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***General Assembly Sustains Governor's Veto on "Triggerman Bill,"
Overrides Vetoes of Other Death-Penalty Expansions***

This afternoon, the Virginia General Assembly upheld the Governor's veto of legislation that would have eliminated the Commonwealth's "triggerman limitation" and thereby permitted murder accomplices to receive death sentences (which under current laws are generally reserved for the actual perpetrators). After the House's attempt to overturn the veto succeeded by a 79-21 vote, the Senate's override vote was 25-14, which fell short of the required two-thirds majority. By considerable margins, both the House and the Senate did, however, override the Governor's vetoes of legislation making it a capital crime to murder a judge or a subpoenaed crime witness.

Virginia Catholic Conference Director Jeff Caruso called today's outcomes "a mixed bag, but somewhat encouraging overall because the bill that was by far the widest of the three death-penalty expansions was rejected." He also said grassroots advocacy in favor of the Governor's vetoes by the members of a coalition of networks was "a sign of great hope."

Since the U.S. Supreme Court reinstated the death penalty in 1976, Virginia has carried out 98 executions, more than any state except Texas. Caruso said the sustained veto of the bill applying to accomplices "shows that our legislature is at least willing to set some limit on a system of punishment that has been used with alarming frequency in our state." He expressed hope that lawmakers "would begin looking for ways to curb use of the death penalty rather than expand it in the future."