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New laws: Gun shops, assault cases, youth detention

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New laws regulating Colorado gun store licenses, firearm permits and the number of youth the state can keep in pretrial detention kicked into effect Tuesday.

The first day of July is typically one of the earliest effective dates for new laws passed by the legislature in the spring and winter, and it remains a common implementation day for bills passed in prior years, too.

Among the several new laws coming online Tuesday include a provision of a drug treatment bill that allows more access to medication-assisted treatment and requires improved tracking of detox services. Another brings an easing of requirements for people who inspect water or gas backflow devices.

One new law consolidates two crisis hotlines into one, making both reachable by calling 988, a mental health resource. Another ends a new program that has recognized employers designated as "recovery-friendly workplaces" for people with substance-use disorders. Here's a look at other new laws that went into effect Tuesday:

New gun regulations

Two holdovers from the 2024 legislative session kick into effect Tuesday. Part of a broader package of gun-control bills passed last year, both measures apply tighter regulations to segments of selling and carrying firearms. They were sponsored by Democratic lawmakers.

House Bill 24-1174 requires Coloradans seeking a concealed-carry permit to complete an in-person training class and pass a written exam and a live-fire exercise with a gun. The course must last at least eight hours, which can include both the written and live-fire tests.

House Bill 24-1353 requires gun shops to have a state license — on top of a federal permit — to sell firearms. They're required to conduct fingerprint background checks on their employees every three years while training staff on preventing self-harm or straw purchases, in which one person buys a weapon for another person.

Stores are also subject to random inspections. The law was intended to give local authorities more investigative — and, if necessary, punitive — power over gun stores, rather than relying on federal oversight.

Compromise on youth detention beds

The product of extensive behind-the-scenes negotiations this spring, House Bill 1146 allows more beds to be used to keep kids in custody before their trials. State law caps that number at 215 youths at any one time; HB-1146 increases the extra 22 emergency beds now allowed by another 17, but they are only to be used if the state has hit its 215 ceiling.

The bill's backers had initially sought to nearly double the bed cap. But pushback to the proposal — and Denver Post reporting about the lack of safety in the facilities — prompted the bill to be scaled back to a smaller, emergency-only boost.

The bipartisan bill also launches a pilot program for staff members to wear body-worn cameras in one detention facility and another commitment facility.

More judges across state

Senate Bill 24 adds 15 judges to various district and county courts across the state. Five of those positions are funded starting Tuesday, and the rest will kick in next year. This year, one new district judge will go to district courts for the judicial regions based in El Paso, Adams, Arapahoe and Douglas counties. La Plata County will also receive a new county judge.

Repealed grant programs

The Joint Budget Committee during this year's legislative session was not exactly a land of plenty. As such, budget-writing legislators trimmed, cut, reshuffled and repealed, until they'd scaled back spending by roughly \$1.2 billion.

Among the departing programs, officially repealed starting Tuesday, are a computer-science education grant for teachers in public schools; a fund to help high schools pay for advanced placement and International Baccalaureate exams; and grants for institutions of higher education to pay for programs for students with intellectual or developmental disabilities.

Expanded shield law

Last year, lawmakers passed House Bill 24-1072, which generally prohibited courts from allowing descriptions of a victim's clothing or past sexual history with their alleged assailant to be used in proceedings of criminal sexual assault cases.

This year, the legislature passed House Bill 1138, a bipartisan law that applies to civil cases about sexual assault. In those settings, speech, hairstyle, lifestyle and clothing generally can't be used as evidence related to consent, harm or credibility.

Defense attorneys can seek to include them, but that can happen only after a hearing with the judge overseeing the case. Past sexual history can also generally not be included, except for DNA and biological evidence intended to prove another person committed the assault.