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Dover – Criminals who illegally carry a concealed firearm will now face longer prison sentences under a law Governor Jack Markell signed today that was written by Attorney General Beau Biden's office.

"Gun violence is an unfortunate reality in many parts of our state," Attorney General Biden said. "Thanks to this new law, criminals who illegally carry concealed firearms will be strictly punished. This legislation is a necessary common-sense tool in our fight against crime and our efforts to enhance public safety for all Delawareans."

"It's great to welcome back our Attorney General with a solid success, the signing of legislation that would increase the penalty for carrying a concealed firearm in our communities without a license," Governor Markell said. "This legislation gives judges the opportunity to hold people who are already breaking the law more accountable."

Specifically, House Bill 226:

- Enhances the penalty when an individual is arrested for carrying a concealed firearm by increasing the maximum jail sentence from 2 years to 8 years
- Adds the charge of carrying a concealed deadly weapon to

Delaware's list of violent felonies when that weapon is a firearm. Under Delaware's sentencing guidelines, crimes classified as violent felonies are subject to higher presumptive sentences, and habitual offenders charged with this crime now face mandatory jail terms.

Rep. Larry Mitchell, D-Elsmere, the bill's chief House sponsor, said that carrying a concealed firearm is a serious offense and should be treated accordingly. "Illegally carrying a concealed firearm poses a serious public safety risk," said Rep. Mitchell, a retired New Castle County police officer. "There is no good reason for someone to illegally hide a handgun in public, and anyone who circumvents the law should face serious consequences."

Sen. Brian Bushweller, D-Dover, the bill's chief Senate sponsor said he hopes the bill will have a deterrent effect on gun crime. "This is a very narrowly targeted bill that increases penalties only for carrying a concealed weapon when that weapon is a firearm," he said. "By increasing the felony penalty, we're sending a message that this is serious and it is my hope that it will make someone think twice before using a concealed gun to commit a crime."

House Bill 226 was passed unanimously by the Delaware House and Senate.

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