

# GENERAL ASSEMBLY WEAPONS POLICY

## Authority for Policy

The Joint Rules Committee has the authority and responsibility for ensuring the safety of every member, full and part-time employee, page, intern, visitor, and guest of the General Assembly and legislative branch agencies. In furtherance of this responsibility, the policy of the Joint Rules Committee relating to the carrying of weapons in those areas and within those agencies under the legal authority of the Joint Rules Committee is contained herein.

## Purpose of Policy

The purpose of this policy is to ban the open carrying and carrying of concealed weapons in offices or spaces occupied or controlled by legislative branch agencies, with certain exceptions as set forth herein.

## Applicability

A. This policy applies to all buildings owned, leased, or controlled in whole or in part by or for a legislative branch agency.

B. This policy applies to the open carrying of firearms or the concealed carrying of firearms.

C. The prohibition against the open carrying of a firearm or carrying a concealed firearm does not apply to law-enforcement officers, authorized security personnel, or military personnel as defined herein.

## Definitions

As used in this policy:

"Authorized security personnel" means a natural person who is employed to (i) perform the functions of observation, detection, reporting, or notification of

37 appropriate authorities or designated agents regarding persons or property on the  
38 premises he is assigned to protect; (ii) safeguard and protect persons and property  
39 on the premises he is assigned to protect; or (iii) deter theft, loss, or concealment of  
40 any tangible or intangible personal property on the premises he is assigned to  
41 protect. Authorized security personnel must be approved by the Division of  
42 Capitol Police or the Department of General Services.

43  
44 "Firearm" means any handgun, pistol, revolver, or other weapon designed or  
45 intended to propel or expel a projectile or missile of any kind by action of an  
46 explosion of any combustible material; rifle, shotgun, automatic or semi-automatic  
47 gun; assault firearm as defined in Section 18.2-308.2:2 of the Code of Virginia;  
48 machine gun; 3D printed gun; or similar weapon. Firearm does not include any  
49 ceremonial firearm currently on display in a legislative branch agency. The Chief  
50 of the Division of Capitol Police is authorized to develop a list of firearms covered  
51 by this policy.

52  
53 "Law-enforcement officer" means a natural person who is a full-time paid  
54 employee of (i) the Division of Capitol Police, (ii) a police department or sheriff's  
55 office that is a part of or administered by the Commonwealth of Virginia or any  
56 political subdivision thereof, or (iii) a law-enforcement agency of the United  
57 States. Law-enforcement officer only includes a person who is on duty and on the  
58 premises of a legislative branch office or space for the purpose of conducting  
59 official agency business.

60  
61 "Legislative branch agency" means any administrative unit of state government in  
62 the legislative branch, including the House of Delegates, the Senate of Virginia or  
63 any department, division, commission, or other body, however designated, within  
64 the legislative branch.

65  
66 "Legislative branch office or space" means any building, portion or space of a  
67 building, owned, leased, or controlled by or for a legislative branch agency  
68 including any office or space assigned to a member of the House of Delegates or  
69 the Senate of Virginia or their support staff in the Pocahontas Building, the  
70 Capitol, the new General Assembly building, or any building on the premises of  
71 Capitol Square. This includes that portion of any building open to others and then  
72 used exclusively for functions or activities sponsored by a legislative branch  
73 agency tenant or tenants while such functions are taking place. It shall not include  
74 parking facilities.

75

76 “Military personnel” means a member of the armed forces of the United States  
77 who is on duty and on the premises of a legislative branch office or space for the  
78 purpose of conducting official agency business.

79

80

81 **Carrying and Possession of Firearms Prohibited**

82

83 The open carrying of any firearm or the possession or carrying of any concealed  
84 firearm by any person is prohibited in legislative branch offices or spaces. Entry  
85 upon a legislative branch office or space in violation of this prohibition is expressly  
86 forbidden. This prohibition does not apply to law-enforcement officers, authorized  
87 security personnel, or military personnel as defined herein.

88

89

90 **Required Lease Terms for Legislative Branch Offices or Spaces**

91

92 All leases entered into where a legislative branch agency is the lessor shall contain  
93 a prohibition on the open carrying of a firearm and the carrying of concealed  
94 firearms consistent with this policy. All leases entered into for the benefit of a  
95 legislative branch agency shall contain the prohibitions herein to indicate the  
96 lessor's acknowledgment. Exceptions may be allowed where approved in writing  
97 by the Joint Rules Committee.

98

99

100 **Posting of Signs**

101

102 A. Posting location. Signs shall be posted at all legislative branch offices or spaces  
103 indicating the prohibition against the open carrying of firearms or carrying  
104 concealed firearms. Where the entire premises are owned or occupied by a  
105 legislative branch agency, signs shall be displayed at every entrance, which shall  
106 satisfy all requirements for the posting of signs. Where only a portion of the  
107 premises are owned or leased for a legislative branch agency, the signs shall be  
108 displayed within the leased space.

109

110 B. Size and design. Signs shall be of a size and design approved by the  
111 Department of General Services in consultation with the Division of Capitol  
112 Police. For legislative branch agencies within the limits of Capitol Square or  
113 located in the Pocahontas Building, the Division of Capitol Police shall obtain and  
114 post such signs. For all other legislative branch agencies, such agencies shall be

115 responsible for obtaining signage design from the Department of General Services  
116 and for posting of the signs.

117

### 118 **Enforcement**

119

120 The Division of Capitol Police shall be responsible for enforcing this policy within  
121 the limits of Capitol Square and within the Pocahontas Building. For all other  
122 legislative branch offices or spaces, the occupying agency shall be responsible for  
123 enforcing this policy.

124

125 In enforcing this policy, the Division of Capitol Police is authorized to search or  
126 screen all persons entering a legislative branch office or space within the limits of  
127 Capitol Square or within the Pocahontas Building, with the exception of current  
128 members of the General Assembly of Virginia. The Division of Capitol Police is  
129 not authorized to search or screen current members of the General Assembly to  
130 avoid any interference with a member fulfilling his legislative responsibilities.

131 Any person found to be violating this policy shall be immediately removed from  
132 the Capitol Building or the Pocahontas Building by the Division of Capitol Police.

133

134

### 135 **Other Weapons**

136

137 The prohibition described above against the open carrying or possession or  
138 concealed carrying of any firearm in a legislative branch office or space as  
139 described above applies with full force and effect and under the same conditions to  
140 the open carrying or possession or concealed carrying of any weapon described in  
141 clauses (ii) through (v) of subsection A of Section 18.2-308 of the Code Virginia  
142 and any stun gun as defined under Section 18.2-308.1 of the Code of Virginia, with  
143 the exception of a pocket knife having a folding metal blade of less than three  
144 inches. The prohibition with respect to weapons other than firearms shall not  
145 apply to (a) any person possessing a knife customarily used for food preparation or  
146 service and using it for such purpose, (b) any person who possesses a knife or  
147 blade which he uses customarily in his trade and using it in such trade, (iii) any  
148 tool used by a person customarily in his trade and being used pursuant to a contract  
149 with a legislative branch agency, or (iv) any tool used by a state employee as a  
150 condition of his position and being used in the scope of employment. The  
151 prohibition with respect to weapons other than firearms shall not apply to any  
152 ceremonial weapon currently on display or use in a legislative branch agency.

153

154 The Chief of the Division of Capitol Police is authorized to develop a list of other  
155 weapons covered by this policy.

156

157

158 **Exclusions**

159

160 This policy shall not apply to any office or space within the limits of Capitol  
161 Square under the control of an executive branch agency. This policy shall also not  
162 apply in the district office of a member of the General Assembly provided that  
163 such office is not located within the limits of Capitol Square or within the  
164 Pocahontas Building.

165

166 **Effective Date**

167

168 This policy shall become effective upon adoption of the Joint Rules Committee  
169 and shall be implemented by the Division of Capitol Police and legislative branch  
170 agencies beginning at 11:59 p.m. on the day of such adoption.

171

172

173 **Coordination with Previous Policies**

174

175 Any firearm or other weapon not allowed on the premises of Capitol Square, the  
176 Pocahontas Building, or any legislative branch office or space under a previous  
177 policy of the Joint Rules Committee shall continue to be disallowed.

178

179

180 Adopted by Joint Rules Committee – January 10, 2020

181 Adopted by House Rules Committee – January 10, 2020

182 Effective 11:59 p.m., January 10, 2020