Pursuant to Article V, Section 6, of the Constitution of Virginia, I veto House Bill 454/ Senate Bill 383, which criminalizes an individual’s possession of a firearm in a building owned or operated by a public institution of higher education.

While I am committed to ensuring well-secured and safe college campuses in Virginia, this legislation does not adequately consider the numerous variations in Virginia's diverse geographic, cultural, and societal norms across different regions of the Commonwealth.

The Boards of Visitors at Virginia's institutions of higher education already have the authority to regulate their respective campuses, including implementing firearms prohibitions. This allows for consideration of the differences across regions and students' unique circumstances.

Accordingly, I veto this bill.

Pursuant to Article V, Section 6, of the Constitution of Virginia, I veto House Bill 585, which criminalizes home-based firearm dealers who maintain their place of business at their residence within one and a half miles of an elementary or middle school.

By all appearances, this legislation targets one individual in Prince William County, to whom the Prince William Board of County Supervisors granted a home-based firearms license.

The legislation's specificity, coupled with the circumstances preceding its passage, comprises a bill of attainder. Consequently, it is unconstitutional under Virginia's Bill of Rights.

Home-based firearm dealers are already subject to comprehensive federal, state, and local regulations. The imposition of this restriction on a lawful commercial activity appears unconstitutional, retaliatory, and arbitrary.

Accordingly, I veto this bill.

Pursuant to Article V, Section 6, of the Constitution of Virginia, I veto House Bill 637, which directs the Department of Criminal Justice programs to create a Substantial Risk Order Training Program.

This initiative duplicates existing training provided by the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) to various constituent groups across the Commonwealth upon request. Moreover, the Firearm Violence Intervention and Prevention Fund already permits the utilization of grant funds to support safe firearm removal practices for individuals prohibited from possessing a firearm.

The substantial risk order law became effective in Virginia on July 1, 2020, prompting the General Assembly to create a full-time position at DCJS to oversee statewide risk order training and implementation. DCJS has since been actively conducting risk order training to offer instruction on the law, procedures, and recommendations for best practices from law enforcement.

In addition, $500,000 was allocated in 2021 for DCJS to establish a grant program funding substantial risk order training for localities. However, due to a lack of interest, the fund carried significant balances at the end of the fiscal year and was recommended to be discontinued in the proposed Budget by the preceding Governor.

Accordingly, I veto this bill.

Pursuant to Article V, Section 6, of the Constitution of Virginia, I veto House Bill 797, which amends the requirements for concealed handgun permits.

This legislation prohibits recognized and widely accepted firearm safety and training courses from being valid for evidence of demonstrated competence in firearms safety for obtaining a concealed handgun permit or training minors in pneumatic gun use. Consequently, this change could compromise Virginians' safety and increase the likelihood of individuals circumventing these requirements.

This legislation would necessitate the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) to become the exclusive certifying agency for courses essential to prove competence for obtaining a concealed handgun permit. However, DCJS primarily serves as a criminal justice agency, and its firearm training and safety courses are tailored for that specific purpose, not addressing the broader needs of the general public.

Additionally, the new requirements establish barriers to determining competency, introducing bureaucratic obstacles that impede an individual's right to self-defense.

This additional government approval process, funded by taxpayer dollars, is despite the established effectiveness of existing certifications currently available.

Accordingly, I veto this bill.

Pursuant to Article V, Section 6, of the Constitution of Virginia, I veto House Bill 799, which requires fingerprints to be submitted with an application for a concealed handgun permit or a renewal of such a permit.

This legislation targets individuals already subject to background checks and mandatory training, creating superfluous and onerous restrictions on responsible citizens exercising their Second Amendment right to self-defense. Despite an existing comprehensive instant background check system, this proposal would include an additional and redundant step in the concealed carry permit process.

Moreover, while the legislation mandates the destruction of fingerprints collected by the Commonwealth during the application process, the Federal Bureau of Investigation retains these fingerprints for the individual's lifetime. This record retention raises legitimate concerns regarding the privacy and civil liberties of those seeking to exercise their Second Amendment rights.

In 2012, in a bipartisan effort, the General Assembly repealed the local option to mandate fingerprints for a concealed handgun permit, recognizing the diminishing relevance of such requirements. This sensible shift is overshadowed in the current hyper-partisan climate, especially considering that concealed carry permit holders are known for being law-abiding citizens in the Commonwealth.

Accordingly, I veto this bill.

Pursuant to Article V, Section 6, of the Constitution of Virginia, I veto Senate Bill 491/ House Bill 318, which relates to civil penalties for firearm industry members.

The federal Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act (PLCAA) already provides a framework for addressing civil actions against firearms industry entities concerning negligent entrustment and defects. This federal law, grounded in common sense and common law principles, prevents baseless litigation that could financially devastate a lawful industry with exorbitant legal fees. Other lawful industries, such as vaccine producers, have similar protections.

Even under Presidents Obama and Biden, the Department of Justice has consistently defended the PLCAA. The DOJ has argued against attempts by states to implement regulatory schemes as a loophole to the PLCAA, deeming them unconstitutional and lacking merit.

Our legal system should prioritize punishing criminals rather than targeting law-abiding manufacturers and retailers within the firearms industry.

Accordingly, I veto this bill.

Pursuant to Article V, Section 6, of the Constitution of Virginia, I veto House Bill 466, relating reciprocity with other states regarding concealed handgun permits.

Virginia’s current system of concealed handgun permit reciprocity works. The Commonwealth recognizes valid concealed weapon permits issued by other states that meet certain conditions, and a sizeable majority of other states recognize Virginia’s concealed handgun permits.

The proposed legislation, however, targets law-abiding Virginia gun owners by restricting the number of states in which permit holders can carry handguns for self-defense, potentially discouraging gun owners from visiting the Commonwealth.

In 2015, the previous Attorney General unilaterally revoked concealed handgun permit reciprocity with twenty-five other states, using a law similar to the proposed legislation.

A few months later, the General Assembly came together in a bipartisan effort to restrict the previous Attorney General's authority in revoking permits. The agreement addressed limitations on firearm possession during protective orders, implemented heightened background checks at gun shows, and demonstrated bipartisan unity in navigating the complexities of firearm ownership and its effects on public safety.

Accordingly, I veto this bill.

Pursuant to Article V, Section 6, of the Constitution of Virginia, I veto Senate Bill 258, which relates to risk factors and considerations for substantial risk orders.

The legislation treats the Second Amendment as a secondary right compared to other constitutional guarantees, and the proposed expansion of substantial risk orders is excessively broad and overreaching.

Accordingly, I veto this bill.

Pursuant to Article V, Section 6, of the Constitution of Virginia, I veto Senate Bill 273/ House Bill 1195, which requires a waiting period to purchase a firearm.

The proposed waiting periods would impede individuals facing threats of violence from promptly acquiring a firearm for self-defense.

Virginia’s existing background check ensures that individuals prohibited by State or Federal law cannot legally access firearms. The Virginia State Police use federal and state records and databases, including the Central Criminal Records Exchange, one of the most complete records repositories in the nation.

My commitment to enhancing mental health services is steadfast, reflected in my efforts and record funding to finalize long-neglected mental health systems. These initiatives aim to assist those undergoing mental health crises when an individual needs it most, a reform that is proven to save lives.

The federal Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act of 1993 initially implemented a five-day waiting period between handgun application and sale completion before being found to be unconstitutional.

Accordingly, I veto this bill.

Pursuant to Article V, Section 6, of the Constitution of Virginia, I veto Senate Bill 368/ House Bill 183, which relates to the storage of firearms where a minor or person prohibiting a firearm is present.

This legislation would limit individuals' access to firearms in their homes.

A similar law was deemed unconstitutional in District of Columbia v. Heller. The court ruled that mandates on storage or trigger locks that make it impractical for citizens to use firearms for the lawful purpose of self-defense are unconstitutional.

The proposed language could prove problematic in cases of necessary home defense when firearm access may be crucial. Further, it would completely disarm individuals who cannot afford a storage device. While the intent may not be to strip the poorest Virginians of their right to self-defense, the proposal would price them out of the market for a fundamental right.

The suggested exemption for carrying weapons is impractical, for example, while sleeping or doing household chores. This exemption leaves individuals with only one option for self-defense; such a requirement would lead to law-abiding Virginians carrying their weapons irresponsibly and dangerously.

Accordingly, I veto this bill.

Pursuant to Article V, Section 6, of the Constitution of Virginia, I veto Senate Bill 447/ House Bill 1462, which relates to firearms in motor vehicles.

The proposal penalizes law-abiding Virginians for leaving a firearm in their vehicle, regardless of any other circumstances, punishing victims of crimes committed by another individual.

The culpability is on the criminal who stole the firearm. The Commonwealth should prioritize prosecution and severe punishment for individuals who commit crimes.

Accordingly, I veto this bill.

Pursuant to Article V, Section 6, of the Constitution of Virginia, I veto House Bill 939, which prohibits possession of a firearm within 100 feet of locations used for certain voting-related and elections-related activities.

Current law prohibits possessing a firearm within forty feet of the entrance to a polling place. Additionally, the act of brandishing a weapon is already a criminal offense.

This legislation proposes intricate time-and-place restrictions on carrying firearms, potentially turning law-abiding citizens into unintentional criminals if they are unaware of the presence of a ballot drop-off box or an electoral board meeting.

The expanded election-related restrictions would necessitate individuals to navigate around various locations permanently, regardless of their purpose in the area; moreover, on specific days and during designated hours, they would be obligated to avoid an extended list of locations to avoid legal consequences. These restrictions could be in effect for up to forty-five days in some years and one hundred thirty-five days or more in others.

Accordingly, I veto this bill.

Pursuant to Article V, Section 6, of the Constitution of Virginia, I veto Senate Bill 338, which directs the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) to study the social, physical, emotional, and economic health effects of gun violence.

The Commonwealth has also made great strides in addressing crimes committed with firearms by establishing programs such as the Operation Ceasefire Grant Fund to implement proven methods such as gang reduction programs, funding state and local law enforcement, and supporting nonprofits engaged in group violence intervention.

The Office of Safer Communities also supports community-based strategies to address community violence's root causes through evidence-informed strategies, such as afterschool programs, mentorships, and strategies to build trust between law enforcement and the community. Additionally, the Virginia Firearm Violence Intervention and Prevention Fund provides resources for violence intervention programs in localities with disproportionate firearm-related homicides.

Contrary to the historical objectivity and nonpartisanship of JLARC, the proposal would expand the use of studies based on political beliefs. It is troubling that the proposal also makes no mention of criminology or requires JLARC to look at the benefits of self-defense that firearm ownership can provide.

Accordingly, I veto this bill.

Pursuant to Article V, Section 6, of the Constitution of Virginia, I veto Senate Bill 99/House Bill 175, prohibiting the carrying of assault firearms in public areas.

Current law already prohibits brandishing a firearm in a manner that reasonably induces fear in another person or holding a firearm in a public place that creates a reasonable fear of violence.

The proposed legislation prohibits carrying a broad category of commonly used firearms in various public spaces, including streets, roads, sidewalks, parks, and other public areas. Such a prohibition is unconstitutional as it attempts to restrict widely embraced firearms used for lawful purposes like self-defense.

Accordingly, I veto this bill.

Pursuant to Article V, Section 6, of the Constitution of Virginia, I veto Senate Bill 327/House Bill 1174, relating to age requirements for purchasing or transferring certain firearms.

The proposed legislation prohibits any individual under the age of twenty-one from purchasing a handgun or assault firearm, two broad categories of commonly used firearms.

Of particular importance is the basic principle that the constitutionally protected right to possess a firearm is meaningless absent the right to purchase or otherwise acquire the firearm, a necessary corollary to the realization of rights guaranteed by the Second Amendment.

Recently, the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia ruled that a federal law prohibiting the sale of firearms to adults under the age of twenty-one would be found unconstitutional under the Supreme Court’s ruling in *Bruen*. The Court stated, “[i]f the Court were to exclude 18-to-20-year-olds from the Second Amendment’s protection, it would impose limitations on the Second Amendment that do not exist with other constitutional guarantee.”

Accordingly, I veto this bill.

Pursuant to Article V, Section 6, of the Constitution of Virginia, I veto House Bill 798, relating to the purchase, possession, or transportation of a firearm following a misdemeanor conviction of assault and battery or stalking.

Individuals convicted of felonious assault and battery or subsequent instances of stalking already automatically lose their firearms rights.

Despite Virginians already having mechanisms in place for disarming individuals deemed dangerous, such as through protective orders, the proposed legislation seeks to remove a constitutional right for misdemeanor offenses.

Accordingly, I veto this bill.

Pursuant to Article V, Section 6, of the Constitution of Virginia, I veto House Bill 362/Senate Bill 642, which relates to the purchase, possession, or transportation of a firearm following a misdemeanor conviction of assault and battery.

I join the patrons in their pursuit of condemning domestic abuse; it is unequivocally deplorable. Virginia should ensure that convicted domestic abusers are dealt with appropriately and those who resort to illegal firearm use, especially, should face severe and harsh punishments. To that end, Virginia already has mechanisms for disarming dangerous individuals, such as through protective orders.

Individuals convicted of felony assault and battery already automatically lose their firearm rights. This proposal, however, aims to extend the prohibition of firearm possession for misdemeanors beyond existing restrictions for family and household members. It would now encompass a vaguely defined category of intimate partners without an objective standard.

Additionally, changing the definition of family or household member has far-reaching effects, such as the jurisdiction of juvenile and domestic courts, petitions for relief of custody, and whom a court may prohibit contact with following a conviction for recruitment for criminal street gangs.

Accordingly, I veto this bill.

Pursuant to Article V, Section 6, of the Constitution of Virginia, I veto House Bill 2/Senate Bill 2, which creates new penalties for transferring and possessing certain firearms containing certain components.

The Constitution precludes the Commonwealth from prohibiting a broad category of firearms widely embraced for lawful purposes, such as self-defense. Despite this, certain members of the General Assembly have pursued legislation banning most contemporary semiautomatic firearms and specific ammunition-feeding devices.

Like all Virginians, I am profoundly troubled by the occurrences of mass shootings and crimes committed with firearms. The pain and sorrow inflicted by criminals with heinous intentions are truly heart-wrenching and should not be minimized for our communities, the victims, or their families.

Virginia has some of the strictest gun laws in the country. Unfortunately, the Commonwealth has reduced penalties for criminals, contributing to violent crime. Enhancing penalties for crimes committed with firearms will reverse this trend. Our most significant gap, however, has been in our behavioral health system, which is why substantial investments in behavioral health are necessary.

That twofold approach can provide a real solution without creating outcomes that would affect law-abiding citizens and violating our constitutional rights.

Accordingly, I veto this bill.

Pursuant to Article V, Section 6, of the Constitution of Virginia, I veto House Bill 351, which requires firearm locking devices or certifications to sell, purchase, or transfer firearms to individuals in households where minors reside.

In 2023, I signed House Bill 2387, which created a tax credit for firearm safety devices. This legislation enhanced public safety and encouraged responsible firearm ownership. I remain willing and ready to collaborate with the General Assembly on more incentives to ensure secure firearm storage and prevent access by dangerous individuals.

Just this year, the General Assembly passed bipartisan legislation, which I signed, that prevents parents from willfully allowing a minor child to gain access to a firearm if that child poses a threat of credible violence.

These approaches are collaborative and account for areas of bipartisan compromise, which can ultimately lead to the safety and well-being of children without affecting law-abiding citizens or their constitutional guarantees.

Accordingly, I veto this bill.

Pursuant to Article V, Section 6, of the Constitution of Virginia, I veto House Bill 1386, which restricts localities’ ability to adopt workplace rules for firearms.

Localities can currently adopt these provisions if they choose, and the existing process allows localities to account for the numerous variations in Virginia's diverse geographic, cultural, and societal norms across different regions of the Commonwealth or the unique situations of fire marshals, school security officers, judges, or Commonwealth attorneys.

The proposal undermines localities' ability to adopt workplace rules based on the best interests of their employees in specific workplaces.

Accordingly, I veto this bill.

Pursuant to Article V, Section 6, of the Constitution of Virginia, I veto House Bill 916, which establishes a Substantial Risk order Reporting System.

Currently, the Virginia State Police maintains the Substantial Risk Order Registry, every order is entered into the Virginia Criminal Information Network (VCIN) after it is issued, and after the order expires, the VCIN is updated.

Accordingly, I veto this bill.