Newsletter

Summer Edition 2015

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2015-2016

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GOVERNOR VETOES BILL THAT WOULD HAVE HAMPERED CRIME-SOLVING EFFORTS

The Virginia Sheriffs' Association applauds Governor Terry McAuliffe's vetoes of HB 1673 and SB 965. These bills would have defined motor vehicle license plate numbers issued by the Commonwealth of Virginia as "personal information," meaning that their use by law enforcement agencies in solving crime and apprehending offenders would have been greatly challenged, if at all possible.

Virginia sheriffs and deputies use license plate numbers from motor vehicles daily to locate stolen vehicles, identify drivers in hit-and-run accidents, locate missing children, and enhance overall public safety. The bills passed by the VA General Assembly, including the amended version of HB 1673, did not address this serious concern.

Further, this bill would have prohibited law enforcement agencies from using any surveillance technology to collect data. This overly broad language prohibited the use of courthouse and jail security cameras and prohibited many activities that are used by law enforcement agencies and not related to license plate readers.

According to the Governor: "It would be unwise for me to sign legislation that could limit the tools available for legitimate law enforcement purposes and negatively impact public safety, or derail major transportation projects and jeopardize time-saving technologies that are essential to our economy, our citizens, tourism and the efficient conduct of business."

Virginia's current law imposes restrictions on the use of private data. Furthermore, there have been no credible witnesses to come forward with experiences of abuse because license plates are not currently considered "personal information."

PROTECTING YOU OR YOUR LOVED ONES FROM MEDICARE FRAUD

Today many older Americans carry their Medicare card in their wallets as proof of insurance, which sets up a great opportunity for identity theives to steal personal information and submit fraudulent benefit claims on a card holder's behalf. As a result, today Medicare fraud is a rampant and costly problem.

To prevent an individual's Social Security number from falling into the wrong hands, Congress passed legislation, which was signed into law by President Obama, which would require the removal of Social Security numbers from Medicare cards. Within four years, Medicare officials will begin issuing cards with new identification numbers that will be "a randomly generated Medicare beneficiary identifier." They have four more years to reissue cards held by current beneficiaries.

(Continued on page 3)

"Medicare Fraud" (Continued from page 2)

In the meantime, if you or a loved one has a Medicare card, here are a few quick tips to protect your valuable personal information from thieves and hackers:

1. Don't carry your card or if you or your family member feels the need to do so, make a photocopy of the card and cut or black out all but the last four digits.
2. If you or your family member has a doctor's appointment with a new health care provider, give your Health Insurance Claim Number (HICN) over the phone.
3. Review you or your family member's Medicare summary to ensure that the list of procedures and services on the summary are accurate. If you notice anything suspicious or wrong, call the Inspector General's fraud hotline at 800-447-8477.

The Virginia sheriffs and deputies are fighting identity theft and nabbing the perpetrators. As always, I urge you to contact my office directly if you have any further questions about identity theft and the role of Virginia sheriffs in fighting this crime, or want to express any other concerns about crime prevention efforts in the Commonwealth.

SPECIAL THANKS!

Sheriffs from all across the Commonwealth, along with exhibitors and speakers, attended the 2015 Virginia Sheriffs' Institute Spring Conference held on April 22-24 in Roanoke, Virginia.

This year's conference provided an important forum for Sheriffs and deputies to discuss new laws passed by the Virginia General Assembly and their impact on the duties of law enforcement officers in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Important training and certification sessions were conducted to enhance crime prevention efforts. The conference also featured the following sessions: "Under the Radar: How Cigarette Traffickers Avoid Detection and Bring Crime to Virginia," "National White Collar Crime Center (NW3C) Services, Including Cyberbullying Investigation Training," and "The Most Costly Legal Issues in a Jail: Medical Department," to name a few.

In addition, the Virginia Sheriffs' Association presented Virginia House of Delegates Speaker William J. Howell with its 2015 Outstanding Legislative Service Award.

The Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center made an excellent venue for the event and now the sheriffs are looking forward to their annual conference later this fall. Many thanks to our Associate Members for making this year's spring meeting a resounding success!

BEAT THE HEAT AND STAY SAFE THIS SUMMER

To help keep you and your family safe this summer, I'd like to pass along some summer safety tips offered by the National Safety Council.

Whether you're working or playing outside in the summer, anybody not accustomed to the heat is at risk for a heat-related illness. Take steps to protect yourself:

- ✓ Wear appropriate clothing, including a wide-brimmed hat
- ✓ Take frequent water breaks
- ✓ Apply sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15
- ✓ Never leave kids or pets unattended in a vehicle

More than one in five drowning victims are children 14-years-old and younger, and most incidents

happen when a child falls into a pool or is left alone in the bathtub. Keep your kids safe in the water:

- ✓ Enroll children over the age of three in swimming lessons
- ✓ Don't rely on lifeguards to watch over your children
- ✓ Never leave your child unattended

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 busy enjoying your summer in the Commonwealth of Virginia. While summertime brings lots of fun, it also brings some extra risks.

So if you're planning to take a vacation and travel out of town for any period of time, I urge you to keep your travel plans private — don't broadcast them on social media. We know that thieves will use Facebook to target the homes of people who post their travels. So don't be an easy target. Just as important, now that school is out, know who your children are with and know the parents of their friends.

Summer is also a time when opportunist thieves seek out property left unattended and unsecured, such as bicycles, lawn items, garden tools, car keys, to name a few. So please, ensure your property is secured, especially overnight, and remember to close and lock your windows and doors. It just takes a second for a thief to steal something which has been left lying unattended and by taking a few moments to ensure property is secure this can significantly reduce the risk of falling victim to such a crime.

I want you to know it is my privilege to serve as Executive Director of VSI and I urge you to contact your Sheriff's office if you have any questions about the subjects we discuss in this issue of the VSI newsletter, or any other concerns about crime prevention or public safety efforts in your community.

I deeply appreciate your involvement as a loyal supporter of the Virginia Sheriffs' Institute.

Sincerely,

John W. Jones, Executive Director
Virginia Sheriffs' Institute
701 East Franklin Street, Suite 706
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VSI IS PROUD TO ANNOUNCE 2015 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

With the help of residents like you, VSI secures the critical funding needed to continue providing desperately needed scholarships to Virginia citizens pursuing Criminal Justice degrees — a great source of pride for us all and a vital step in ensuring our safety. VSI is the only organization in Virginia helping the state's law enforcement students with Criminal Justice scholarships.

One of our most recent scholarship award recipients is Matthew Joel O'Dell, of Franklin County, Virginia. Matthew is planning on attending Radford University where he will be pursuing a course of study in Criminal Justice.

We're very pleased to announce that 102 promising Virginia students have benefited from your generous support this year — 99 full-time scholarships at $1,000 and 3 part-time at $500. That's over $100,000 going toward education costs for some great young people that will benefit everyone in our Commonwealth. It's all part of our effort to provide an opportunity for students across Virginia to pursue a career of service to community in law enforcement, to the benefit of all Virginia's citizens!

We Want to Hear from You ...

Drop us a note, give us a call, or send us an email.

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The Virginia Sheriffs' Institute 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, 701 East Franklin Street, Suite 706, Richmond, VA 23219-2512, or phone (804) 225-7152.

The Virginia Sheriffs' Institute does not solicit donations by telephone.