



Commonwealth of Virginia
Office of Governor Ralph S. Northam

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Office of the Governor

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Governor Northam Signs Sweeping New Laws to Reform Policing in Virginia

*~ Measures ban no-knock warrants, strengthen officer decertification
process, limit use of neck restraints ~*

RICHMOND—Governor Ralph Northam today announced he has signed new laws that will significantly advance police and criminal justice reform in Virginia. Governor Northam has been working closely with legislators on these measures since early summer, when the deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor led to a national reckoning on racial bias in policing.

“Too many families, in Virginia and across our nation, live in fear of being hurt or killed by police,” **said Governor Northam**. “These new laws represent a tremendous step forward in rebuilding trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve. I am grateful to the legislators and advocates who have worked so hard to make this change happen. Virginia is better, more just, and more equitable with these laws on our books.”

Governor Northam took action on the following bills that reform policing:

- Governor Northam signed [Senate Bill 5030](#), sponsored by Senator Locke, omnibus police reform legislation, which incorporates a number of critical reform measures passed by the House of Delegates:
 - [House Bill 5099](#), sponsored by Delegate Aird, prohibits law enforcement officers from seeking or executing a no-knock search warrant. With Governor Northam's signature, Virginia becomes the third state in the nation to ban no-knock warrants.
 - [House Bill 5049](#), sponsored by Delegate Helmer, reduces the militarization of police by prohibiting law enforcement from obtaining or using specified equipment, including grenades, weaponized aircraft, and high caliber firearms. Governor Northam amended this bill to clarify that law enforcement agencies can seek a waiver to use restricted equipment for search and rescue missions.
 - [House Bill 5109](#), sponsored by Delegate Hope, creates statewide minimum training standards for law enforcement officers, including training on awareness of racism, the potential for biased profiling, and de-escalation techniques. Governor Northam made technical amendments to this bill to align it with Senate Bill 5030.
 - [House Bill 5104](#), sponsored by Delegate Price, mandates law enforcement agencies and jails request the prior employment and disciplinary history of new hires.
 - [House Bill 5108](#), sponsored by Delegate Guzman, expands and diversifies the Criminal Justice Services Board, ensuring that the perspectives of social justice leaders, people of color, and mental health providers are represented in the state's criminal justice policymaking.
 - [House Bill 5051](#), sponsored by Delegate Simon, strengthens the process by which law enforcement officers can be decertified and allows the Criminal Justice Services Board to initiate decertification proceedings.
 - [House Bill 5069](#), sponsored by Delegate Carroll Foy, limits the circumstances in which law enforcement officers can use neck restraints.
 - [House Bill 5029](#), sponsored by Delegate McQuinn, requires law enforcement officers intervene when they witness another officer engaging or attempting to engage in the use of excessive force.

- [House Bill 5045](#), sponsored by Delegate Delaney, makes it a Class 6 felony for law enforcement officers to “carnally know” someone they have arrested or detained, an inmate, parolee, probationer, pretrial defendant, or post trial offender, if the officer is in a position of authority over such individual.
- Governor Northam signed [House Bill 5055](#) and [Senate Bill 5035](#), sponsored by Leader Herring and Senator Hashmi, respectively, which empower localities to create civilian law enforcement review boards. These new laws also permit civilian review boards the authority to issue subpoenas and make binding disciplinary decisions.
- Governor Northam signed [Senate Bill 5014](#), sponsored by Senator Edwards, which mandates the creation of minimum crisis intervention training standards and requires law enforcement officers complete crisis intervention training.

Governor Northam also took action on the following bills that make Virginia’s criminal justice system more equitable:

- Governor Northam signed [Senate Bill 5018](#), sponsored by Senator Bell, which allows individuals serving a sentence for certain felony offenses who are terminally ill to petition the Parole Board for conditional release.
- Governor Northam amended [House Bill 5148](#) and [Senate Bill 5034](#), sponsored by Delegate Scott and Senator Boysko, respectively, which allow for increased earned sentencing credits. The Governor proposed a six-month delay to give the Department of Corrections sufficient time to implement this program.

“The deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery woke Americans to a longstanding problem that has existed for generations—and we know Virginia is not immune,” **said Senator Mamie Locke**. “These are transformative bills that will make Virginians’ lives better, and I’m so proud to see them signed into law.”

“Today is about progress,” **said Majority Leader Charniele Herring**. “After generations of work on this issue, we are finally taking steps to hold police accountable and rebuild trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve. It’s a new day in Virginia.”

Governor Northam also signed measures to support COVID-19 relief. A full list of legislation signed by the Governor from the Special Session can be found [here](#).

[Full Release](#)

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