

1 S.221
2 Introduced by Senator Sears
3 Referred to Committee on
4 Date:
5 Subject: Criminal procedures; firearms; extreme risk protection orders
6 Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to establish a
7 procedure for a law enforcement officer to obtain an extreme risk protection
8 order. The order would prohibit a person from possessing a firearm for up to
9 ~~one year~~ if the Family Division of the Superior Court finds by clear and
10 convincing evidence that the person poses a ~~significant~~ danger of causing
11 injury to ~~himself or herself or~~ another person by purchasing, possessing, or
12 receiving a firearm or by having a firearm within the person's custody or
13 control.

14 An act relating to establishing extreme risk protection orders
15 It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

16 Sec. 1. SHORT TITLE

17 This act shall be known as the Vermont Extreme Risk Protection Order Act.

18 Sec. 2. 13 V.S.A. chapter 85 is amended to read:

19 CHAPTER 85. WEAPONS

20 Subchapter 1. Generally

Commented [A1]: VFSC 2-11-18 This needs to be reduced to 3 months. The purported need for/ purpose of ERP Orders is to provide a quicker remedy than might be available via other modes/ mechanisms such as criminal court (prosecution/ conditions of release) or family court (relief from abuse order) or mental health proceedings (involuntary treatment). An ERP Order should not be a permanent or even long term solution in instances in which there is insufficient basis to proceed in any of those other manners.

Commented [A2]: VFSC 2-11-18 "significant" is too nebulous and subjective, needs to be replaced with "unusually severe"

Commented [A3]: VFSC 2-11-18 VFSC opposes "himself or herself" because there already exists the more appropriate remedy of mental health protective observation under Title 18 Chapter 179

1 * * *

2 Subchapter 2. Extreme Risk Protection Orders

3 § 4051. DEFINITIONS

4 As used in this subchapter:

5 (1) “Court” means the Family Division of the Superior Court.

6 (2) “Federally licensed firearms dealer” means a licensed importer,
7 licensed manufacturer, or licensed dealer required to conduct national instant
8 criminal background checks under 18 U.S.C. § 922(t).

9 (3) “Firearm” shall have the same meaning as in subsection 4017(d)
10 of this title.

11 (4) “Law enforcement agency” means the Vermont State Police, a
12 municipal police department, or a sheriff’s department.

13 § 4052. JURISDICTION AND VENUE

14 (a) The Family Division of the Superior Court shall have jurisdiction over
15 proceedings under this subchapter.

16 (b) Emergency orders under section 4054 of this title may be issued by a
17 judge of the Criminal, Civil, or Family Division of the Superior Court.

18 (c) Proceedings under this chapter shall be commenced in the county in
19 which the law enforcement agency is located.

1 § 4053. PETITION FOR EXTREME RISK PROTECTION ORDER

2 (a) A law enforcement officer may file a petition requesting that the court
3 issue an extreme risk protection order prohibiting a person from purchasing,
4 possessing, or receiving a firearm or having a firearm within the person's
5 custody or control. The petitioner shall submit an affidavit in support of the
6 petition.

Commented [A4]: VFSC 2-11-18: replace L.E.O. with "State's Attorney" so that requester is under appropriate duties of diligence and obligations as officer of the court

7 (b) Except as provided in section 4054 of this title, the court shall grant
8 relief only after notice to the respondent and a hearing. The petitioner shall
9 have the burden of proof by clear and convincing evidence.

10 (c)(1) A petition filed pursuant to this section shall allege that the
11 respondent poses a significant danger of causing injury to himself or herself or
12 another person by purchasing, possessing, or receiving a firearm or by having a
13 firearm within the respondent's custody or control.

Commented [A5]: VFSC 2-11-18: "significant" is too nebulous and subjective, needs to be replaced with "unusually severe"

Commented [A6]: VFSC 2-11-18 VFSC opposes "himself or herself" because there already exists the more appropriate remedy of mental health protective observation under Title 18 Chapter 179

14 (2) The affidavit in support of the petition shall state:

15 (A) the specific facts supporting the allegations in the petition;

16 (B) the number, types, and locations of any firearms the petitioner
17 believes to be in the respondent's possession, custody, or control; and

18 (C) whether the petitioner knows of an existing order with respect to
19 the respondent under 15 V.S.A. chapter 21 (abuse prevention orders) or
20 12 V.S.A. chapter 178 (orders against stalking or sexual assault).

1 (d) The court shall hold a hearing within seven days after a petition is filed
2 under this section. Notice of the hearing shall be served pursuant to section
3 4056 of this title concurrently with the petition and any ex parte order issued
4 under section 4054 of this title.

5 (e) The court may consider any relevant evidence in determining whether
6 to grant the petition, including:

7 (1) testimony from the petitioner, the respondent, and other relevant
8 witnesses;

9 (2) recent acts or threats of violence by the respondent against himself
10 or herself or another person;

11 (3) the respondent's criminal history;

12 (4) the respondent's history of use, attempted use, or threatened use of
13 physical force against another person;

14 (5) recent alcohol or drug abuse by the respondent;

15 (6) recent acquisition of firearms by the respondent;

16 (7) previous violations by the respondent of abuse prevention orders or
17 orders against stalking or harassment;

18 (8) previous unlawful or reckless use, display, or brandishing of a
19 firearm by the respondent; and

20 (9) previous extreme risk protection orders issued against the
21 respondent.

Commented [A7]: VFSC 2-11-18 VFSC opposes "himself or herself" because there already exists the more appropriate remedy of mental health protective observation under Title 18 Chapter 179

Commented [A8]: VFSC 2-11-18 replace with "violent criminal history within the last 5 years" - nonviolent criminal history is of no relevance, and distant past history is of no relevance. The entire idea of using past acts to prove current recent behavior is contrary to long-and-well-established principles of law and fairness (see VT Rule of Evidence 404(b)) and so if this is included at all, it needs to be narrowly and carefully tailored.

Commented [A9]: VFSC 2-11-18: Need to add qualifiers such as illegal or excessive alcohol or drug use

Commented [A10]: VFSC 2-11-18: Need to add illegal acquisition; the mere doing of a legal act of acquiring a firearm cannot be treated as a consideration tantamount to danger or misconduct

Commented [A11]: VFSC 2-11-18: this MUST be restricted to only ERP Orders issued after notice and hearing; otherwise the past presence of orders that were not upheld on the merits after hearing would have evidentiary weight- which is fundamentally offensive to basic fairness. Accordingly, add: "except that no previous order(s) issued ex parte pursuant to section 4054, at any time, may be considered in any manner or for any purpose."

1 (f)(1) The court shall grant the petition and issue an extreme risk protection
2 order if it finds by clear and convincing evidence that the respondent poses a
3 significant danger of causing injury to himself or herself or another person by
4 purchasing, possessing, or receiving a firearm or by having a firearm within
5 the respondent's custody or control.

6 (2) An order issued under this subsection shall prohibit a person from
7 purchasing, possessing, or receiving a firearm or having a firearm within the
8 person's custody or control for a period of up to one year. The order shall be
9 signed by the judge and include the following provisions:

10 (A) A statement of the grounds for issuance of the order.

11 (B) The name and address of the court where any filings should be
12 made, the names of the parties, the date of the petition, the date and time of the
13 order, and the date and time the order expires.

14 (C) A description of how to appeal the order.

15 (D) A description of the requirements for relinquishment of firearms
16 under section 4059 of this title.

17 (E) A description of how to request termination of the order under
18 section 4055 of this title. The court shall include with the order a form for a
19 motion to terminate the order.

Commented [A12]: VFSC 2-11-18: need to add "only" between existing "order" and "if" to underscore importance of clear and convincing standard, and need to add "specifically" in between "it" and "finds" to highlight that the need for the order must be based on and supported by specificity, not generality

Commented [A13]: VFSC 2-11-18: "significant" is too nebulous and subjective, needs to be replaced with "unusually severe"

Commented [A14]: VFSC 2-11-18 VFSC opposes "himself or herself" because there already exists the more appropriate remedy of mental health protective observation under Title 18 Chapter 179

Commented [A15]: VFSC 2-11-18: This needs to be reduced to 3 months. The purported need for/ purpose of ERP Orders is to provide a quicker remedy than might be available via other modes/ mechanisms such as criminal court (prosecution/ conditions of release) or family court (relief from abuse order) or mental health proceedings (involuntary treatment). An ERP Order should not be a permanent or even long-term solution in instances in which there is insufficient basis to proceed in any of those other manners.

Commented [A16]: VFSC 2-11-18: Need to add, supported by "specific findings of fact about specific facts" this is necessary to avoid invalidly conclusory "Krupp findings" that just repeat what someone said, without demonstrating weighing of the evidence and active ascertainment, discernment, and decision of credibility and relevance; Krupp findings have been recognized as dangerous and defective in VT for decades; see, e.g. In re Rumsey 2012 VT 74 ¶¶ 11-14
<https://www.vermontjudiciary.org/sites/default/files/documents/In%20re%20Rumsey.pdf>

1 (F) A statement directing the law enforcement agency, approved
2 federally licensed firearms dealer, or other person in possession of the firearms
3 to release them to the owner upon expiration of the order.

4 (G) A statement in substantially the following form:

5 “To the subject of this protection order: This order shall be in effect until
6 the date and time stated above. If you have not done so already, you are
7 required to surrender all firearms in your custody, control, or possession to
8 [insert name of law enforcement agency], a federally licensed firearms dealer,
9 or a person approved by the court. While this order is in effect, you are not
10 allowed to purchase, possess, or receive a firearm; attempt to purchase,
11 possess, or receive a firearm; or have a firearm in your custody or control.
12 You have the right to request ~~one~~ hearing to terminate this order during the
13 period that this order is in effect, starting from the date of this order. You may
14 seek the advice of an attorney regarding any matter connected with this order.”

15 (g) If the court denies a petition filed under this section, the court shall state
16 the particular reasons for the denial in its decision.

17 (h) No filing fee shall be required for a petition filed under this section.

18 (i) Form petitions and form orders shall be provided by the Court
19 Administrator and shall be maintained by the clerks of the courts.

20 (j) When findings are required under this section, the court shall make
21 ~~either written findings of fact or oral findings of fact on the record.~~

Commented [A17]: VFSC 2-11-18: As explained elsewhere, one hearing is too draconian, it should be a hearing, and if there is a limit on a second or additional hearing, it should be only that the movant must show a change in circumstances in order to request more than one hearing.

Commented [A18]: VFSC 2-11-18: Oral findings of fact place much too great a burden on the affected person who may wish to challenge a decision (or even to fully evaluate and understand a decision), especially someone who is subject to accusations that majorly affect their life and if the person is in any sort of time of stress or difficulty. Written findings are relatively easy for a person to examine and understand, decide whether to challenge, and then seek legal counsel and/or proceed pro se. Oral findings require ordering and then obtaining and listening to a recording, and potentially transcribing, the verbal findings in order to even fully understand, evaluate, or challenge the decision. These burdens of unwritten findings are offensive to the rights of a person subject to this sort of proceeding. If the circumstances do not justify the time and resources to make simple written findings of fact, then the circumstances do not justify issuance of an order.

1 (k) Every final order issued under this section shall bear the following
2 language: “VIOLATION OF THIS ORDER IS A CRIME SUBJECT TO A
3 TERM OF IMPRISONMENT OR A FINE, OR BOTH, AS PROVIDED BY
4 13 V.S.A. § 4058, AND MAY ALSO BE PROSECUTED AS CRIMINAL
5 CONTEMPT PUNISHABLE BY FINE OR IMPRISONMENT, OR BOTH.”

6 (l) Affidavit forms required pursuant to this section shall bear the following
7 language: “MAKING A FALSE STATEMENT IN THIS AFFIDAVIT IS A
8 CRIME SUBJECT TO A TERM OF IMPRISONMENT OR A FINE, OR
9 BOTH, AS PROVIDED BY 13 V.S.A. § 4058.”

10 § 4054. EMERGENCY RELIEF: TEMPORARY EX PARTE ORDER

11 (a) Concurrent with the filing of a petition under section 4053 of this title,
12 the petitioner may file a motion requesting that the extreme risk protection
13 order be issued ex parte, without notice to the respondent. The petitioner shall
14 submit an affidavit in support of the motion alleging that the respondent poses
15 an immediate and significant danger of causing injury to himself or herself or
16 another person by purchasing, possessing, or receiving a firearm or by having a
17 firearm within the respondent’s custody or control.

18 (b) The court shall hold a hearing on an ex parte motion filed pursuant to
19 this section on the day the motion is filed or on the day immediately following
20 the day the motion is filed. The court may consider any relevant evidence in

Commented [A19]: VFSC 2-11-18: “immediate” is too nebulous, especially for the ex parte scenario where an affected person has no right or opportunity to know of or respond to the allegations; it needs to be something like “especially imminent”; as noted above, “significant” is too nebulous and subjective and needs to be replaced with “unusually severe.”

Commented [A20]: VFSC 2-11-18 VFSC opposes “himself or herself” because there already exists the more appropriate remedy of mental health protective observation under Title 18 Chapter 179

1 determining whether to grant the petition, including the evidence described in
2 subsection 4053(e) of this title.

3 (c) The court shall grant the motion and issue a temporary ex parte extreme
4 risk protection order if it finds by clear and convincing evidence that the
5 respondent poses an immediate and significant danger of causing injury to
6 himself or herself or another person by purchasing, possessing, or receiving a
7 firearm or by having a firearm within the respondent's custody or control.

8 (d) As set forth in subsection 4053(d) of this title, the court shall hold a
9 hearing within seven days after the issuance of a temporary ex parte extreme
10 risk protection order to determine if a final extreme risk protection order
11 should be issued. The temporary ex parte extreme risk protection order shall
12 expire when the court grants or denies a motion for an extreme risk protection
13 order under section 4053 of this title.

14 (e) An order issued under this section shall prohibit a person from
15 purchasing, possessing, or receiving a firearm or having a firearm within the
16 person's custody or control for a period of up to seven days. The order shall be
17 signed by the judge and include the following provisions:

18 (1) A statement of the grounds for issuance of the order.

19 (2) The name and address of the court where any filings should be
20 made, the names of the parties, the date of the petition, the date and time of the
21 order, and the date and time the order expires.

Commented [A21]: VFSC 2-11-18: As, and for reasons, noted above add "only" between "order" and "if" and add "specifically" between "it" and "finds"

Commented [A22]: VFSC 2-11-18. Per above this needs to be "especially imminent and unusually severe"

Commented [A23]: VFSC 2-11-18" Need to add a sentence here: "No such order shall issue unless it contains specific written findings of fact that clearly and distinctly support not only a general order, but the specific heightened standard of showing, as required in this subsection, for the ex parte order."

Commented [A24]: VFSC 2-11-18 Need to add "The prior issuance of an ex parte order shall carry no evidentiary weight of any sort at the subsequent hearing under section 4053 of this title."

1 (3) The date and time of the hearing when the respondent may appear to
2 contest the order before the court. This opportunity to contest shall be
3 scheduled as soon as reasonably possible, which in no event shall be more than
4 seven days after the date of issuance of the order.

5 (4) A description of the requirements for relinquishment of firearms
6 under section 4059 of this title.

7 (5) A description of how to request termination of the order under
8 section 4055 of this title. The court shall include with the order a form for a
9 motion to terminate the order.

10 (6) A statement in substantially the following form:

11 “To the subject of this protection order: This order shall be in effect
12 until the date and time stated above. If you have not done so already, you are
13 required to surrender all firearms in your custody, control, or possession to
14 [insert name of law enforcement agency], a federally licensed firearms dealer,
15 or a person approved by the court. While this order is in effect, you are not
16 allowed to purchase, possess, or receive a firearm; attempt to purchase,
17 possess, or receive a firearm; or have a firearm in your custody or control. A
18 hearing will be held on the date and time noted above to determine if a final
19 extreme risk prevention order should be issued. Failure to appear at that
20 hearing may result in a court making an order against you that is valid for up to

1 one year. You may seek the advice of an attorney regarding any matter
2 connected with this order.”

3 (f) Form motions and form orders shall be provided by the Court
4 Administrator and shall be maintained by the clerks of the courts.

5 (g) Every order issued under this section shall bear the following language:
6 “VIOLATION OF THIS ORDER IS A CRIME SUBJECT TO A TERM OF
7 IMPRISONMENT OR A FINE, OR BOTH, AS PROVIDED BY 13 V.S.A.
8 § 4058, AND MAY ALSO BE PROSECUTED AS CRIMINAL CONTEMPT
9 PUNISHABLE BY FINE OR IMPRISONMENT, OR BOTH.”

10 (h) Affidavit forms required pursuant to this section shall bear the
11 following language: “MAKING A FALSE STATEMENT IN THIS
12 AFFIDAVIT IS A CRIME SUBJECT TO A TERM OF IMPRISONMENT
13 OR A FINE, OR BOTH, AS PROVIDED BY 13 V.S.A. § 4058.”

14 (i) If the court denies a petition filed under this section, the court shall state
15 the particular reasons for the denial in its decision.

16 § 4055. TERMINATION AND RENEWAL MOTIONS

17 (a)(1) The respondent may file a motion to terminate an extreme risk
18 protection order issued under section 4053 of this title or renewed under
19 subsection (b) of this section. A motion to terminate shall not be filed more
20 than once during the effective period of the order. The respondent shall have
21 the burden of proof by clear and convincing evidence.

Commented [A25]: VFSC 2-11-18: Needs to be 3 months; see notes above in prior 1y/3mo setting that the E.R.P. Order should not be a long term substitute for proceedings in the criminal, family, or mental health contexts in which the proceedings are more protective of the rights of the person subject to allegations

Commented [A26]: VFSC 2-11-18: This “once only” bar is needlessly draconian and should be made more flexible by adding a standard similar to that from family court “unless a motion other than the first motion to terminate is accompanied by facts showing a real and substantial change of circumstances.”

Commented [A27]: VFSC 2-11-18: The idea that the person seeking relief should have a burden of clear and convincing evidence is wildly offensive to concepts of fairness and due process, and protection of any civil liberties. Even a convicted murderer seeking post-conviction relief bears a burden of only a preponderance of the evidence of a flaw in the prior proceedings. The purpose of the clear and convincing standard of proof is a standard imposed on the government, to raise the bar for the State, in order to serve as a safeguard of the rights of a person against action by the government that is of severe consequence to the affected person. “Clear and convincing” is above the ordinary civil “preponderance” standard but below the criminal “beyond a reasonable doubt” standard. Where the court has already found a clear and convincing basis to issue an ERP Order, to put a burden of “clear and convincing” on a person to obtain relief is oppressive and invalid. The person seeking relief should only have to show a preponderance of evidence.

1 (2) The court shall grant the motion and terminate the extreme risk
2 protection order if it finds by clear and convincing evidence that the
3 respondent no longer poses a significant danger of causing injury to himself or
4 herself or another person by purchasing, possessing, or receiving a firearm or
5 by having a firearm within the respondent's custody or control.

6 (b)(1) A law enforcement officer may file a motion requesting that the
7 court renew an extreme risk protection order issued under this section or
8 section 4053 of this title for an additional period of up to one year. The motion
9 shall be accompanied by an affidavit and shall be filed not more than 30 days
10 and not less than 14 days before the expiration date of the order. The motion
11 and affidavit shall comply with the requirements of section 4053(c) of this title,
12 and the moving party shall have the burden of proof by clear and convincing
13 evidence.

14 (2) The court shall grant the motion and renew the extreme risk
15 protection order for an additional period of up to one year if it finds by clear
16 and convincing evidence that the respondent continues to pose a significant
17 danger of causing injury to himself or herself or another person by purchasing,
18 possessing, or receiving a firearm or by having a firearm within the
19 respondent's custody or control. The order shall comply with the requirements
20 of subdivision 4053(f)(2) and subsections 4053(j) and (k) of this title.

Commented [A28]: VFSC 2-11-18 As explained elsewhere, placing a clear and convincing burden on the person subject to the order, to try to have the order terminated, is fundamentally and wildly unfair. Even a convicted murder need only show a preponderance of evidence of flawed prior proceedings in order to successfully obtain post-conviction relief. This burden must be only preponderance of evidence

Commented [A29]: VFSC 2-11-18 VFSC opposes "himself or herself" because there already exists the more appropriate remedy of mental health protective observation under Title 18 Chapter 179

Commented [A30]: VFSC 2-11-18 **VFSC believes that the maximum duration of an ERP Order should be three months, with no option to renew.** The purported need for/ purpose of ERP Orders is to provide a quicker remedy than might be available via other modes/ mechanisms such as criminal court (prosecution/ conditions of release) or family court (relief from abuse order) or mental health proceedings (involuntary treatment). An ERP Order should not be a permanent or even long term solution in instances in which there is insufficient basis to proceed in any of those other manners. **VFSC believes that the renewal option needs to be deleted entirely, and VFSC's recommendations for revisions within the renewal options are conditional recommendations only if the renewal option is not removed from the legislation,**

Commented [A31]: VFSC 2-11-18: Needs to be "State's Attorney," for same reason as above so that requester is under appropriate duties of diligence and obligations as officer of the court

Commented [A32]: VFSC 2-11-18 Need to add "the request for renewal must contain specific facts regarding current circumstances, not merely the same circumstances referenced in the original petition or order, that continue to justify relief."

Commented [A33]: VFSC 2-11-18: Needs to be three months, for same reasons noted above that ERP Order must not take the place of proceedings in the criminal, family, or mental health context that are more protective of the person subject to the allegations.

Commented [A34]: VFSC 2-11-18: Need to specifically revise as in earlier instances to "only if it specifically finds"

Commented [A35]: VFSC 2-11-18: Need to add: "of specific facts regarding current circumstances, not merely the same circumstances referenced in the original petition or order"

Commented [A36]: VFSC 2-11-18: "significant" is too nebulous and subjective, needs to be replaced with "unusually severe"

1 (c) The court shall hold a hearing within 14 days after a motion to
2 terminate or a motion to renew is filed under this section. Notice of the
3 hearing shall be served pursuant to section 4056 of this title concurrently with
4 the motion. The court may consider ~~any relevant evidence in determining~~
5 ~~whether to grant the motion, including~~ the evidence described in subsection
6 4053(e) of this title.

Commented [A37]: VFSC 2-11-18" "any relevant evidence" is no standard at all and is a red carpet invitation to arbitrary and unsupported action.

7 (d) If the court denies a motion filed under this section, the court shall state
8 the particular reasons for the denial in its decision.

Commented [A38]: VFSC 2-11-18: Need to add "except that an order continuing the relief must contain specific written findings of fact contemporaneous to the decision to continue the relief and supporting the decision to continue the relief."

9 (e) Form termination and form renewal motions shall be provided by the
10 Court Administrator and shall be maintained by the clerks of the courts.

11 (f) When findings are required under this section, the court shall make
12 either written findings of fact or oral findings of fact on the record.

Commented [A39]: VFSC 2-11-18: See comment above about unacceptable burden that oral findings present to a person who is subject to this type of proceeding

13 § 4056. SERVICE

14 (a) A petition, ex parte temporary order, or final order issued under this
15 subchapter shall be served in accordance with the Vermont Rules of Civil
16 Procedure and may be served by any law enforcement officer. A court that
17 issues an order under this chapter during court hours shall promptly transmit
18 the order electronically or by other means to a law enforcement agency for
19 service.

20 (b) A respondent who attends a hearing held under section 4053, 4054, or
21 4055 of this title at which a temporary or final order under this subchapter is

1 issued and who receives notice from the court on the record that the order has
2 been issued shall be deemed to have been served. A respondent notified by the
3 court on the record shall be required to adhere immediately to the provisions of
4 the order. However, even when the court has previously notified the
5 respondent of the order, the court shall transmit the order for additional service
6 by a law enforcement agency.

7 (c) Extreme risk protection orders shall be served by the law enforcement
8 agency at the earliest possible time and shall take precedence over other
9 summonses and orders. Orders shall be served in a manner calculated to
10 ensure the safety of the parties. Methods of service that include advance
11 notification to the respondent shall not be used. The person making service
12 shall file a return of service with the court stating the date, time, and place at
13 which the order was delivered personally to the respondent.

14 (d) If service of a notice of hearing issued under section 4053 or section
15 4055 of this title cannot be made before the scheduled hearing, the court shall
16 continue the hearing and extend the terms of the order upon request of the
17 petitioner for such additional time as it deems necessary to achieve service on
18 the respondent.

19 § 4057. PROCEDURE

20 (a) Except as otherwise specified, proceedings commenced under this
21 subchapter shall be in accordance with the Vermont Rules for Family

1 Proceedings and shall be in addition to any other available civil or criminal
2 remedies.

3 (b) The Court Administrator shall establish procedures to ensure access to
4 relief after regular court hours or on weekends and holidays. The Court
5 Administrator is authorized to contract with public or private agencies to assist
6 petitioners to seek relief and to gain access to Superior Courts. Law
7 enforcement agencies shall assist in carrying out the intent of this section.

8 (c) The Court Administrator shall ensure that the Superior Court has
9 procedures in place so that the contents of orders and pendency of other
10 proceedings can be known to all courts for cases in which an extreme risk
11 protection order proceeding is related to a criminal proceeding.

12 § 4058. ENFORCEMENT; CRIMINAL PENALTIES

13 (a) Law enforcement officers are authorized to enforce orders issued under
14 this chapter. Enforcement may include collecting and disposing of firearms
15 pursuant to section 4059 of this title and making an arrest in accordance with
16 the provisions of Rule 3 of the Vermont Rules of Criminal Procedure.

17 (b)(1) A person who intentionally commits an act prohibited by a court or
18 fails to perform an act ordered by a court, in violation of an extreme risk
19 protection order issued pursuant to section 4053, 4054, or 4055 of this title,
20 after the person has been served with notice of the contents of the order as

1 provided for in this subchapter, shall be imprisoned not more than one year or
2 fined not more than \$1,000.00, or both.

3 (2) A person who files a petition for an extreme risk protection order
4 under this subchapter knowing that information in the petition is false or with
5 the intent to harass the respondent shall ~~be imprisoned not more than one year~~
6 ~~or fined not more than \$1,000.00, or both.~~

7 (c) In addition to the provisions of subsections (a) and (b) of this section,
8 violation of an order issued under this subchapter may be prosecuted as
9 criminal contempt under Rule 42 of Vermont Rules of Criminal Procedure.
10 The prosecution for criminal contempt may be initiated by the State's Attorney
11 in the county in which the violation occurred. The maximum penalty that may
12 be imposed under this subsection shall be a fine of \$1,000.00 or imprisonment
13 for six months, or both. A sentence of imprisonment upon conviction for
14 criminal contempt may be stayed, in the discretion of the court, pending the
15 expiration of the time allowed for filing notice of appeal or pending appeal if
16 any appeal is taken.

17 § 4059. RELINQUISHMENT, STORAGE, AND RETURN OF FIREARMS

18 (a)(1) A person who is required to relinquish a firearm in the person's
19 possession, custody, or control by an extreme risk protection order issued
20 under section 4053, 4054, or 4055 of this title shall, unless the court orders an
21 alternative relinquishment pursuant to subdivision (2) of this subsection, upon

Commented [A40]: VFSC 2-11-18 'shall be subject to punishment in accordance with 13 V.S.A. § 1701.' The penalty for intentional mis-use of this mechanism must be clear and severe.

1 service of the order immediately relinquish the firearm to a cooperating law
2 enforcement agency or an approved federally licensed firearms dealer.

3 (2)(A) The court may order that the person relinquish the firearm to a
4 person other than a cooperating law enforcement agency or an approved
5 federally licensed firearms dealer unless the court finds that relinquishment to
6 the other person will not adequately protect the safety of any person.

7 (B) A person to whom a firearm is relinquished pursuant to
8 subdivision (A) of this subdivision (2) shall execute an affidavit on a form
9 approved by the Court Administrator stating that the person:

10 (i) acknowledges receipt of the firearm;

11 (ii) assumes responsibility for storage of the firearm until further
12 order of the court and specifies the manner in which he or she will provide
13 secure storage;

14 (iii) is not prohibited from owning or possessing firearms under
15 State or federal law; and

16 (iv) understands the obligations and requirements of the court
17 order, including the potential for the person to be subject to civil contempt
18 proceedings pursuant to subdivision (C) of this subdivision (2) if the person
19 permits the firearm to be possessed, accessed, or used by the person who
20 relinquished the item or by any other person not authorized by law to do so.

1 (C) A person to whom a firearm is relinquished pursuant to
2 subdivision (A) of this subdivision (2) shall be subject to civil contempt
3 proceedings under 12 V.S.A. chapter 5 if the person permits the firearm to be
4 possessed, accessed, or used by the person who relinquished the item or by any
5 other person not authorized by law to do so. In the event that the person
6 required to relinquish the firearm or any other person not authorized by law to
7 possess the relinquished item obtains access to, possession of, or use of a
8 relinquished item, all relinquished items shall be immediately transferred to the
9 possession of a law enforcement agency or approved federally licensed
10 firearms dealer pursuant to subdivision (b)(1) of this section.

11 (b) A law enforcement agency or an approved federally licensed firearms
12 dealer that takes possession of a firearm pursuant to subdivision (a)(1) of this
13 section shall photograph, catalogue, and store the item in accordance with
14 standards and guidelines established by the Department of Public Safety
15 pursuant to 20 V.S.A. § 2307(i)(3). A firearm shall not be taken into
16 possession pursuant to this section if it is being or may be used as evidence in a
17 pending criminal matter.

18 (c) Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit the lawful sale of
19 firearms or other items.

20 (d) An extreme risk protection order issued pursuant to section 4053 of this
21 title or renewed pursuant to section 4055 of this title shall direct the law

1 enforcement agency, approved federally licensed firearms dealer, or other
2 person in possession of the firearm under subsection (a) of this section to
3 release it to the owner upon expiration of the order.

4 (e)(1) A law enforcement agency, an approved federally licensed firearms
5 dealer, or any other person who takes possession of a firearm for storage
6 purposes pursuant to this section shall not release it to the owner without a
7 court order unless the firearm is to be sold pursuant to subdivision (2)(A) of
8 this subsection. If a court orders the release of a firearm stored under this
9 section, the law enforcement agency or firearms dealer in possession of the
10 firearm shall make it available to the owner within three business days after
11 receipt of the order and in a manner consistent with federal law.

12 (2)(A)(i) If the owner fails to retrieve the firearm within 90 days after
13 the court order releasing it, the firearm may be sold for fair market value. Title
14 to the firearm shall pass to the law enforcement agency or firearms dealer for
15 the purpose of transferring ownership.

16 (ii) The law enforcement agency or firearms dealer shall make a
17 reasonable effort to notify the owner of the sale before it occurs. In no event
18 shall the sale occur until after the court issues a final extreme risk protection
19 order pursuant to section 4053 of this title.

1 (iii) As used in this subdivision (2)(A), “reasonable effort” shall
2 mean notice shall be served as provided for by Rule 4 of the Vermont Rules of
3 Civil Procedure.

4 (B) Proceeds from the sale of a firearm pursuant to subdivision (A) of
5 this subdivision (2) shall be apportioned as follows:

6 (i) associated costs, including the costs of sale and of locating and
7 servicing the owner, shall be paid to the law enforcement agency or firearms
8 dealer that incurred the cost; and

9 (ii) any proceeds remaining after payment is made to the law
10 enforcement agency or firearms dealer pursuant to subdivision (i) of this
11 subdivision (2)(B) shall be paid to the original owner.

12 (f) A law enforcement agency shall be immune from civil or criminal
13 liability for any damage or deterioration of a firearm stored or transported
14 pursuant to this section. This subsection shall not apply if the damage or
15 deterioration occurred as a result of recklessness, gross negligence, or
16 intentional misconduct by the law enforcement agency.

17 (g) This section shall be implemented consistent with the standards and
18 guidelines established by the Department of Public Safety under 20 V.S.A.
19 § 2307(i).

1 § 4060. APPEALS

2 An extreme risk protection order issued by the court under section 4053 or
3 section 4055 of this title shall be treated as a final order for the purposes of
4 appeal. Appeal may be taken by either party to the Supreme Court under the
5 Vermont Rules of Appellate Procedure, and the appeal shall be determined
6 forthwith.

7 Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

8 This act shall take effect on July 1, 2018.