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# Spanberger signs assault weapons ban

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Gov. Abigail Spanberger late Thursday signed a sweeping package of legislation approved during the 2026 General Assembly session, including a ban on the future sale and manufacture of assault-style firearms, new restrictions of weapons in hospitals, marijuana sentencing reforms, voter roll maintenance changes and protections for immigrant workers.

The assault weapons measure, one of the session's most contentious bills, is set to become law after Spanberger signed it without amendments she had previously proposed to narrow the legislation's scope. Lawmakers rejected those changes during the reconvened session last month and returned the bill to the governor's desk in its original form.

"I am signing this bill into law because firearms designed to inflict maximum casualties do not belong on our streets. We are taking this step to protect families and support the law enforcement officers who work every day to keep our communities safe," Spanberger said in a statement Friday.

"While the General Assembly chose not to adopt my amendment that specifically carves out certain firearms frequently used for hunting, I will work with the patrons to clarify this language."

Senate Bill 749, sponsored by Sen. Saddam Azlan Salim, D-Fairfax, and its companion, House Bill 217 by Del. Dan Helmer, D-Fairfax, prohibit the future sale and manufacture of certain assault-style firearms and ban the sale of magazines capable of holding more than 15 rounds.

The legislation marks one of Virginia's most significant firearm restrictions since 2020 and delivers on a major campaign promise



Virginia Gov. Abigail Spanberger delivers her State of the Commonwealth address before a joint session of the Virginia General Assembly at the Capitol on Jan. 19. STEVE HELBER/AP

from Spanberger, a former federal law enforcement officer who has long supported assault weapons restrictions.

Republicans criticized the measure and predicted legal challenges.

House Minority Leader Terry Kilgore, R-Scott, accused Democrats of ignoring constitutional concerns raised throughout the debate.

"We warned Democrats repeatedly that their gerrymandering plan would be found unconstitutional. They didn't listen. We were right" Kilgore said in a statement, referring to the voter-approved redistricting referendum pushed by Democrats that the Supreme Court of Virginia struck down last week.

"We also warned them repeatedly that their effort to ban some of the most commonly owned firearms was unconstitutional. They didn't listen. The Supreme Court has already spoken to this in (New York State Rifle & Pistol Association, Inc. v. Bruen), and Democrats are going to waste even more taxpayer money just to lose. Again."

Among the other firearm-related measures

signed Thursday were HB 229 by Del. Phil Hernandez, D-Norfolk, and SB 173 by Sen. Angelia Williams Graves, D-Norfolk, which prohibit people from bringing weapons into hospitals and certain psychiatric care facilities.

Gun control advocates said the legislation responds to growing concerns about violence against healthcare workers and is intended to strengthen protections for hospital staff and patients.

Spanberger also signed legislation creating a process for reviewing sentences tied to marijuana convictions for conduct that is no longer illegal in Virginia. She also signed a measure that bars employers from retaliating against immigrant workers who report wage theft or minimum wage violations, and one that expands the use of ignition interlock devices for certain people charged with driving while intoxicated.

Further, she signed two energy-related measures aimed at expanding weatherization and energy assistance programs for low-income, elderly and disabled Virginians. Her deadline to act on all remaining legislation is May 23.