

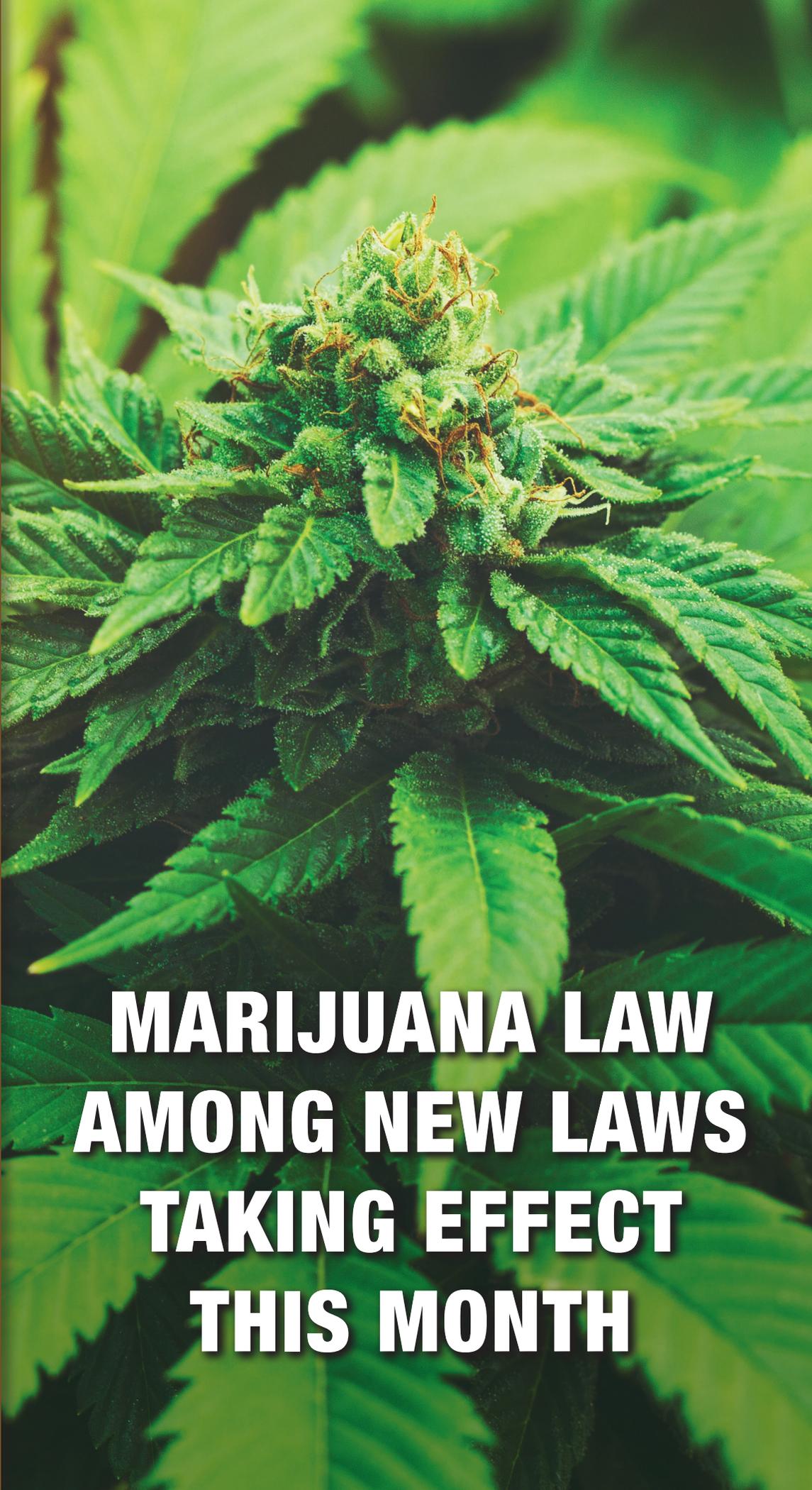


NEWSLETTER

SUMMER EDITION 2021



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MARIJUANA LAW AMONG NEW LAWS TAKING EFFECT THIS MONTH

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2021-2022

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We Want to Hear from You ...

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NEW MARIJUANA LAW IN VIRGINIA



The General Assembly approved legislation that was signed into law and goes into effect this month that makes it legal for people 21 years and older to possess up to an ounce of marijuana. Adults caught with more than an ounce

but less than a pound will face a \$25 fine. Adults caught with more than a pound face a felony punishable by between one and 10 years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000.

Sales of the drug are illegal, although the legislation does permit the gifting of up to an ounce of the drug to any adult. People under the age of 21 caught with marijuana face a fine of \$25 but would also be required to enter a substance abuse treatment and education program. In addition, it is illegal to consume the drug in public or offer it to people in public.

The new law also allows people to cultivate up to four marijuana plants per household as long as they are not visible from a public street and precautions are taken to prevent access by minors.

VA SHERIFFS RESPONSIBLE FOR SERVICE TO THE COURTS

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

As such, sheriffs are responsible for transporting inmates to and from state institutions and maintaining security in local jails while transporting inmates to trials and other community services as required by local jail standards and court orders. Today, local jails range in size in Virginia from a few dozen inmates to over a thousand inmates and the operation thereof can be, and is, a very complex system of services to the jail community.

In addition, court services are the responsibility of all Virginia's sheriffs. In your community — and in every county and city across the Commonwealth — the sheriff is responsible for the security of the courthouse, the courtrooms, and the trials while they are underway.



Sheriffs are responsible for the security and sequestering of the jurors and notification of jurors for court service. Additionally, sheriffs' offices are responsible for the service of hundreds of thousands of court papers per year, ranging from divorce proceedings and child custody cases to simple civil suits among citizens.

In addition to these services, sheriffs are called upon to promote 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.

OTHER NEW LAWS TAKING EFFECT



We wanted to make you and other VSI members aware of a few key pieces of legislation regarding public safety:

HB 5055 empowers civilian review boards with subpoena and disciplinary authority. This

legislation exempts sheriffs because they are elected and already subject to civilian review during the election process.

HB 5007 reforms criminal sentencing to eliminate the ‘trial penalty’ caused by mandatory jury sentencing, allowing a defendant to have a jury trial and judge sentencing. The change will go into effect for trials after July 1, 2021.

HB 5053 creates mental-health crisis response teams to co-respond with law enforcement. The legislation states the teams should divert individuals in crisis to health care services whenever feasible.

HB 5148 gives some inmates a chance to earn earlier release dates. Some inmates will be able to cut their sentences by a third as long as they weren’t convicted of certain violent offenses, follow prison rules, and participate in counseling and education programs.

JULY IS VEHICLE THEFT PREVENTION MONTH

Each year over 700,000 drivers fall victim to vehicle theft, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety (NHTSA) Administration. That’s why July is designated as National Vehicle Theft Prevention Month.

Incredibly, nearly half of the annual vehicle thefts are the result of driver error, and summers tend to be the worst season for this type of crime. To help drivers keep their vehicles safe and out of the hands of criminals, the NHTSA offers the following tips:

Use common sense when parking and exiting your vehicle:

- Take your vehicle’s key; do not leave it in or on your vehicle.
- Close and lock all windows and doors when you park.
- Park in well-lit areas if possible.
- Never leave valuables in your vehicle, especially if they can be seen from outside the vehicle.

If you are a victim of vehicle theft, contact law enforcement immediately and file a stolen-vehicle report, and contact your insurance company to file a claim within 24 hours of your vehicle being stolen. You will need a copy of the police report and/or a case number to provide to your insurance company.

RANSOM PHONE SCAM MAKING ROUNDS AGAIN

Virginia residents have reported they have received calls from fraudsters who claim they are holding their children or grandchildren for ransom. This is reportedly a scam that gets resurrected by criminals every few years. While the calls originate from outside of the country, scammers can spoof the phone numbers to make them appear as if they are originating from a local phone number. Those who have received these calls report hearing a child screaming in the background. The intent is clearly to incite panic.

There are no reports of anyone falling for the scam, but we wanted to make our members aware of this scam in case they ever receive a similar call.

VIRGINIA RANKED 10TH SAFEST STATE IN THE NATION

U.S. News & World Report has ranked Virginia as the 10th safest state in the country according to data available for 2020. Our state received a ranking of 6 for “low violent crime rate” and 15 for “low property crime.” There was no change to the ranking from 2019.

NATIONAL NIGHT OUT

August 3, 2021 is National Night Out, a day meant to increase awareness about police programs in communities, such as drug prevention, town watch, neighborhood watch, and other anti-crime efforts.

National Night Out was introduced in August of 1984 through an already established network of law enforcement agencies, neighborhood watch groups, civic groups, state and regional crime prevention associations, and volunteers across the nation. The first annual National Night Out involved 2.5 million neighbors across 400 communities in 23 states.

According to the National Night Out’s website, “millions of neighbors take part in National Night Out across thousands of communities from all fifty states, U.S. territories and military bases worldwide on the first Tuesday in August (Texas and select areas celebrate on the first Tuesday in October).”

If you’d like to know if your community is taking part in this important crime prevention event, please contact your local sheriff’s office.

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 usher in this summer season — perhaps you are planning to visit family you haven't seen in a while or take that vacation you've put off. We seem to have finally turned the corner for good on this crisis.

To ensure you and your family enjoy a safe summer, here are some tips: If you're traveling out of town as so many Virginia families are planning to do this summer, please keep your travel plans private — don't "broadcast" when you are traveling away from home or when you are home alone, especially through social media.

Sadly, Facebook and other social media outlets are providing would-be criminals with a wealth of information and knowledge that they can use to commit crimes against people in our community.

Don't be an easy target. Protect your home by keeping your garage and shed doors closed and locked, locking all windows and closing most of the shades. Put a timer on some of your lights and make sure you have adequate exterior lighting. Ask a neighbor to keep an eye on your house by picking up your mail and newspaper.

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

Thank you for 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

UNCLAIMED PROPERTY EVENT

Dept. of Treasury | Oct. 14th | 10am-6pm

The Virginia Sheriffs' Institute (VSI) is once again partnering with the Virginia Department of the Treasury to host a virtual call-in event for VSI members to track down unclaimed property. This year's event will take place on October 14 from 10am-6pm. Members should call 1-833-302-0704 to speak to a representative. During last year's event, over \$94,000 in unclaimed property was uncovered for VSI and VSA members!

- Utility Deposits
- Customer Refunds
- Bank Accounts
- Money from Insurance Policies
- Unpaid Wages
- Securities & Investments
- Dividends
- Uncashed Checks
- and More!

2021 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. 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 Mia Bashore, of New Kent County, Virginia. Mia is planning on attending Virginia Commonwealth University where she will be pursuing a course of study in Criminal Justice.

We're very pleased to announce that 66 scholarships were awarded to deserving students across the Commonwealth pursuing a career in law enforcement. Full-time students are awarded \$1,000 scholarships; part-time students are awarded \$500 scholarships. That's an impressive \$65,000 going toward education costs for some great young people that will benefit everyone in our state. Your support is the reason we've had such tremendous success of our scholarship program!

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