RICHMOND – Opponents of drunken driving are applauding the Senate for passing a bill to require even first-time DUI offenders in Virginia to install a device to prevent them from operating their vehicle while intoxicated.

The Senate approved House Bill 279 on a 26-13 vote Wednesday. It would require Virginia drivers to have an ignition interlock installed after their first DUI offense. Currently, the devices are required only after a second or subsequent DUI conviction.

An ignition interlock requires a motorist to blow into a Breathalyzer before starting the car and at random intervals while driving. The car won’t start if the driver’s blood alcohol content is above .02 percent.

“This is the sixth year in which ignition interlock legislation for all DUI offenders has been introduced in Virginia’s General Assembly,” said Kurt Erickson, president of the Washington Regional Alcoholic Program, which campaigns against drunken driving.

“Virginia’s patience with the more than 29,000 drivers in the state annually convicted of driving under the influence has worn thin.”

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, nearly 30,000 DUI offenders were convicted in Virginia in 2010. That’s more than three convictions every hour.

Erickson said ignition interlocks are effective in stopping people from driving while under the influence of alcohol.

“If, before attempting to start their vehicle, the device senses a set amount of alcohol, the vehicle will not start,” Erickson said. “If a running retest senses a set amount of alcohol, the vehicle’s horn will sound, along with its headlights flashing, in order to draw the attention of law enforcement.”
HB 279, sponsored by Delegate Salvatore Iaquinto, R-Virginia Beach, won approval from the House of Delegates on Feb. 9. It would require anyone convicted of DUI to install an ignition interlock. (Under the law, any driver with a blood alcohol content of .08 or above is considered intoxicated.)

But some drama surrounded the bill when it moved to the Senate. The Senate Courts of Justice Committee changed the bill so that, for first-time offenders, it applied only if the BAC was 0.12 or higher.

However, the Senate rejected the committee’s modification of the bill and passed the House version.

The group Mothers Against Drunk Driving was glad senators refused to water down HB 279.

“The committee amendment that the Senate rejected on Wednesday would have made the legislation weaker,” said Chris Konschak, manager of the Virginia office of MADD. “The Senate demonstrated that they are committed to eliminating drunk driving in Virginia, and mandatory ignition interlocks for all DUI offenders is a step in that direction.”

WRAP agreed.

“By capturing a combined, more than 80 percent of their vote, Virginia lawmakers have sent to Gov. (Bob) McDonnell legislation deploying proven effective technology to combat drunk driving in the commonwealth,” Erickson said.

Comments

Wed, Mar 07 at 11:51 AM by DD | Report this comment

Since Romney will not drink it I’ll have a victory beer or 3 in his stead and get a ride home!

Tue, Mar 06 at 06:00 AM by Gatekeeper | Report this comment

Lostcause, morestupidpeople We should lock you and your parents up for doing a lousy job in bringing you up. A 4 week adjustment period sounds like it will dry you out.

Thu, Mar 01 at 11:41 AM by lostcause | Report this comment
Panel Kills Bill to Allow Sunday Hunting  
By Brian Hill  
Capital News Service

A House subcommittee has defeated a Senate-approved bill that would have permitted hunting on Sundays in Virginia.

A subcommittee of the House Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural Resources Committee recommended Wednesday that Senate Bill 464 be tabled.

The bill, sponsored by Sen. Ralph Northam, D-Norfolk, would have allowed hunting on Sundays on private property by the landowners, their immediate family or people who have written permission from the landowners.

At Wednesday’s meeting of the Natural Resources Subcommittee, Northam proposed an amendment to limit Sunday hunting to state or federal military bases and wildlife management areas.

Terrie Suit, Virginia’s secretary of veterans affairs and homeland security, was among the proponents of SB 464. She spoke in favor of the bill.

“Military installation representatives expressed informally that this would be beneficial to the military bases,” Suit said. “There is already shooting occurring on Sundays at these installations. This would just allow them to shoot at something that could perhaps benefit the dinner table.”

A hunter from Amelia County also supported the bill. He said he has two children who are at an age when they should learn to hunt. However, because of work and school schedules, the man said, it is difficult for him to be available to hunt on Saturdays.

Delegate Manoli Loupassi, R-Richmond, also spoke in favor of the measure.

“Hunting provides an opportunity for children to get outside and see that which they don’t normally see,” Loupassi said.

Opponents of SB 464 gathered at the subcommittee hearing to speak out against the legislation.

“Sunday hunting has been promoted as a property rights issue, a hunting issue and a gun rights issue,” said Will Shaw, a Louisa County resident and member of the National Rifle Association. “I submit that it’s really ‘a one-day-a-week peace and quiet’ issue.”

Shaw said Sunday should be a day for the community to share the outdoors and for residents to feel safe outside on their properties.

Current state law prohibits hunting on Sunday on public or private land, declaring it a “rest day for all species of wild bird and wild animal life, except raccoons, which may be hunted until 2:00 a.m. on Sunday mornings.”

In January, the Senate passed SB 464 on a 29-11 vote and sent it to the House for consideration.

Bills Undercut Reproductive Rights, Democrats Say  
By Claire Porter  
Capital News Service

Democratic leaders and women’s right advocates sounded the alarm Thursday about three bills they said would limit a woman’s reproductive freedom in Virginia.

They said House Bill 1, which would grant individual rights to an embryo from the moment of conception, would be a step toward making all abortions illegal. On Tuesday, the House of Delegates passed the measure on a 66-32 vote.

The bill provides that “unborn children” from the moment of conception until birth at every stage of biological development “enjoy all the rights, privileges, and immunities available to other persons, citizens, and residents of the Commonwealth, subject only to the laws and constitutions of Virginia and the United States, precedents of the United States Supreme Court, and provisions to the contrary in the statutes of the Commonwealth.”

No state has passed such a law. Since 2008, Republicans in Colorado and Mississippi have pushed for similar “personhood” bills, but they failed.

HB 1, sponsored by Delegate Bob Marshall, R-Manassas, now heads to the Senate. If the personhood bill becomes law, it would essentially criminalize all abortions in Virginia, opponents say. They worry that the law also would affect women’s access to regular contraceptive measures, such as intrauterine devices and the morning-after pill.

At a press conference Thursday in the General Assembly Building, Delegate Vivian Watts, D-Annandale, said she has asked Marshall “what is the definition of conception?” and “Does this mean we aren’t going to protect legal contraception?”

Marshall has refused to answer, Watts said. She said he repeatedly responded with “That will be up to the courts to decide.”

According to Watts, the language of HB 1 is clear: that from the moment egg and sperm meet, anything that keeps the fertilized egg from being implanted in the uterus would be destroying a person.

Sen. Donald McEachin, D-Richmond, said he believes the personhood bill is “absolutely an attack on contraceptives.”

“Republicans want to reserve the right to decide what should be considered a contraceptive in Virginia,” said McEachin, who chairs the Senate Democratic Caucus.

“It makes me wonder if the Republicans’ real intent is to prevent access to contraceptives, to continue to blur lines, and eventually for them to make all family planning inaccessible,” McEachin said.

The cafeteria hours are 6:00 P.M. This position will work second shifts between those weekends required. Must be flexible schedule is scheduled off every other week. Must have experience in a school cafeteria setting. Job duties include staffing the serving line, sanitizing equipment, and operating commercial kitchen equipment, including meat slicer.

A minimum of six months formal training or experience required in a school institutional setting. Basic Food Safe Serve Certification required to obtain certification in both positions. Ability to prepare and cook multiple recipes. Requires the ability to clean, safe, sanitary work environment, possess the ability to read, math, and follow basic instructions including instruct labeling and formal recipes. Must be a team player and possess excellent customer relations skills.

Drug screen, physical, and background screening required.

EOE. Open until filled.

Mail, fax, or e-mail resume & cover letter to:

Jackson-Feild Home Health Care of Virginia
Attn: Chris Thompson
Job#: 2012-3
546 Walnut Grove Circle
Jarratt, Virginia 23867
Fax: (434) 634-6232

chthomson@jacksonfeild.org

Employment Opportunity
Food Service Worker

Psychiatric residential treatment facility in Back Bay, Virginia is seeking a Food Service Worker to work in a large cafeteria setting. Job duties include staffing the serving line, sanitizing equipment, and operating commercial kitchen equipment, including meat slicer.

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and sent it to the house for consideration.

Before the subcommittee voted, Northam addressed the panel.

“The tradition of hunting and hunters is going away,” he said. “It’s a tradition that I feel strongly about – that we as hunters and as outdoorsmen all need to work together to protect and promote.”

Delegate R. Lee Ware, R-Powhatan, chairs the subcommittee. First, he called for a vote on the amendment to limit Sunday hunting to military bases and wildlife management areas. That vote failed, 4-3.

Then Ware called a vote on the overall bill. It also failed, 4-3.

Speakers at the press conference also criticized House Bill 462, which would require every woman undergoing an abortion to first submit to an ultrasound.

The bill says the woman must be given an opportunity to view the ultrasound image of her fetus before the abortion.

Under the legislation, if the heartbeat cannot be detected, as is often the case early in a pregnancy, the woman would be subjected to a trans-vaginal probe.

“House Bill 462 basically puts government inside a woman’s body, and government has absolutely no business there,” said Delegate Charnielle Herring, D-Alexandria.

“These two bills (HB 1 and HB 462) represent an attack on women the likes of which we have never seen in our modern era, telling women what they must do with their bodies and forcing an invasive medical procedure onto a person who is exercising their constitutional right, is the epitome of big government.”

The House passed HB 462 on a 63-36 vote on Tuesday.

By a similar margin, delegates also have passed HB 62, which would prohibit state-funded abortions for low-income women even if the child they are carrying would have totally incapacitating deformities or impairments.

Katherine Grennier, a spokesperson for the local chapter of the ACLU, said HB 62 discriminates against impoverished Virginians.

“It would restrict access for very poor women, resulting in a system where only wealthy women can access the full range of health care services in the face of a devastating pre-natal diagnosis,” Grennier said.

She said this is “absolutely no way to treat a woman who is facing a medical crisis. No woman plans to have an abortion, but if she needs one, every woman deserves the chance to make the best decision for her

**National Stories**

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RICHMOND – Delegate Bob Marshall of Manassas has proposed a bill that would allow full-time faculty members to carry guns on college campuses.

House Bill 91 would ban policies by public institutions of higher education that prohibit full-time faculty members with Virginia concealed handgun permits from holding firearms on campus.

The Republican lawmaker’s rationale is that faculty members with guns could deter violence on campus. Others, however, believe the measure could backfire.

“I do not think the bill should be passed, but not because I am anti-gun,” said John Aughenbaugh, a political science professor at Virginia Commonwealth University. “My concern is how would the policy be implemented and specifically how would we ensure that all faculty members carrying concealed weapons have the necessary training to use firearms properly.”

Most college campuses have policies restricting guns.

Aughenbaugh said proponents of firearms on campus believe such a policy would reduce tragic events, such as the 2007 Virginia Tech shooting. But he’s not convinced.

“We do not know if having more firearms, especially without the requisite training and limitations, would increase the number of shootings on college campuses,” he added.

Some students are concerned about HB 91 and the effect it could have on campus life.

“Initially, it would make me feel a little nervous knowing that there is possibly a loaded gun in the classroom,” said Zachary LaRoche, an international studies major at VCU. “Rationally, I would not feel that my life is in danger. I think I would actually feel safer knowing that a certified concealed weapons user was in the room.”

Marshall’s bill is awaiting action by the House of Delegates Militia, Police and Public Safety Committee.
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