

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2021 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

Senate Bill 8

BY SENATORS RUCKER, PHILLIPS, ROBERTS, SMITH,
MARTIN, ROMANO, MARONEY, WOODRUM, SWOPE,
AZINGER, AND GRADY

[Introduced February 10, 2021; referred
to the Committee on the Judiciary]

1 A BILL to amend the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, by adding thereto a new section,
2 designated §61-2-31, relating to the castle doctrine and self-defense standards.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

ARTICLE 2. CRIMES AGAINST THE PERSON.

§61-2-31. Self-Defense.

1 (a) A lawful occupant within a home or other place of residence is justified in using
2 reasonable and proportionate force, including deadly force, against an intruder or attacker to
3 prevent a forcible entry into the home or residence or to terminate the intruder's or attacker's
4 unlawful entry if the occupant reasonably apprehends that the intruder or attacker may kill or inflict
5 serious bodily harm upon the occupant or others in the home or residence or if the occupant
6 reasonably believes that the intruder or attacker intends to commit a felony in the home or
7 residence and the occupant reasonably believes deadly force is necessary.

8 (b) A lawful occupant within a home or other place of residence does not have a duty to
9 retreat from an intruder or attacker in the circumstances described in subsection (a) of this section.

10 (c) A person not engaged in unlawful activity who is attacked in any place he or she has
11 a legal right to be outside of his or her home or residence may use reasonable and proportionate
12 force against an intruder or attacker: *Provided*, That such person may use deadly force against
13 an intruder or attacker in a place that is not his or her residence without a duty to retreat if the
14 person reasonably believes that he or she or another is in imminent danger of death or serious
15 bodily harm from which he or she or another can only be saved by the use of deadly force against
16 the intruder or attacker.

17 (d) The justified use of reasonable and proportionate force under this section shall
18 constitute a full and complete defense to any criminal action against a person using such force.

19 (e) The full and complete criminal defense created by the provisions of this section is not
20 available to a person who:

21 (1) Is attempting to commit, committing, or escaping from the commission of a felony;

22 (2) Initially provokes the use of force against himself, herself, or another with the intent to
23 use such force as an excuse to inflict bodily harm upon the assailant; or

24 (3) Otherwise initially provokes the use of force against himself, herself, or another, unless
25 he or she withdraws from physical contact with the assailant and indicates clearly to the assailant
26 that he or she desires to withdraw and terminate the use of force, but the assailant continues or
27 resumes the use of force.

28 (f) The provisions of this section do not apply to the creation of a hazardous or dangerous
29 condition on or in any real or personal property designed to prevent criminal conduct or cause
30 injury to a person engaging in criminal conduct.

31 (g) Nothing in this section shall authorize or justify a person to resist or obstruct a law-
32 enforcement officer acting in the course of his or her duty.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to codify the “castle doctrine” and make clear the self-defense standards applied in criminal cases.

Strike-throughs indicate language that would be stricken from a heading or the present law, and underscoring indicates new language that would be added.