



Commonwealth of Virginia  
Office of the Governor

## Executive Order

### NUMBER FOURTEEN (2018) (AMENDED)

#### DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW OF STATE AGENCY REGULATIONS

##### Importance of the Initiative

By virtue of the authority vested in me as Governor under Article V of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Virginia and under the laws of the Commonwealth, including, but not limited to, §§ 2.2-4013 and 2.2-4017 of the *Code of Virginia*, and subject to my continuing and ultimate authority and responsibility to act in such matters, I hereby establish policies and procedures for the review of all new regulations and changes to existing regulations proposed by state agencies, which shall include all agencies, boards, commissions, and other entities of the Commonwealth within the executive branch authorized to promulgate regulations. Nothing in this Executive Order shall be construed to limit my authority under the *Code of Virginia*, including to require an additional 30-day public comment period, file a formal objection to a regulation, suspend the effective date of a regulation with the concurrence of the applicable body of the General Assembly, or to exercise any other rights and prerogatives existing under Virginia law.

##### Definitions

The following acronyms and definitions are set out for ease of use and represent only a summary of terms and acronyms related to the regulatory review process. More detailed descriptions and definitions appear in the Administrative Process Act (APA), § 2.2-4000, *et seq.* of the *Code of Virginia*.

“Agency Background Document” (ABD) refers to a form completed by agencies and uploaded on the Virginia Regulatory Town Hall website for each regulatory stage in order to describe and explain the regulatory action. The form for each stage is available on the Town Hall.

“Administrative Process Act” (APA) refers to § 2.2-4000, *et seq.* of the *Code of Virginia*, which contains provisions setting forth the process for promulgating regulations in Virginia.

“Day” means a calendar day.

“Virginia Department of Planning and Budget” (DPB) refers to the state entity that reviews regulatory proposals for economic and policy impact and manages the Virginia Regulatory Town Hall website.

“Economic Impact Analysis” (EIA) refers to a report prepared by DPB that evaluates the estimated costs and benefits of a regulatory proposal.

“Emergency rulemaking process” refers to the process used (1) when there is an emergency situation as determined by the agency and affirmed by the Governor that an emergency regulation is necessary, or (2) when a Virginia statutory law, Acts of Assembly (such as the appropriation act), federal law, or federal regulation requires that a state regulation be effective in 280 days or fewer from its enactment.

“Executive Branch Review” refers to the review of a regulatory proposal at various stages by the executive branch before the regulatory proposal is published in the *Virginia Register of Regulations* and is available for public comment.

“Exempt rulemaking process” refers to the process by which agency actions exempt from the promulgation requirements of Article 2 of the APA can be adopted and filed directly with the Office of the Registrar of Regulations (Registrar) and are not subject to Executive Branch Review outlined in this executive order. Agencies should consult with their respective cabinet secretary prior to promulgating a regulation under the exempt process.

“Fast-track rulemaking process” refers to the process utilized for rules that are expected to be noncontroversial.

“Mandate” refers to a directive from the General Assembly, the federal government, or a court that requires that a regulation be promulgated, amended, or repealed in whole or part.

“Notice of Intended Regulatory Action” (NOIRA) refers to the first stage in the standard rulemaking process under Article 2 of the APA.

“Office of the Attorney General” (OAG) refers to the state agency headed by the Attorney General. The OAG reviews regulatory proposals at the emergency stage, the fast-track stage, and the proposed stage. In addition, the OAG must review a proposal at the final stage if changes with substantial impact, as determined by either the promulgating agency or DPB, have been made since the proposed stage.

“The *Virginia Register of Regulations*” (*Register*) refers to an official legal publication that provides information about proposed and final changes to Virginia’s regulations.

“Rulemaking or regulatory process” refers to the four types of rulemaking processes in Virginia: (1) emergency, (2) fast-track, (3) standard, and (4) exempt.

“Standard rulemaking process” refers to the default rulemaking process in Virginia. If a regulatory proposal does not meet the criteria for exempt, fast-track, or emergency rulemaking, it goes through the standard rulemaking process, generally consisting of three stages: NOIRA, proposed, and final.

“The Virginia Regulatory Town Hall website” (Town Hall) refers to the website managed by DPB and used by agencies to post regulatory proposals and to facilitate the regulatory review process.

“*Virginia Administrative Code*” (VAC) refers to Virginia’s official legal publication for regulations.

### **Policy and Principles**

The executive branch agencies of the Commonwealth must consider, review, and promulgate numerous regulations each year. This Executive Order sets out procedures and requirements to ensure the efficiency and quality of Virginia’s regulatory process. All state employees who draft, provide policy analysis for, or review regulations shall carefully consider and apply the principles outlined below during the regulatory development and review process.

#### **General**

- A. All regulatory activity should be undertaken with the least possible intrusion into the lives of the citizens of the Commonwealth and be necessary to protect the public health, safety, and welfare. Accordingly, agencies shall consider:
  - 1. The use of user fees or permits;
  - 2. The use of information disclosure requirements, rather than regulatory mandates, so that the public can make more informed choices;
  - 3. The use of performance standards in place of required techniques or behavior; and
  - 4. The consideration of reasonably available alternatives in lieu of regulation.
- B. Where applicable, and to the extent permitted by law, it shall be the policy of the Commonwealth that only regulations necessary to interpret the law or to protect the public health, safety, or welfare shall be promulgated. These principles shall be considered when an agency performs its periodic review of regulations pursuant to § 2.2-4017 and this Executive Order.
- C. Regulations shall be clearly written and easily understandable.
- D. Regulations shall be designed to achieve their intended objective in the most efficient, cost effective manner.

## **Regulatory Development**

- A. Regulatory development shall be based on the best reasonably available and reliable scientific, economic, and other information concerning the need for, and consequences of, the intended regulation. Agencies shall specifically cite the best reasonably available and reliable scientific, economic, or statistical data as well as any other information in support of regulatory proposals.
- B. Regulatory development shall be conducted in accordance with the statutory provisions related to impact on small businesses. DPB shall work with state agencies to address these requirements during the regulatory review process, including notifications, as appropriate, to the Joint Commission on Administrative Rules.
- C. During regulatory development, agencies shall consider the impact on existing and potential Virginia employers and their ability to maintain and increase the number of jobs in the Commonwealth, as well as the cost of compliance to the general public.

## **Public Participation**

- A. Agencies shall actively seek input for proposed regulations from interested parties, stakeholders, citizens, and members of the General Assembly.
- B. In addition to requirements established in Article 2 of the APA, agencies shall post all rulemaking actions on Town Hall to ensure that the public is adequately informed of rulemaking activities.
- C. All legal requirements and guidelines related to public participation shall be strictly followed to ensure that citizens have reasonable access and opportunity to present comments and concerns. Agencies shall inform interested persons of (1) Town Hall's email notification service that can send information regarding specific regulations, regulatory actions, and meetings about which citizens are interested, and (2) the process to submit comments in Town Hall public comment forums. Agencies shall establish procedures that provide for a timely written response to all comments and the inclusion of suggested changes that would improve the quality of the regulation.

## **Other**

- A. Agencies, as well as reviewing entities, shall perform their tasks in the regulatory process as expeditiously as possible and shall adhere to the timeframes set out in this Executive Order.
- B. Regulations are subject to periodic evaluation, review, and modification, as appropriate, in accordance with the APA, policy initiatives of the Governor, and legislation.

- C. Each agency head will be held accountable for ensuring that the policies and objectives specified in this Executive Order are followed. Agency heads shall ensure that information requested by DPB, a Cabinet Secretary, or the Office of the Governor, in connection with this Executive Order, is provided on a timely basis. Incomplete regulatory packages may be returned to the appropriate agency by DPB.

### **Applicability**

The review process in this Executive Order applies to rulemakings initiated by agencies of the Commonwealth of Virginia in accordance with Article 2 of the APA.

With the exception of the requirements governing the periodic review of existing regulations, the posting of meeting agenda and minutes, and the posting of guidance documents, agencies and agency regulatory action exempt from Article 2 of the APA are not subject to the requirements of this Executive Order. Nonetheless, the Governor, a Cabinet Secretary, or the Chief of Staff to the Governor may request in writing that an agency comply with all or part of the requirements of this Executive Order for regulations exempt from Article 2 of the APA. Copies of such requests shall be forwarded to the Governor's Policy Office and DPB. In addition, a Cabinet Secretary may request in writing that certain Article 2 exempt regulations be further exempted from all or part of the requirements of this Executive Order.

These procedures shall apply in addition to those already specified in the APA, the agencies' public participation guidelines, and the agencies' basic authorizing statutes. As of July 16, 2018, these procedures shall apply to all regulatory actions and stages that have been submitted to DPB for any stage of Executive Branch Review.

Any failure to comply with the requirements set forth herein shall in no way affect the validity of a regulation, create any cause of action or provide standing for any person under Article 5 of the APA (§ 2.2-4025 *et seq.* of the *Code of Virginia*), or otherwise challenge the actions of a government entity responsible for adopting or reviewing regulations.

### **Regulatory Review Process**

Regulations shall be subject to Executive Branch Review as specified herein. All agency regulatory packages shall be submitted via Town Hall. For each stage of the regulatory development process, agencies shall complete and post the applicable ABD on Town Hall to describe the regulatory action and inform the public about the substance and reasons for the rulemaking. Agencies shall ensure that the correct regulatory text is synchronized with the appropriate stage information page on Town Hall.

If a regulatory package is submitted to DPB, and DPB determines that the package is not substantially complete, then DPB shall notify the agency within 10 days. At that time, the agency must withdraw the package from Town Hall and resubmit the package after all missing elements identified by DPB have been added. Agencies shall submit regulatory packages to the Registrar for publication on Town Hall within 14 days of being authorized to do so.

In rulemakings where there are two or more stages, the filing of each stage shall be submitted on Town Hall as expeditiously as the subject matter allows and no later than 180 days after the conclusion of the public comment period for the prior stage.

## **A. Standard Rulemaking Process**

### **1. NOIRA Stage**

The NOIRA shall include the nature and scope of the regulatory changes being considered and the relevant sections of the VAC. This package shall include draft regulatory text if it is available.

DPB shall review the NOIRA to determine whether it complies with all requirements of this Executive Order and applicable statutes, and whether the contemplated regulatory action comports with the policy of the Commonwealth as set forth herein. Within 14 days of receiving a complete NOIRA review package from the agency, the Director of DPB or his designee shall advise the appropriate Cabinet Secretary and the Governor of DPB's determination.

If the Director of DPB or his designee advises the appropriate Cabinet Secretary and the Governor that the NOIRA presents issues requiring further review, the NOIRA shall be forwarded to the Cabinet Secretary. The Cabinet Secretary shall review the NOIRA within 14 days and forward a recommendation to the Governor. If DPB does not find issues requiring further review, the agency shall be authorized to submit the NOIRA to the *Register* for publication after the Governor approves the NOIRA.

The Chief of Staff to the Governor or his designee is hereby authorized to approve or disapprove NOIRAs on behalf of the Governor.

Public comments received following publication of the NOIRA should be encouraged and carefully considered in developing the proposed stage of a regulatory proposal.

### **2. Proposed Stage**

Following the initial public comment period required by § 2.2-4007.01 of the *Code of Virginia*, and taking into account the comments received, the agency shall prepare a regulatory review package.

At this stage, the proposed regulation and regulatory review package shall be in as close to final form as possible, including completed review by all appropriate regulatory advisory panels or negotiated rulemaking panels. New issues that were not disclosed to the public when the NOIRA was published shall not be addressed at the proposed stage.

The order of Executive Branch Review shall be as follows:

- a. OAG. The OAG will conduct a review of the proposed regulation and produce a memorandum assessing the agency’s legal authority to promulgate the regulation and determining whether the content of the proposed regulation conflicts with existing law. The OAG may also provide any advice, recommendations, or other comments for consideration by the Governor with respect to the proposed regulation. After the OAG has completed its review, the package will be submitted to DPB.
- b. DPB. DPB shall review the proposed regulatory package to determine whether it complies with all requirements of this Executive Order, applicable statutes, and other policies of the Commonwealth. Consistent with § 2.2-4007.04 of the *Code of Virginia*, within 45 days of receiving a complete regulatory review package, the Director of DPB or his designee shall prepare a policy analysis and EIA, and advise the appropriate Cabinet Secretary and the Governor of the results of the review.
- c. Cabinet Secretary. The Cabinet Secretary shall review the proposed regulation package within 14 days and forward a recommendation to the Governor.
- d. Governor. The Chief of Staff to the Governor or his designee is hereby authorized to approve or disapprove proposed regulations on behalf of the Governor.

### 3. **Revised Proposed Stage (Optional)**

Following the public comment period of the proposed stage, required by § 2.2-4007.03 of the *Code of Virginia*, the agency may wish to make additional changes and/or receive additional public comment by publishing a revised proposed regulation (as allowed by § 2.2-4007.03 of the *Code of Virginia*). The order of Executive Branch Review for the revised proposed stage shall be the same as for the Proposed Stage, with the exception that DPB will perform its duties within 21 days.

### 4. **Final Stage**

Following the approval of the proposed regulation package or the revised proposed regulation package, and taking into account all comments received during the prior stage, the rulemaking entity shall revise the proposed regulation.

If any change with substantial impact—as determined by DPB—has been made to the regulatory text between the proposed and final stages, the agency shall obtain a letter from the OAG certifying that the agency has authority to make the additional changes.

The order of Executive Branch Review shall be as follows:

- a. DPB. DPB shall review the final stage package to determine whether it complies with all requirements of this Executive Order, applicable statutes, and other policies of the Commonwealth. In particular, DPB shall assess the effect of any substantive changes made since the publication of the proposed regulation and the responsiveness of the agency to public comment. Within 21 days of receiving a complete final regulation package from the agency, the Director of DPB or his designee shall prepare a policy analysis advising the appropriate Cabinet Secretary and the Governor of the results of the review.
- b. Cabinet Secretary. The Cabinet Secretary shall review the final stage regulation package within 14 days and forward a recommendation to the Governor.
- c. Governor. The Chief of Staff to the Governor or his designee is hereby authorized to approve or disapprove proposed final regulations on behalf of the Governor.

## **B. Fast-Track Rulemaking Process**

The fast-track rulemaking process is for rules that are expected to be noncontroversial.

DPB shall review the fast-track regulation to determine whether it complies with all other requirements of this Executive Order and applicable statutes, and whether the contemplated regulatory action comports with the policies of the Commonwealth as set forth herein. DPB shall request the Governor's Office to determine if the fast-track process is appropriate when there is any question as to whether a package should be allowed to proceed in this manner. The Governor or his designee retains sole discretion to disapprove use of the fast-track rulemaking process when the Governor or his designee determines it is not in the public interest.

After a fast-track regulation has been submitted on Town Hall, Executive Branch Review will proceed as follows:

1. OAG. The OAG will conduct a review of the proposed fast-track regulation and produce a memorandum assessing the agency's legal authority to promulgate the regulation and determining that the content of the proposed regulation does not conflict with existing law. The OAG may also provide any advice, recommendations, or other comments for consideration by the Governor with respect to the fast-track regulation. After the OAG has completed its review, the package will be submitted to DPB.
2. DPB. DPB shall determine within 10 days or less whether the regulatory package is appropriate for the fast-track rulemaking process and communicate



this decision to the agency. After a package has been determined to be appropriate for the fast-track process, the Director of DPB or his designee shall have 30 days to prepare a policy analysis and EIA, and advise the appropriate Cabinet Secretary and the Governor of the results of the review.

3. Cabinet Secretary. The Cabinet Secretary shall review the fast-track regulation package within 14 days and forward a recommendation to the Governor.
4. Governor. The Chief of Staff to the Governor or his designee is hereby authorized to approve or disapprove fast-track regulations on behalf of the Governor.

### **C. Emergency Rulemaking Process**

Emergency regulations may be promulgated by an agency if it determines there is an emergency situation, consults with the OAG, and obtains the approval of the Governor or his designee. Emergency regulations may also be promulgated where Virginia statutory law, an Act of Assembly such as the appropriation act, federal law, or federal regulation requires that a state regulation be effective in 280 days or fewer from its enactment and the regulation is not exempt from the APA.

If the agency plans to replace the emergency regulation with a permanent regulation, it should file an Emergency/NOIRA stage. The order of Executive Branch Review shall be as follows:

1. OAG. The OAG will conduct a review of the proposed emergency regulation and produce a memorandum assessing the agency's legal authority to promulgate the regulation and determining that the content of the proposed regulation does not conflict with existing law. The OAG may also provide any advice, recommendations, or other comments for consideration by the Governor with respect to the proposed emergency regulation. After the OAG has completed its review, the package will be submitted to DPB.
2. DPB. DPB shall review the proposed emergency regulatory package to determine whether it complies with all requirements of this Executive Order, applicable statutes, and other policies of the Commonwealth. Within 14 days of receiving a complete emergency regulation package from the agency, the Director of DPB or his designee shall prepare a policy analysis, and advise the appropriate Secretary and the Governor of the results of the review.
3. Cabinet Secretary. The Cabinet Secretary shall review the proposed emergency regulation package within 10 days and forward a recommendation to the Governor.
4. Governor. The Chief of Staff to the Governor or his designee is hereby authorized to approve or disapprove emergency regulations on behalf of the

Governor.

An emergency regulation shall be effective for up to 18 months and may be extended for up to an additional six months if, despite the rulemaking entity's best efforts, a permanent replacement regulation cannot become effective before the emergency regulation expires. If an agency wishes to extend an emergency regulation beyond its initial effective period, the agency shall submit an emergency extension request to the Governor's Office via Town Hall as soon as the need for the extension is known, but no later than 30 days before the emergency regulation is set to expire. The emergency extension request must be granted prior to the expiration date of the emergency regulation, pursuant to § 2.2-4011(D) of the *Code of Virginia*.

#### **D. Periodic Review of Existing Regulations**

Existing state regulations shall be reviewed every four years to determine whether they should be continued without change or be amended or repealed, consistent with the stated objectives of applicable law, to minimize the economic impact on small businesses in a manner consistent with the stated objectives of applicable law, as regarding § 2.2-4007.1 of the *Code of Virginia*.

The regulatory review shall include: (1) the continued need for the rule; (2) the nature and complaints or comments received concerning the regulation from the public; (3) the complexity of the regulation; (4) the extent to which the regulation overlaps, duplicates, or conflicts with federal or state law or regulation; and (5) the length of time since the regulation has been evaluated or the degree to which technology, economic conditions, or other factors have changed in the area affected by the regulation.

Prior to commencement of the periodic regulatory review, the agency shall publish a notice of the review in the *Register* and post the notice on Town Hall. The agency shall provide a minimum of 21 days for public comment after publication of the notice. No later than 120 days after close of the public comment period, the agency shall publish a report of the findings of the regulatory review in the *Register* and post the report on Town Hall.

The periodic review shall include (1) a review by the Attorney General or his designee to ensure statutory authority for regulations, and (2) a determination by the Governor or his designee, whether the regulations are (a) necessary for the protection of public health, safety and welfare and (b) clearly written and easily understandable.

The periodic review must be conducted on Town Hall and may be accomplished either during the course of a comprehensive regulatory action using the standard rulemaking process, or by using the periodic review feature as follows:

1. If during the course of a comprehensive rulemaking, using the standard regulatory process, the agency plans to undertake a standard regulatory action, then the agency can fulfill the periodic review requirement by including a notice of a periodic review in the NOIRA. When the proposed stage is submitted for Executive Branch Review, the ABD shall include the result of

the periodic review. When a regulation has undergone a comprehensive review as part of a regulatory action and when the agency has solicited public comment on the regulation, a periodic review shall not be required until four years after the effective date of the regulatory action.

2. Using the periodic review feature. If, at the time of the periodic review, the agency has no plans to begin a comprehensive rulemaking using the standard rulemaking process, then the agency shall use the periodic review feature to announce and report the result of a periodic review using the appropriate Town Hall form. If the result of the periodic review is to amend or repeal the regulation, the agency shall link the periodic review with the subsequent action to amend or repeal the regulation.

### **Electronic Availability of Petitions and Documents**

Agencies shall post petitions for rulemaking and decisions to grant or deny the petitions on Town Hall, in accordance with the timeframes established in § 2.2-4007 of the *Code of Virginia*.

Executive branch agencies shall post the notice of, and agenda for, a public regulatory meeting on Town Hall at least seven days prior to the date of the meeting, except if it is necessary to hold an emergency meeting in which case the agenda shall be posted as soon as possible.

In addition, agencies that promulgate regulations and keep minutes of regulatory meetings shall post such minutes of those meetings on Town Hall in accordance with the timeframes established in §§ 2.2-3707 and 2.2-3707.1 of the *Code of Virginia*.

Agencies shall post all guidance documents or a link to each agency guidance document, as defined by § 2.2-4101 of the *Code of Virginia* on Town Hall. Any changes to a guidance document or a guidance document link shall be reflected on Town Hall within 10 days of the change.

**Effective Date of the Executive Order**

This Executive Order amends Executive Order No. 14 (2018) issued by Governor Ralph S. Northam and rescinds Executive Order No. 58 (1999) issued by Governor James S. Gilmore, III. This Executive Order shall become effective on July 16, 2018, and shall remain in full force and effect until June 30, 2022, unless amended or rescinded by further executive order.

Given under my hand and under the Seal of the Commonwealth of Virginia on this 16<sup>th</sup> day of July, 2018.



Handwritten signature of Ralph S. Northam in black ink.

Ralph S. Northam, Governor

Attest:

Handwritten signature of Kelly Thomasson in black ink.

Kelly Thomasson, Secretary of Commonwealth