



**NEWSLETTER**  
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# **VIRGINIA'S CRIME RATE REFLECTS NATIONAL TREND**



## 2017-2018

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## VIRGINIA'S CRIME RATE

Between 2015 and 2016, violent crime increased by 10 percent, while homicides jumped 26 percent. These trends were also apparent nationwide. At the time of going to print, 2017 statewide crime rate statistics were unavailable.

At a time of increasing heroin use and drug overdoses by citizens in our state and across the country, drug crime rates were on the rise as well during 2015 and 2016. And statewide, gun charges helped push weapons violations higher in 2016.

According to Virginia Tech criminologist, Jim Hawdon, who was cited for an article in the *Virginian-Pilot*, "when taken as a

whole, crime rate increases like this one — violence, guns, drugs, car thefts — tend to be associated with urban street gangs." Since 1992 crime rates have for the most part been on the decline. But 2015 and 2016 marked two years in a row of increasing crime in Virginia.

Despite these trends in the crime rate, Virginia has the third-lowest crime rate and the tenth-lowest property crime rate in the country. Virginia's sheriffs and deputies continue to lead and take part in a number of public safety task forces and initiatives that aim to strengthen the protection of citizens in our state.

## VIRGINIA RULES

Young people commit and are more frequently the victims of violent crime than any other age group. That's why Virginia's sheriffs and deputies are taking an active role in promoting good citizenship among our youth.

*Virginia Rules* is a law-related education program administered by the Office of the Attorney General to educate teens about how Virginia laws apply to them. This is part of an ongoing effort to provide parents, teachers, and students with tools they need to ensure Virginia teens make better decisions and understand their rights and responsibilities.

Middle and high school students receive



instruction on issues including bullying, dating violence, teen driving, alcohol and tobacco, gangs, Internet safety and more.

Last year nearly two dozen law enforcement agencies, including sheriff's offices across our state, hosted *Virginia Rules* Camps. These camps help build positive relationships between law enforcement officers and youth in communities across our state. To learn more, visit [www.virginiarules.org](http://www.virginiarules.org).

## TRAFFIC DEATHS ON THE RISE

According to the Virginia Department of Transportation, traffic deaths in Virginia increased significantly in 2017. It's also reported that about 40 percent of Virginia's traffic fatalities involve a vehicle hitting a fixed object, like a tree or pole.

The increase is attributed in part to cheap gasoline and an improving job picture resulting in Americans driving more. Most crashes are preventable, so this uptick in the number of traffic fatalities must and can be reduced significantly if more drivers paid attention and complied with the law.

## SCHOLARSHIP DEADLINE

The Virginia Sheriffs' Institute scholarship program — which is funded exclusively by generous VSI supporters like you — is granted to full-time or part-time students majoring in criminal justice and attending a Virginia state college or university. We awarded 79 scholarships for the 2017-2018 academic year.

Only online scholarship applications will be accepted and can be found on our website. A full list of application requirements can be found at <https://vasheriffsinstitute.org/scholarship/>. Applications must be submitted by May 1, 2018.

## ANNUAL VSI SPRING CONFERENCE

Over 250 Virginia sheriffs, management level deputies, and guests are taking part in the 2018 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 25-27, 2018 at the Newport News Marriott at City Center in Newport News, Virginia.

The VSI Spring Conference is an important forum for sheriffs, deputies, and Virginia legislators to discuss how legislation passed during the 2018 General Assembly could impact the duties of public safety officers in the Commonwealth. In addition, important training sessions to enhance crime prevention efforts by law enforcement officers are featured as part of the conference.

The Virginia Sheriffs' Association's upcoming 85th Annual Conference will be held September 11-13 in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

## PUPPY FRAUD ALERT

Virginians are being targeted by scammers in a new scheme that targets dog lovers. If you're looking online for a new puppy to add to your family, beware. Virginia's Attorney General has received several reports of consumers entering into agreements and putting forth hundreds of dollars to buy a purebred puppy online only to learn that the puppy never existed.



As always if something sounds too good to be true, it probably is. The Better Business Bureau urges consumers to conduct research on the seller, inspect an animal in person before paying money, and pay by credit

card if you do make an online purchase. If you are looking for a new pet to add to your family, the Humane Society of the United States will refer the consumer to local shelters and provide tips for finding a reputable breeder. And of course, avoid buying pets from puppy mills.

## DID YOU KNOW?

# JOB DESCRIPTION

The Sheriff is the only locally elected constitutional law enforcement officer of the Commonwealth of Virginia, as provided in the Constitution of Virginia, and is elected by the citizens of his or her locality every four years. Accordingly, the duties of the sheriff are not spelled out in any one document, law, or regulation.

**Law Enforcement** – Sheriffs are responsible for primary local law enforcement in all counties without a police force, but also have responsibility for law enforcement in all localities in which they serve.

**Jail Administration** – The Code of Virginia provides that sheriffs are responsible for all locally operated jails. Sheriffs also sit on regional jail boards, and in some cases operate regional jails in Virginia.

**Service to the Courts** – Court services, including courthouse and courtroom security, the security and sequestering of the jurors, and the service of hundreds of thousands of court papers each year, are the responsibility of all Virginia's sheriffs.

In addition to these services, sheriffs are called upon to promote DARE programs and services for victims and witnesses of crime as well as participate in civil commitments to the citizens of their locality to protect the basic health and welfare of those citizens.

## REMINDER ABOUT DISABLED PARKING PLACARDS

According to the Department of Motor Vehicles, if you have been issued a disabled parking placard and plate, you are permitted to park in any parking space designated for a disabled person. In addition, you are permitted to park for up to four hours in metered or time-restricted spaces without paying a fee (unless prohibited by the locality).

Remember, disabled parking privileges do not allow you to stop, stand or park where parking is prohibited, in spaces reserved for other special type of vehicles, or where it would clearly present a traffic hazard.

If a person parks in a space reserved for a disabled individual without displaying a disabled placard or plate, a fine of \$100 to \$500 could result if convicted of this offense.



# 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.

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.

Below are a few tips to help promote safety on our roadways:

- 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

Of course the goal of VSI is to provide the highest level of service to our communities 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 your community a safe place to work, play, live, and raise your families.

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

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

Sincerely,

John W. Jones, Executive Director  
Virginia Sheriffs' Institute  
901 East Byrd Street, Suite 1301  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

## DRUG TAKE-BACK DAY

Virginia's next drug take-back day will take place on April 28, 2018 between 10:00 am - 2:00 pm. This state-wide event is an effort to prevent prescription drug abuse in our communities and to keep trace drugs out of our lakes and streams, since wastewater treatment plants cannot remove many compounds found in medications.

During the last Drug Take-Back Day, held on October 28, 2017, Virginia collected nearly 26,000 pounds of drugs. A few things to keep in mind if you would like to participate: 1) It's anonymous and free; 2) Prescription and over-the-counter medications will be accepted; and **3) Please do not give intravenous solutions, injectables, or needles.**

Drug take-back days are important because our state, along with many others across the country, is experiencing an opioid epidemic. Drug overdose is the leading cause of accidental death in the U.S. and opioid addiction is driving this epidemic. Most people who abuse prescription painkillers indicate that they obtained the prescription drugs from friends or relatives for free.

Residents in communities across Virginia are urged to find out if their community is participating in a prescription drug take-back event and if so, where to drop off their unused, unwanted, or expired medications for safe disposal.

### CHECK US OUT ON SOCIAL MEDIA!



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<https://twitter.com/VSIInstitute>



Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/vasheriffsinstitute>

### 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, 901 East Byrd Street, Suite 1301, Richmond, Virginia 23219, or phone (804) 225-7152.