

(HB1607)

GOVERNOR'S VETO

Pursuant to Article V, Section 6, of the Constitution of Virginia, I veto House Bill 1607, which creates new penalties for transferring and possessing certain firearms containing certain components.

My position on this legislation has not changed since it came to my desk last year. The Constitution precludes the Commonwealth from prohibiting a broad category of firearms widely embraced for lawful purposes, such as self-defense.

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 under previous administrations has reduced penalties for criminals, contributing to violent crime. I have yet to receive any bills enhancing penalties for crimes committed with firearms that would reverse this trend. Our most significant gap has been in our behavioral health system. This 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 Virginia's constitutional rights.

Accordingly, I veto this bill.