

New Laws Take Effect in Virginia

Sweeping measures include minimum wage increase, worker protections, gun violence prevention, expanding voting access, fighting climate change

Richmond—Governor Ralph Northam highlighted new laws that took effect July 1, 2020 as Virginia began its new fiscal year. The Governor worked closely with members of the General Assembly to take forward-looking and historic steps to protect vulnerable Virginians, increase equity, and position the Commonwealth for future growth and success.

New laws include commonsense gun safety measures, worker protections, improvements to voting accessibility, criminal justice reforms, and measures that advance the rights of women and the LGBTQ community. Governor Northam also signed legislation that removes discriminatory and racist language from Virginia's books, and include actions to fight climate change and dramatically boost Virginia's renewable energy production.

"I am proud of the bold legislation we championed with the General Assembly this year," said Governor Northam. "From protecting civil rights, to expanding voting access, to supporting workers, we have made generational progress on some of the most critical issues of our time. With these new laws, Virginia will be an even better place to live, work, visit, and raise a family."

Key measures from the 2020 General Assembly Session that went into effect Wednesday, July 1st include:

- Advancing historic justice and equity with new laws that give localities authority over Confederate war memorials, remove of discriminatory language from the Acts of Assembly, and establish a commission

to study slavery in Virginia and subsequent racial and economic discrimination. New measures also ban discrimination based on hair.

- Enhancing worker protections with measures that increase the minimum wage, ban workplace discrimination, and combat worker misclassification and wage theft.

- Commonsense gun safety laws that reinstate the restriction on handgun purchases to one per month, implement background checks on all firearm sales, require the reporting of lost or stolen firearms, and establish an Extreme Risk Protective Order.

- Criminal justice reforms that include decriminalizing marijuana, raising the felony larceny threshold, and permanently ending the practice of driver's license suspensions for unpaid court fines.

- Expanding access to the ballot box by allowing early voting 45 days prior to an election without a stated excuse and making Election Day a state holiday by repealing Lee-Jackson Day.

- Accelerating Virginia's transition to clean energy with the Virginia Clean Economy Act and measures to advance offshore wind and solar energy sources, establish renewable portfolio standards, and enter the Commonwealth into the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative.

- Increasing protections for LGBTQ+ Virginians with the Virginia Values Act, which prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in housing, employment, public spaces, and credit applications. New laws also



Governor Ralph Northam

ban the harmful practice of "conversion therapy" for minors, increase protections for transgender students in public schools, expand the definition of a hate crime, and make it easier for LGBTQ+ individuals to obtain a birth certificate that matches their gender identity.

- Restoring reproductive rights by repealing medically-unnecessary restrictions on women's healthcare. The Reproductive Health Protection Act repeals Virginia's mandatory ultrasound law and 24-hour waiting period prior to abortion, and rolls back politically motivated "TRAP" restrictions on women's health centers.