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## Capitol Vice Squad

Virginia lawmakers eye teen drinking and smoking in a string of new legislation

**Joannah Nwokeabia**

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### No "butts;" fine would cost slacker smokers \$250 per violation

**Capital News Service** -- Smokers behind the wheel may want to think twice before they flick their cigarette butts out the window.

A bill that would make littering cigarette butts from a motor vehicle a crime passed in the **House of Delegates** last week. The vote was 76-24.

**House Bill 805**, sponsored by **Del. William Fralin Jr., R-Roanoke**, would amend the Virginia Code to add "cigarette remnants" to the list of the list of things that can't be discarded along a roadway. The list includes trash, garbage and pets, but currently, tossing a cigarette butt is not considered littering.

Under Virginia law, littering from a vehicle is a misdemeanor, punishable by up to 12 months in jail, a maximum fine of \$2,500 or both.

Fralin's original legislation would have increased the minimum fine for those convicted of littering from \$250 to \$750. But members of the **House Committee on Transportation** revised it to keep the current penalty.

HB 805 now moves to the **Senate Committee on Transportation**.

The Senate also wrestled with a different issue involving cigarettes: a bill that would ban smoking indoors in most public places.

While senators defeated the bill on a vote of 18 to 20 last week, they later voted to reconsider the matter, and yesterday passed the bill to the House of Delegates on a 21-18 vote. Unlike a similar attempt last year, **SB 648**, sponsored by **Sen. Brandon Bell, R-Roanoke**, would allow local governments to decide if the ban applies to restaurants.

### Lawmakers look to tackle teen drinking at root of the problem

**Capital News Service** -- Lawmakers are considering a cluster of bills that would toughen the penalty for teenage drinking and hold lax parents more responsible for what goes on under their roofs. The Senate last

week unanimously passed a bill that would prohibit adults from serving alcoholic beverages to underage guests in their private homes.

While it is a Class 1 misdemeanor to allow underage people to possess or consume alcohol, currently a loophole in Virginia law allows adults to serve alcohol to guests in their homes with no reference to age.

**SB 396**, sponsored by **Sen. Ryan T. McDougle**, R-Hanover, clarifies that law, restricting alcohol consumption to guests who are aged 21 or older, or are accompanied by an adult parent. Parents, however, would still be allowed to supply drinks to their own children.

**Kurt Gregory Erickson**, president of the **Washington Regional Alcohol Program**, said parents who supervise parties where alcohol is served may have good intentions, but don't realize the dangers when teenagers drink.

"Their heart is in the right place, but their head isn't," he said.

Erickson said the bill respects families' religious and social values. "In a nutshell, this bill says that while it may be acceptable for you to serve alcohol to your kids, it may not be acceptable for you to serve to mine."

The bill now moves to the House, where several measures cracking down on teen drinking are pending.

**Del. Brian Moran**, D-Alexandria, has proposed three: **HB 1207**, **HB 1208** and **HB 1210**. His legislation calls for a mandatory six-month driver's license suspension for underage drinkers and people who purchase alcohol for underage people.

Delegates approved HB 1210 last week on a vote of 88-10.

HB 113, sponsored by **Del. David B. Albo**, R-Springfield, would require convicted underage drinkers to forfeit their driver's license for up to a year. Currently, driver's license suspension in such cases is not mandatory. The House passed this bill on an 81-17 vote last week.

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