



NEWSLETTER

SUMMER EDITION 2013



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IN THIS ISSUE ...

Legislative Insider – How Do New Laws Impact Virginians?	2
Virginia’s Deputies Receive a Much-Deserved Pay Raise	3
Virginia’s Sheriffs are Proud to Announce the 2013 VSI Scholarships	3
VSI Spring Conference Recap	3
Visit Our Home on the Web: VASheriffsInstitute.org	4
Message from John W. Jones.....	4

Legislative Insider – How Do New Laws Impact Virginians?





2013-2014

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LEGISLATIVE INSIDER — HOW DO NEW LAWS IMPACT VIRGINIANS AND VIRGINIA'S SHERIFFS?

A number of important new bills of particular interest to Virginia's sheriffs and the hard-working men and women who serve with them passed during the 2013 General Assembly and were signed into law by Gov. Bob McDonnell.

As we noted in our spring newsletter (see "*Tough New 'Texting While Driving' Legislation Moving Through Virginia General Assembly*"), **House Bill 1907** was sponsored by Del. Richard L. Anderson of Prince William to deal with the rising problem of distracted driving due to the use of personal communications devices.

Del. Anderson's original bill comprised two main elements which stiffen penalties already on the books, and Governor McDonnell proposed two amendments to bring fines into line with those levied for reckless driving and driving while intoxicated, and required that training be made available to Virginia law enforcement personnel for carrying out the new regulations.

Said Gov. McDonnell concerning the importance of the new legislation, "texting...can cause crashes, injuries and deaths on Virginia highways. Drivers should concentrate on their responsibility of operating a motor vehicle safely and...should avoid texting and other distractions that can take their attention away from the roadway."

Also covered in our most recent issue (see "*Keeping a Watchful Eye on Drones*") was legislation introduced by Amherst Delegate Benjamin Cline to declare a moratorium on the use of unmanned aerial systems (UASs) or drones by state and local law enforcement personnel except in restricted emergency situations, such as to assist in the search for missing persons. The bill's senate counterpart, **S.B. 1331**, was sponsored by Sen. A. Donald McEachin of Henrico and passed through the upper chamber with identical wording.

Governor McDonnell offered amendments to the bills to allow for the study of UASs at research and educational institutions and usage of the devices for search or rescue operations. According to a statement by Gov. McDonnell's press secretary, Jeff Caldwell, the amendments "will allow law enforcement officials to use this developing technology to protect public safety while respecting individual rights of citizens and their expectations of privacy."

In other legislation, **House Bill 1554** deals with risk management plans and insurance coverage for sheriffs, including limiting the amount of individual liability a sheriff or deputy may incur to \$1.5 million, or the maximum amount of liability coverage called for in their risk management insurance plan. In related legislation, **Senate Bill 896** equates injuries sustained by public safety officers due to dangerous weather conditions with those injuries that arise during the general performance of duties, and provides for workers' compensation coverage.

House Bill 1582 allows private educational institutions to hire armed security officers appropriately licensed by the Department of Criminal Justice Services to carry firearms on school property in a protection role, and prohibits any Board of Social Services rules that would deny a child care service from employing an armed protection officer. In other school safety legislation, **House Bill 2344** requires Virginia school boards to develop plans for establishing teams tasked with creating assessments of possible threats, providing guidance to school students and employees in threat identification, and creating procedures for dealing with threatening or violent occurrences in schools.

Additionally, **House Bill 1955** deals with penalties for the impersonation of sheriff's deputies, and **Senate Bill 1038** creates new regulations for mopeds, ATVs, and other light and low-speed vehicles.

VSI SPRING CONFERENCE RECAP

SPECIAL THANKS!

Sheriffs from all across the Commonwealth, along with exhibitors and speakers, attended the 2013 Virginia Sheriffs' Institute Spring Conference held in Portsmouth, Virginia in April.

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. In addition, important training sessions were held for law enforcement officers to enhance crime prevention efforts.

The Renaissance Portsmouth Hotel 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!

VIRGINIA'S DEPUTIES RECEIVE A MUCH- DESERVED RAISE IN PAY

In another important legislative development, Richmond lawmakers approved a 3% pay raise for Virginia's dedicated deputy sheriffs — in no small part due to the support of Virginia Sheriffs' Institute supporters like you! In January, we made a special appeal for your help to launch an all-out educational effort urging Virginia's delegates and state senators to support an overdue pay increase for all deputy sheriffs. Thanks to the tremendous response of our citizens, these courageous personnel can now look forward to receiving a well-deserved reward for the priceless service they provide to all of us. Thank you!

VIRGINIA'S SHERIFFS ARE PROUD TO ANNOUNCE THE 2013 VSI SCHOLARSHIPS

With the help of supporters like you, VSI secures the critical funding needed to continue providing desperately needed scholarships to Virginia citizens to pursue 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 Samantha N. Moran of Franklin County, Virginia. Samantha is planning on attending Radford University where she will be pursuing a course of study in Criminal Justice.

Due to the assistance of members like you, we've awarded 91 scholarships for 2013-2014 to Virginia's youth. The full-time recipients received \$1,000 and the part-time recipients received \$500 for a total of \$90,000. It's all part of our effort to provide an opportunity for young people across Virginia to pursue an education in criminal justice, to the benefit of all Virginia's citizens!



PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM VSI EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR JOHN W. JONES



From everyone here at the Virginia Sheriffs' Institute, I hope you and your family are looking forward to another busy summer season here in our beautiful Commonwealth!

With all the opportunities for recreation and enjoyment during the long, warm days of

summer, there are also some important things to keep in mind to ensure this busy season remains safe for you and your family.

If you have plans for a summer getaway or other activities in and around your community, use discretion in making your plans known — don't "broadcast" when you are traveling away from home, when you are home alone, where your children are if they aren't with you, etc.

These days, many people find social media tools such as Facebook or Twitter extremely convenient for keeping family and friends informed of their activities and whereabouts, but these applications may also provide information to individuals seeking easy targets for crime — something to be aware of when considering what details to make public online.

Also very important, now that school is out for summer vacation, is keeping tabs on your children — make sure you know who your children are with and know the parents of their friends.

Many of the suggestions for maintaining a safe, secure environment around your home which I mentioned in the spring issue continue to hold true for summer — remember to secure doors and windows when doing yard work, lock parked vehicles, and keep an eye on your neighbors' home while they are away, etc.

As always, I hope you'll continue to be an important partner in our efforts to keep your community secure by reporting crimes and suspicious activity when you see them so that your Sheriffs' Office can do their very best to keep your community a safe place to work, play, live, and raise families.

Thanks again for all you do to support us!

Sincerely,

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

John W. Jones, Executive Director
Virginia Sheriffs' Institute
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VISIT OUR HOME ON THE WEB: VASHERIFFSINSTITUTE.ORG

If you haven't visited our website at vasheriffsinstitute.org recently, why not surf on over today? Our site is full of useful information about the Virginia Sheriffs' Institute, including an overview of our mission, news links, public resources such as crime statistics and reports, training and educational opportunities for sheriffs' personnel, details of our scholarship program, and much more!

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 does not solicit donations by telephone.