



Commonwealth of Virginia

Office of Governor Ralph S. Northam

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: May 17, 2018

Office of the Governor

Contact: Ofirah Yheskel

Email: Ofirah.Yheskel@governor.virginia.gov

Governor Northam Vetoes Legislation Restricting Local Authorities from Adopting Fire and Life Safety Regulations

RICHMOND—Governor Ralph Northam today vetoed House Bill 1595 and Senate Bill 972, which would restrict the ability of local governing bodies to adopt standards for protecting citizens and structures from fires involving combustible landscape cover materials. The Governor’s full veto statement for House Bill 1595 is below. Governor Northam signed an identical statement for Senate Bill 972.

May 17, 2018

Pursuant to Article V, Section 6, of the Constitution of Virginia, I veto House Bill 1595, which would restrict local authority and prohibit the adoption of local regulations governing combustible landscape cover materials.

Outlined in § 27-97 of the Code of Virginia, local governing bodies are authorized to adopt fire and life safety regulations that are more extensive in scope than the Statewide Fire Prevention Code.

House Bill 1595 is contrary to that long-standing principle in Virginia and prohibits a local governing body from adopting standards to protect structures and citizens from fires involving combustible landscape materials.

Fire departments across Virginia have experienced many substantial fires in recent years caused by combustible ground cover. Our local governments must have the necessary tools to address these fire hazards, and this legislation hinders their ability to protect the life safety of the citizens of the Commonwealth.

During the Reconvened Session, I offered an amendment to address the fire and life safety concerns expressed by Virginia's fire service. That amendment would have narrowed the scope of the bill and provided a higher-level fire protection for residential structures. That amendment was rejected.

Accordingly, I veto this bill.

Sincerely,

Ralph S. Northam

###