



NEWSLETTER

SPRING EDITION 2017

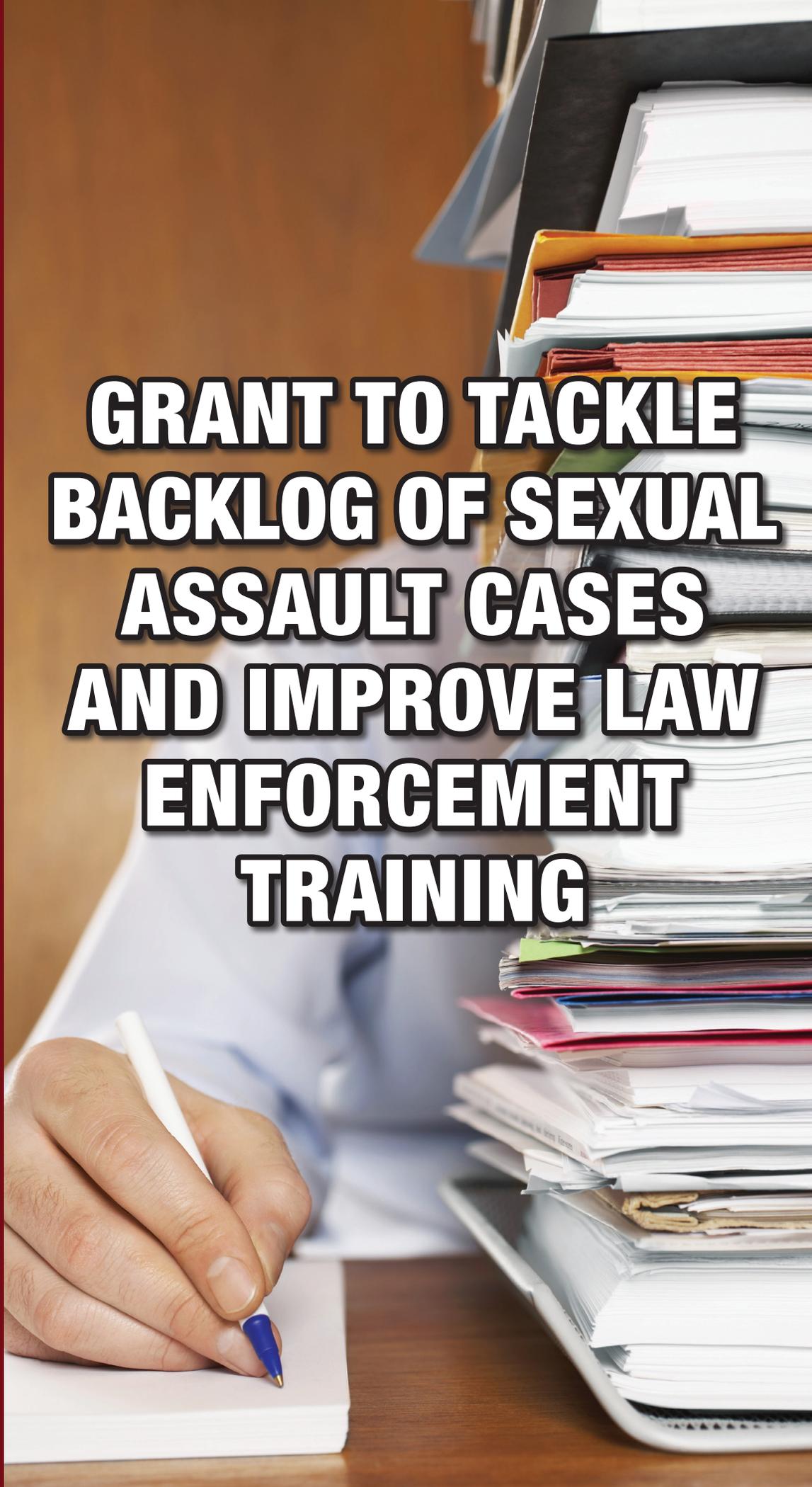


John W. Jones
Executive Director
951 East Byrd Street, Suite 905
Richmond, Virginia 23219
(804) 225-7152

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GRANT TO TACKLE BACKLOG OF SEXUAL ASSAULT CASES AND IMPROVE LAW ENFORCEMENT TRAINING





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GRANT TO IMPROVE HANDLING OF SEXUAL ASSAULT CASES

In January, Attorney General Mark Herring and the Virginia Department of Forensic Science announced that they had secured a \$2 million federal grant to improve the way Virginia handles sexual assaults, from evidence collection and testing, to investigation and ongoing survivor support services.

At the beginning of the year, there were 2,000 untested sexual assault kits sitting on shelves across the Commonwealth. This federal grant will help clear out this backlog and help victims seek justice. In addition, the grant will expand specialized training for Virginia law enforcement, including "Trauma Informed Sexual Assault Investigation Training" and "Identifying and Preventing Gender Bias in Law



Enforcement Response to Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence."

According to Attorney General Herring: "Survivors are going to be met with a more informed and compassionate response, cases against perpetrators will be stronger, and every survivor will know that their Commonwealth stands with them as they seek justice and healing from these brutal crimes."

ANNUAL VSI SPRING CONFERENCE

Over 250 Virginia sheriffs, management level deputies, and guests are taking part in the 2017 Virginia Sheriffs' Institute's Spring Conference and Virginia Sheriffs' Association Exhibition, and we expect a tremendous turnout at this year's conference to be held on April 19-21, 2017 at the Norfolk Waterside Marriott, in Norfolk, Virginia.

The VSI Spring Conference is an important forum for sheriffs, deputies, and Virginia legislators to discuss how legislation

passed during the 2017 General Assembly could impact the duties of sheriff's offices in the state of Virginia.

In addition, important training sessions to enhance crime prevention efforts by public safety officers are featured as part of the conference.

The Virginia Sheriffs' Association's upcoming 84th Annual Conference will be held September 12-14 in Williamsburg, Virginia.

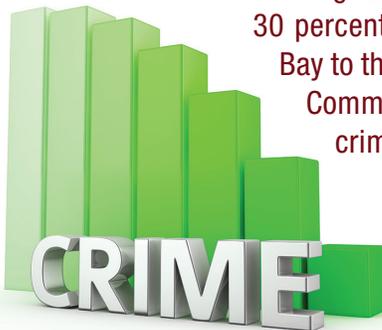


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VIRGINIA CRIME RATE BELOW NATIONAL AVERAGE

According to the latest FBI crime data, Virginia's overall crime rate is 30 percent less than the national average. From the Chesapeake Bay to the Appalachian Mountains, safe cities are found across the Commonwealth. Virginia also ranked 10th lowest for property crime in 2015.



In fact 15 of the 20 safest cities in Virginia reported fewer than 20 total violent crimes, 16 cited zero incidents of murder, and two cited no violent crimes whatsoever.

DRUG DISPOSAL KITS NOW AVAILABLE



Law enforcement agencies across Virginia will participate in the National Prescription Drug Take-Back Initiative on April 29, 2017. The goal of this nationwide effort is to prevent prescription drug abuse and to keep trace drugs out of our lakes and streams. In communities all across the Commonwealth citizens will participate by dropping off their unused, unwanted, or expired medications at their local law enforcement agencies for safe disposal.

In Virginia, abuse and overdose deaths continue to rise. In fact prescription opioid overdose deaths have risen 44 percent between 2007 and 2015, from 399 to 576; while heroin overdose deaths have risen more than 600 percent between 2010 and 2015, from 48 to 342.

Given the strong link between misuse of prescription opioids and opioid addiction, Attorney General Mark Herring has secured the donation of 80,000 individually sized drug deactivation kits, which are capable of safely disposing 3.6 million leftover prescription pills. These kits are being made available to Virginians with excess or unused prescription opioids or other drugs at dozens of locations across the Commonwealth, including health care and law enforcement agencies.

VSI is proud to support this important effort to keep dangerous pharmaceuticals from misuse and abuse, as well as preventing trace contamination of our water resources.

SCHOLARSHIP DEADLINE FAST APPROACHING

One of the many benefits the Virginia Sheriffs' Institute offers is our scholarship program. This award is granted to full-time or part-time students majoring in criminal justice and attending a Virginia state college or university. In fact, with the help of loyal members like you, we've awarded 87 scholarships for the 2016-2017 academic year to Virginia's youth.

Scholarship applications are currently available to be downloaded from our website. In addition to the application, students must submit SAT/ACT scores, transcripts, a copy of the student's voter registration card if the student is 18, and an essay. A full list of application materials can be found at <https://vasheriffsinstitute.org/scholarship/>. Applications are due May 1, 2017.

VACATION SAFETY TIPS

As warmer weather arrives in the Commonwealth, you and other residents may be planning your next vacation. And whether you decide to travel within our great state, or venture out of state or even out of the country, there are some important safety tips you should keep in mind to ensure your vacation is stress-free.

To protect your property from would-be burglars, make your house appear like someone is always home. Your neighbors can help play a critical role by taking out your trash containers or mowing your lawn if you're planning to be gone for a long time. Others steps you can take include leaving a second car in your driveway, turning off the ringers on your phones, and setting timers on lights, radios, and TVs.

Here are some personal safety tips to keep in mind while on vacation:

- Carry your purse close to your body, with your wallet secured in an inside pocket.
- Do not travel with large sums of money.
- Avoid displaying expensive cameras, jewelry, or luggage.
- Park in well-lit areas.
- Try to blend into the crowd.
- Provide family members with a map of your destination with the name and telephone number of where you are staying.



PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM VSI EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, JOHN W. JONES



On behalf of all of us at the Virginia Sheriffs' Institute, I hope you and your family are eager to say farewell to winter and welcome a return of spring to the Commonwealth.

Of course many Virginia residents and their families will be taking to the roadways, enjoying the change of season, and exploring all of the wonderful family-oriented events, parks, and

scenery Virginia has to offer. So I encourage drivers to be extra vigilant, especially as this time of year brings many out-of-state visitors to our area.

Please remember: COURTESY, CAUTION and COMMON SENSE are the most important rules of the road!

As I mentioned in this newsletter, if you're traveling out of town on vacation, there are some simple steps to take to keep your property safe. In addition, there are preventative steps you can take to ensure your family has an enjoyable and stress-free vacation.

Of course the goal of VSI is to provide the highest level of service to our community and to promote public safety. As always I urge you to help your local law enforcement efforts by reporting crimes and suspicious activity when you see them so that we can do our very best to keep this community a safe place to work, play, live, and raise our families.

As Executive Director of VSI, I want to know what you consider important and necessary to keep ours a safe community.

I deeply appreciate your support of the Virginia Sheriffs' Institute!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John W. Jones".

John W. Jones, Executive Director
Virginia Sheriffs' Institute
951 East Byrd Street, Suite 905
Richmond, Virginia 23219

UPDATE ON STAFF COMPENSATION ISSUE

We're proud to report that the General Assembly, in a year with a \$1.5 million budget shortfall, provided raises to Virginia's law enforcement community. The General Assembly approved the career development and compression pay raises offered by Governor McAuliffe and increased the bonus proposed by the governor to a pay raise of 2% effective August 1, 2017. These three types of raises together are meaningful to the deputy sheriffs across Virginia. Special appreciation is expressed to Senator Jill Vogel, Senator Tommy Norment, Senator Emmett Hanger, Delegate Charles Poindexter and Delegate Chris Jones for working together to arrive at this conclusion.

Additionally, the General Assembly approved legislation that allows sheriffs to purchase sheriffs' vehicles off a contract negotiated and offered by the Virginia Sheriffs' Association (VSA). Not only does this speak well of the respect the legislators have for the VSA, this action will save money for counties and cities when purchasing law enforcement vehicles. Many thanks go to Senator Bryce Reeves who worked tirelessly to secure passage of this important bill.

We Want to Hear from You ...

-  951 East Byrd Street, Suite 905
Richmond, Virginia 23219
-  (804) 225-7152 phone
-  (804) 225-7162 fax
-  vsavsi@virginiasheriffs.org

The VSI solicits articles and comments from associate members of the Virginia Sheriffs' Institute for inclusion in this newsletter. Articles and comments should be directed to: John W. Jones, Executive Director, Virginia Sheriffs' Institute, 951 East Byrd Street, Suite 905, Richmond, Virginia 23219, or phone (804) 225-7152.