

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2019 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

Senate Bill 337

BY SENATORS WELD, CLEMENTS, MAYNARD, ROMANO,

CLINE, MARONEY, TARR, SMITH, AND HAMILTON

[Introduced January 16, 2019; Referred
to the Committee on Government Organization]

1 A BILL to amend and reenact §15A-3-10 of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, relating
 2 to authorizing the Commissioner of the Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation to issue
 3 a certificate to correctional employees to carry firearms in the course of their duties;
 4 establishing training requirements for the issuance of the certificate; establishing form of
 5 the certificate; and requiring the correctional employee to carry the certificate at all times
 6 when carrying a firearm or weapon in the course of his or her duties.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

ARTICLE 3. DIVISION OF CORRECTIONS AND REHABILITATION.

§15A-3-10. Law-enforcement powers of employees; authority to carry firearms.

1 (a) Other than as outlined in this section, a correctional officer employed by the division is
 2 not a law-enforcement officer as that term is defined in §30-29-1 of this code.

3 (b) The commissioner is a law-enforcement official, and has the authority to use, and
 4 permit and allow or disallow his or her designated employees to use, publicly provided carriage
 5 to travel from their residences to their workplace and return: *Provided*, That the usage is subject
 6 to the supervision of the commissioner and is directly connected with and required by the nature
 7 and in the performance of the official’s or designated employee’s duties and responsibilities.

8 (c) All employees of the division are responsible for enforcing rules and laws necessary
 9 for the control and management of correctional units and the maintenance of public safety that is
 10 within the scope of responsibilities of the division.

11 (d) Persons employed by the Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation as correctional
 12 officers are hereby authorized and empowered to make arrests of persons already charged with
 13 a violation of law who surrender themselves to the correctional officer, to arrest persons already
 14 in the custody of the division for violations of law occurring in the officer’s presence, to detain
 15 persons for violations of state law committed on the property of any facility under the jurisdiction
 16 of the commissioner, and to conduct investigations, pursue, and apprehend escapees from the
 17 custody of a facility of the division.

18 (e) The commissioner may designate correctional employees as correctional peace
19 officers who have the authority:

20 (1) To detain persons for violations of state law committed on the property of any state
21 correctional institution;

22 (2) To conduct investigations regarding criminal activity occurring within a correctional
23 facility;

24 (3) To execute criminal process or other process in furtherance of these duties; and

25 (4) To apply for, obtain, and execute search warrants necessary for the completion of his
26 or her duties and responsibilities.

27 (f) The Corrections Special Operations Team is ~~hereby established~~ continued and ~~shall~~
28 ~~consist~~ consists of the Corrections Emergency Response Team, the K9 unit, and the Crisis
29 Negotiations team created under the former Division of Corrections. The Corrections Special
30 Operations Team serves as the first responder necessary for the protection of life, liberty, and
31 property. It ~~shall have~~ has limited law-enforcement authority regarding matters occurring at jails,
32 correctional centers, and juvenile centers, and arrest powers to apprehend escapees,
33 absconders, and in all matters arising on the grounds of a facility under the care and control of
34 the commissioner: *Provided*, That at any time the Corrections Special Operations Team is
35 apprehending an escapee or an absconder outside the confinement of the facility grounds, it does
36 so with the assistance and cooperation of local law enforcement or the West Virginia State Police.

37 (g) The commissioner may issue a certificate authorizing any correctional employee who
38 has successfully completed the division's training program for firearms certification, which is
39 approved by the commissioner and equivalent to the training requirements applicable to deputy
40 sheriffs for the use and handling of firearms. Notwithstanding any provision of this code to the
41 contrary, any correctional employee so authorized by the commissioner may carry division-issued
42 firearms while in the performance of his or her official duties, including travel to and from work
43 sites. The correctional employee must successfully complete an annual firearms qualification

44 course equivalent to that required of certified law-enforcement officers as established by
45 legislative rule to maintain the certificate. The certificate shall be in a form prescribed by the
46 commissioner and shall bear his or her official signature.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to authorize the Commissioner of the Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation to authorize correctional employees to carry firearms and to establish certification and training requirements.

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