



## At Last, McAuliffe Signs Virginia Gun Bills Into Law

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While it was an odd day for political endorsements, it was a good day for Second Amendment supporters in Virginia, where Democratic Governor Terry McAuliffe signed the various gun bills that comprised the long-awaited deal on concealed carry rights into law. The compromise drafted between Democrats and Republicans in the legislature allows more out-of-state concealed carry holders to exercise their rights in the Commonwealth, requires State Police to be present at gun shows for voluntary background checks, and prevents those slapped with protective orders from carrying firearms.

Via Gov. McAuliffe's Office:

Governor Terry McAuliffe today finalized a historic bipartisan agreement to make Virginia safer by signing three key pieces of legislation into law. Joined by First Lady Dorothy McAuliffe, Democratic and Republican legislators, law enforcement officials, Virginia prosecutors and domestic violence prevention advocates at a signing ceremony in the Virginia Executive Mansion, the Governor thanked the leaders who worked with him and his team to make this agreement a reality.

[...]

The three bills signed by Governor McAuliffe were part of a bipartisan agreement with the General Assembly to pass legislation requiring any person who is subject to a permanent protective order for family abuse to relinquish his or her guns within 24 hours or face a Class 6 felony. The bill, which had been defeated for many years in the General Assembly, will give Virginia one of the strongest laws in the nation with regard to taking guns away from domestic abusers.

[...]

The General Assembly also passed legislation granting Virginia State Police the statutory authority to run background checks for non-federally licensed vendors at gun shows. Previously, private firearm sellers who did not possess a federal license could not access the federal background check system – meaning they could not run background checks even if they wanted to. According to the agreement, Virginia State Police will now attend

every gun show in the Commonwealth and offer background checks to every vendor who wants one.

Finally, as part of the agreement, Governor McAuliffe agreed to sign legislation passed by a bipartisan majority of the General Assembly recognizing concealed carry permits from other states. The legislation will also protect the right of Virginia concealed carry permit holders to carry a concealed handgun in states that demand such reciprocity agreements.

The National Rifle Association was pleased with the result:

The National Rifle Association (NRA) commends Virginia's leaders for reaching an agreement to secure the rights of law-abiding concealed carry permit holders. H.B. 1163 and S.B. 610 which will restore and promote concealed carry reciprocity for permit holders in the Commonwealth and around the country, were signed into law today.

"Now, more than six million law-abiding gun owners will be free to travel in and out of Virginia with their Second Amendment rights intact," said Chris W. Cox, executive director of the NRA Institute for Legislative Action. "Self-defense is a fundamental right that must be respected."

[...]

"Concealed carry permit holders are among the safest groups of citizens in Virginia and throughout the country. On behalf of the NRA's more than five million members, we commend this effort to protect public safety and fundamental freedoms. Hopefully this effort will encourage Congress to pass national right to carry reciprocity legislation as soon as possible," concluded Cox.

The deal is comprised of six bills, three from the House of Delegates and State Senate respectively, that accomplish the legislative goals listed above. With or without the governor's veto or signature, the package would have become law within a week's time. It goes into effect July 1.

The impetus for this little showdown occurred last December, when Attorney General Mark Herring decided to unilaterally gut the concealed carry reciprocity agreements with 25 other states. Herring's actions infuriated Second Amendment supporters in Virginia, and highlighted the importance of voting in local elections; Herring only beat Republican State Sen. Mark Obenshain by *165 votes* in the 2013 attorney general race. Yet, towards the end of January, Gov. McAuliffe announced he was going to reverse Herring's actions and restore those carry agreements. If no action was taken, Herring's actions would have gone into effect February 1. Of course, anti-gun activists felt "betrayed" by McAuliffe, who decided to announce this legislative course of action a little over a week after both pro-gun and anti-Second Amendment activists descended upon Richmond for Lobby Day.

Yet, this deal almost didn't come to pass. Luckily, members of legislature, the NRA, and the governor's office were able to save this piece legislation over an oyster dinner at the Rappahannock Restaurant in Richmond (via WaPo):

A key moment came Tuesday night when the tentative agreement appeared ready to unravel. [State Sen. Bryce] Reeves, [Matt] Moran [spokesman for House Speaker William J. Howell (R-Stafford)] and two NRA lobbyists met at Rappahannock Restaurant for an oyster dinner — and to remind themselves what was at stake. In walked Secretary of the Commonwealth Levar Stoney, a McAuliffe confidant. Together they figured it out.

Anybody who says the ‘Virginia Way’ is dead. It’s not dead. It’s alive and well,” Reeves said. “We can find compromise on the most contentious issues if we can shelve the politics and work together.”

Moran said: “This is a historic agreement for its bipartisanship. Virginians will be truly safer today than they were yesterday because of this agreement.”

A source with knowledge of the deal offered general details of the drama that ensued prior to the “Rappahannock Oyster Accord.” The source told *Townhall* that a deal was settled, but a pro-gun state senator shot his mouth off about getting the better end of it. It was then taken off the table, with the governor’s office saying that the legislature take up the agreement instead. Blessedly, the state legislature in both chambers were able to pass bills honoring the provisions discussed, but it was close to being outright torpedoed.

Nevertheless, on February 10, the House of Delegates passed the bills comprising the deal on their end deal, with the State Senate doing its part earlier this month. By February 22, all business on this compromise was finished. At the same time, there were still some fights within the halls of the state senate over the Second Amendment; Sen. Richard Black (R-Loudoun) proposed a constitutional carry bill that was eventually rejected.

Again, this is a great day for Virginia. No one wants wife beaters owning firearms, and federal law already says that convicted domestic abusers can’t own firearms. In Virginia, the loss of gun ownership rights via protective orders occurs after due process of law, according Dave Kopel of the Cato Institute. He added that many of the provisions that will be enacted falls within the realm of common sense, though the anti-gun left is still shell-shocked that this even happened (Everytown has targeted McAuliffe), which shows that their movement isn’t dedicated to gun, or public, safety, but exerting more government control that erodes our civil rights. In this case, one of our oldest civil rights.

Last Note: Another huge positive with this deal, the attorney general’s involvement with the process of honoring carry permits will be stripped. This makes Virginia pretty much a total recognition state, as it will honor virtually every out-of-state carry permit.