense for six offenders; of these, one offender (16.7%) did not receive an active term of incarceration to serve after sentencing, two offenders (33.3%) were given jail terms of 6 and 11 months, and the remaining three offenders (50.0%) received state-responsible (prison) terms of 1 year, 1.3 years, and 1.5 years.

Impact of Proposed Legislation:

State adult correctional facilities. By expanding the applicability of an existing Class 6 felony, the proposal may increase the future state-responsible (prison) bed space needs of the Commonwealth. Available data do not provide sufficient details to estimate the number of new felony convictions that may result from the proposal; therefore, the magnitude of the impact on prison bed space needs cannot be determined.

Local adult correctional facilities. Similarly, by expanding the applicability of existing offenses, the proposal may increase local-responsible (jail) bed space needs. Because the number of new convictions resulting from the proposal cannot be determined, the magnitude of the impact on jail beds cannot be quantified.

Adult community corrections programs. 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 that may be affected cannot be determined, the potential impact on community corrections resources cannot be estimated.

Virginia's Sentencing Guidelines. Convictions under §18.2-311.2 are not covered by the Guidelines as the primary (or most serious) offense. Such a conviction could augment the Guidelines recommendation (as an additional offense) if the most serious offense at sentencing is covered by the Guidelines. This offense is not defined as violent under §17.1-805(C) for the purposes of the Guidelines. No adjustment to the Guidelines would be necessary under the proposal.

¹ Under current law, the felony offense defined in § 18.2-311.2 is eligible for the enhanced sentence credits specified in § 53.1-202.3, whereby offenders will serve a minimum of 67% of the sentence ordered by the court. The proposed legislation does not change the earned sentence credits available to offenders convicted of this felony.

Juvenile direct care. According to the Department of Juvenile Justice, 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 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, the estimated amount of the necessary appropriation cannot be determined for periods of commitment to the custody of the Department of Juvenile Justice.

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