



# NEWSLETTER

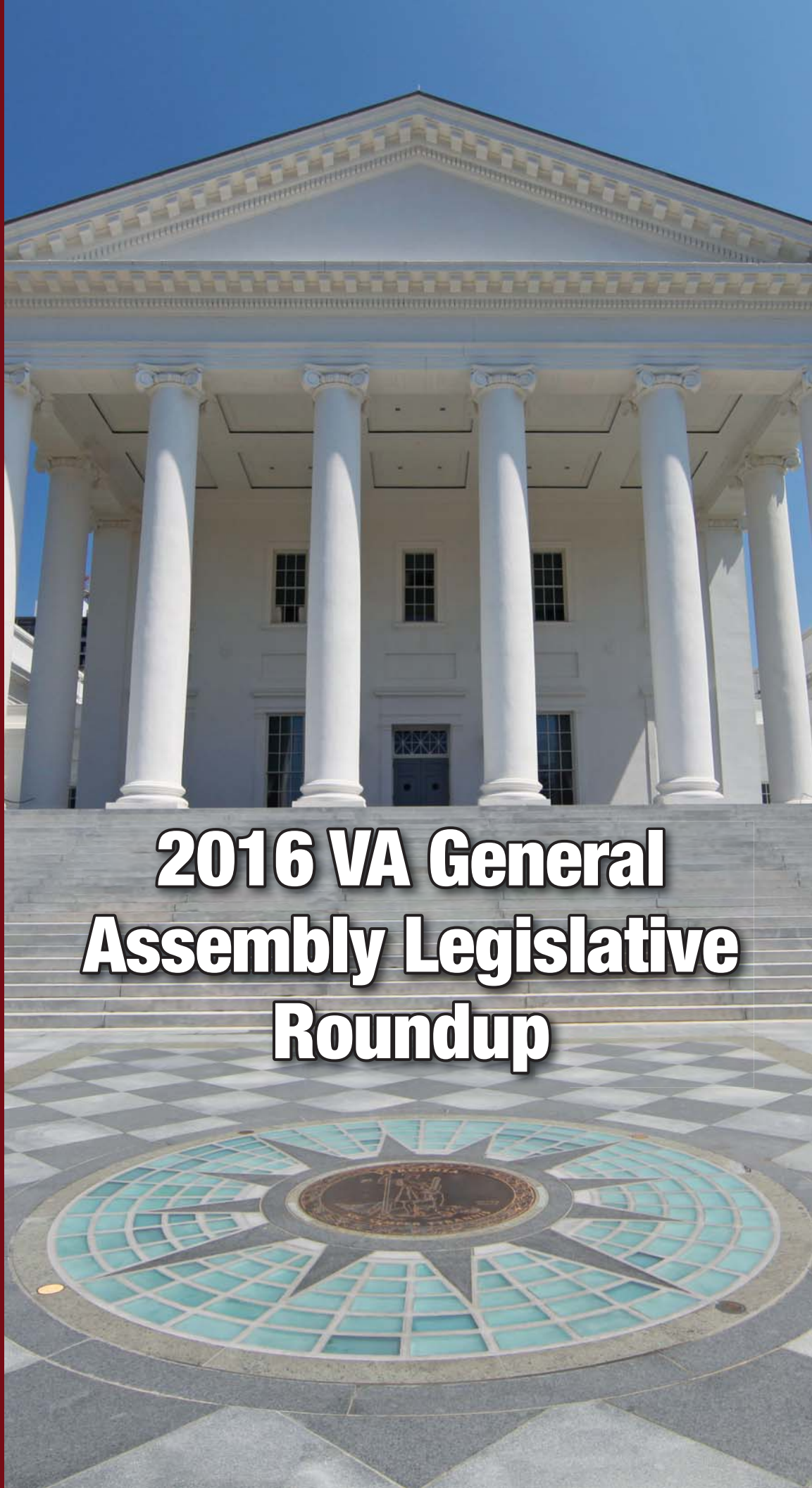
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# 2016 VA General Assembly Legislative Roundup



2016-2017

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# VA GENERAL ASSEMBLY LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

## New Laws Take Effect — Here's What You Need to Know

The Virginia Sheriffs' Institute monitors all legislation that impacts the office of the sheriff. VSI would like to touch on a few key pieces of legislation that will promote the public safety of Virginia residents and aid law enforcement officers in our efforts to fight crime.

The following three bills involved in the firearms deal between the Governor and General Assembly leaders passed through both chambers and will become law:

- **SB49**, which makes it a felony for a person subject to a permanent protective order to possess a firearm during the period covered by the order.
- **SB610**, which requires the Attorney General to enter into reciprocity agreements on concealed carry permits with all states that offer one, even those whose requirements are much looser than ours.
- **SB715**, which requires State Police to be present at every gun show in Virginia to perform voluntary background checks.

To combat the growing heroin epidemic, there are many ways that the Commonwealth is working with communities across the state to prevent heroin overdoses. The following bills passed in the General Assembly and signed by the Governor will improve processes and increase access to resources to deal with this problem and related opioid abuse:

- **SB287** requires dispensers to update the Prescription Monitoring Program within 24 hours of writing

a prescription. This bill was a recommendation of the Governor's Task Force on Opiate Abuse, and seeks to increase information available to doctors and pharmacies and combat "pill mills" throughout the Commonwealth. (Read about other legislative efforts to curb opioid abuse in our article on the next page.)

- **SB556** gives local treatment providers access to more medication-assisted therapies to treat addiction. This bill provides another tool which is not being utilized in some areas of the Commonwealth.

In addition, it's important to note the defeat of certain legislation which would not have represented the best interests of Virginians. A bill which would have seriously hampered the ability of law enforcement to use license plate readers to catch criminals was defeated in the General Assembly. Several bills aimed at abolishing the present system of asset forfeiture, which allows law enforcement to use drug dealers' assets to offset taxpayers' costs by confiscating assets from crime to use for law enforcement purposes, did not pass. There are safeguards in place in Virginia to ensure that no one's property is confiscated without due process. According to a Crime Commission Study on this issue in Virginia, there were only small adjustments needed to ensure that the public is protected. Those adjustments were passed with the support of the Virginia Sheriffs' Association and other bills abolishing the present system of asset forfeiture were not passed.



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## VA COMMUNITIES TAKE PART IN DRUG TAKE-BACK DAY

Law enforcement agencies across Virginia participated in the National Prescription Drug Take-Back Initiative on April 30, 2016. 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 participated by dropping off their unused, unwanted, or expired medications at their local law enforcement agencies for safe disposal. More than 31,000 pounds of prescription drugs were collected in Virginia.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in 2006, nearly seven million Americans over the age of 12 reported abusing prescription medications. In fact, approximately 60 percent of people who abuse prescription painkillers indicate that they obtained the prescription drugs from friends or relatives for free, often taking the drugs without permission. 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.

# PEDESTRIAN DEATHS SPIKE NATIONALLY — UP 9% IN VA



According to a report released by the Governor's Highway Safety Association, pedestrian deaths nationally continue to rise at an alarming rate. In fact, 2015 projections indicated a dramatic 10 percent year-over-year spike in pedestrian deaths,

while traffic fatalities had increased 8.1 percent.

This is the largest jump in the past 40 years, when such records were first collected. In Virginia, our state saw a 9 percent increase: 38 pedestrian deaths in the first half of 2015, up from 35.

What's causing this troubling national increase and what can we do as drivers and pedestrians to keep safe on our roadways?

One of the reasons cited for the spike is that Americans logged more miles on their cars last year, thanks in large part to a steep drop in the price of gasoline. Warmer weather across some regions last year also encouraged more people to get outside and walk.

Some safety experts point to a rise in the use of cell phones and multi-media messaging, which can result in distracted driving and distracted walking. Speed also plays a big role, but the biggest contributing factor to pedestrian deaths is alcohol consumption resulting in driver or pedestrian impairment.

Virginia sheriffs and deputies are working to educate the public about how to stay safe on our roadways. Below are a few tips:

- Refrain from drinking and driving
- Refrain from walking or driving impaired, which includes the use of a cell phone or other multi-media device
- Yield to pedestrians
- Obey speed limits
- Use crosswalks and wait for the walk sign

# VIRGINIA SHERIFFS ANNOUNCE 2016 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

With the help of our supporters 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 Alyson P. Martin, of Williamsburg - James City County, Virginia. Alyson is planning on attending George Mason University where she will be pursuing a course of study in Criminal Justice.

We're very pleased to announce that **87 promising Virginia students have benefited from your generous support this year** — 85 full-time scholarships at \$1,000 and 2 part-time at \$500. That's over \$86,000 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 in law enforcement, to the benefit of all Virginia's citizens!

## NEW LAW AIMS AT CURBING ADDICTS WHO "DOCTOR-SHOP"

An ongoing priority for Virginia law enforcement and legislators is tackling the growing opioid epidemic in our state that is destroying too many families. Drug overdose deaths rose for the 11th straight year, according to federal data, and most of these deaths were attributed to accidents involving addictive painkillers, especially OxyContin and Vicodin.

A new law passed in the General Assembly requires doctors and other prescribers to check the state's Prescription Monitoring Program database — which includes information on the drug prescribed, the patient, the prescriber, and where the prescription was filled — before writing an opioid prescription for longer than 14 days. This effort is designed to identify people going from doctor to doctor and pharmacy to pharmacy to get their narcotics.

# 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 summer brings lots of fun, it also brings some extra risks.

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. By taking a few moments to ensure property is secure, you 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 with 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,

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

John W. Jones, Executive Director  
Virginia Sheriffs' Institute  
701 East Franklin Street, Suite 706  
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## SPECIAL THANKS!

More than 260 sheriffs and deputy sheriffs from all across the Commonwealth, along with exhibitors and speakers, attended the 2016 Virginia Sheriffs' Institute Spring Conference held April 27-29 in Hampton, 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. Delegate Scott Lingamfelter, Chairman of the House Militia, Police and Public Safety Committee as well as the House Appropriations Public Safety Subcommittee, briefed sheriffs on the recent legislative session while the Honorable Brian Moran, Virginia Secretary of Public Safety, spoke about efforts to combat gun violence. Important training and certification sessions were conducted to enhance crime prevention efforts. The conference also featured a presentation on "Muslim Culture for Law Enforcement," which focused on understanding the Muslim culture from a law enforcement perspective, and "Countering Violent Extremism," which gave Virginia sheriffs an understanding of how to work with community members and maintain a safer community.

In addition, York-Poquoson Sheriff Danny Diggs and Culpeper County Sheriff Scott Jenkins received the Gary B. Payne D.A.R.E. Administrator of the Year Award, presented during the conference. The Hampton Roads Convention 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!

## We Want to Hear from You ...

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