



Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence
ACTION ALLIANCE

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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIM ADVOCACY GROUP APPLAUDS GOVERNOR'S VETO OF MISGUIDED GUN BILLS

The Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence Action Alliance and domestic violence victims advocates across Virginia applaud Governor Terry McAuliffe for vetoing SB 626 and companion bill HB 766—legislation that would have allowed any person with a temporary or permanent protective order to carry a concealed handgun without applying for a concealed carry permit and completing required safety measures.

The legislation would have permitted people who carry a Protective Order to use the order in place of a concealed weapons permit for 45 days until the order expires, circumventing existing concealed weapons permitting procedures.

"This legislation, though well-intentioned, sends a dangerous message to victims of domestic violence: firearms will keep you safe," said Kristi VanAudenrove, Executive Director of the Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence Action Alliance, "Thankfully, Governor McAuliffe understands that guns and domestic violence are a lethal combination."

VanAudenrove continued, "Some legislators claim that SB 626/HB 766 would have given victims of domestic violence another tool to protect themselves and their children. While we appreciate the intention of that sentiment, it is a false promise of safety; the reality is that no evidence exists to support the theory that introducing a firearm into volatile situations where a history of domestic violence exists makes victims and their families safer."

On the contrary, the presence of a gun in a domestic violence situation makes it five times more likely that a woman will be killed.

31% of all homicides in 2014 in Virginia were attributed to family and intimate partner violence. 54% of those homicides were committed with a firearm. In addition, offenders often use firearms to threaten and intimidate victims. "Advocates know and witness in their work with victims that the presence of any firearm is dangerous and frightening for most victims and their families," said VanAudenrove.

Victims of domestic violence are routinely sentenced for long prison terms for doing what HB 766/SB 626 tacitly encourage victims to do: defend the lives and the lives of their children with the use of a firearm. A California state prison study found that 93% of the women convicted of killing an intimate partner had been abused by that partner.

Women of color, in particular, face harsh penalties for defending themselves against abusive partners and protecting their children. Case in point: Marissa Alexander, the Florida mother who was sentenced to 20 years in prison for firing a single warning shot into the ceiling to protect herself and her children from an abusive husband who had threatened to kill her.

VanAudenrove concluded, "On behalf of domestic violence victims advocates across the Commonwealth, thank you, Governor McAuliffe, for your continued leadership on promoting individual and public safety through common-sense gun laws, grounded in evidence-based practices."

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About the Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence Action Alliance

The Action Alliance has been Virginia's leading voice on sexual and domestic violence for more than 30 years and enhances response and prevention efforts through training, public policy advocacy, public awareness programs, and technical assistance to professionals. www.vsdvalliance.org @VActionAlliance

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