

OFFICE OF THE



Justin L. Griffith
COMMONWEALTH'S ATTORNEY

Dina M. Branco
CHIEF DEPUTY

Travis H. Epes
SENIOR DEPUTY

James L. Crandall
DEPUTY ASSISTANT ATTORNEY

Selina N. Blessing
DEPUTY ASSISTANT ATTORNEY

Aaron L. Foster
DEPUTY ASSISTANT ATTORNEY

Dakota J. Crouse
ASSISTANT COMMONWEALTH' ATTORNEY

COMMONWEALTH'S ATTORNEY
COUNTY OF PULASKI
240 North Jefferson Avenue
PULASKI, VIRGINIA 24301
Phone: 540-980-7893
Fax: 540-980-7994

Katrina N. Dobbins
EXECUTIVE CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR

Sandra K. Lackey
SENIOR ADMINISTRATOR
JDR ADMINISTRATIVE

Jessica S. Farmer
GDC ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Mariah White
ASSISTANT/RECEPTIONIST

May 19th, 2026

IN RE: SB749/HB217

To the public,

During recent past Virginia General Assembly sessions, several Commonwealth's Attorneys in other areas of the Commonwealth, not in Pulaski County, proactively claimed they would not enforce a proposed amendment, by Governor Youngkin, if it were put into law. Those were preemptive declarations of Commonwealth's Attorneys of their intention to use their discretion in a way they believed was rooted in what their community members would support. That proposed amendment was never put into law and the invocation of the Commonwealth's Attorneys' discretion was never put to the test.

However, as you may or may not know, on May 14th, 2026, our Governor signed into law Senate Bill 749 and House Bill 217, commonly referred to as the ban on "assault weapons and large capacity magazines." In contrast, unlike the situation above, our community is not facing a proposal. The new law takes effect on July 1, 2026. While many legal scholars and have will argue this new law is unconstitutional, I choose to let the courts speak on that. Our Commonwealth should not need to be reminded that the Supreme Court of Virginia and the Supreme Court of the United States will make decisions that are necessary to keep laws and procedures within the legal tracks laid down before them.

It is clear that there are localities that support this new law, as evidenced by its passage in the General Assembly. In addition, the signing of this bill into law is within the purview of the

Governor's discretion. Localities that believe it is a necessary tool for justice in their communities can use it, unless, it is deemed unconstitutional by the courts. Virginia has many outstanding qualities, not least of which is each locality's utilization of its independent discretion.

As laid out above, enforcement of criminal laws is at the discretion of the Commonwealth's Attorney of each locality. As the Commonwealth's Attorney for Pulaski County, I must do my job by informing law enforcement officials of our enforcement plans. In addition, I must maintain my duty to my community, which includes knowing the will of the people and applying their will in a transparent and effective manner that maintains justice.

I am not going to take law abiding citizens as of June 30, 2026 and criminalize that same behavior on July 1, 2026 solely on the basis of this new law. Justice has been and will continue to be sought against those that use guns in the commission of crimes, outside of this new law. This new ban is not a necessary tool for justice in Pulaski County. What are necessary tools, including cooperation from victims and witnesses of gun crimes, are the laws that are in place at the time of this writing. They include but are not limited to:

- Felon in possession of firearm
- Use of firearm in commission of felony
- Discharge a firearm at a building
- Discharge a firearm at a school
- Discharge a firearm at a public place
- Brandishing a firearm without legal justification
- Discharge a firearm from a vehicle
- Possession of guns on school property
- Possession of firearm by previously involuntary committed
- Possession of firearms with drugs
- Robbery with firearm as a deadly weapon
- Breaking and Entering with a deadly weapon

The resources for justice in gun crimes in our community already exist. In addition, it is important to note that not one member of our elected Southwest Virginia delegation that represents our County voted for this new law. I genuinely and subjectively believe that my response to this new law is founded on the will of the majority of people in our community.

Accordingly, in Pulaski County, as we already do, we will work hand in hand with our law enforcement officials to obtain justice. That justice, however, will continue to be obtained without utilizing this new law.

Gladly serving,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Justin L. Griffith". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "J" and "G".

Justin L. Griffith