



**NEWSLETTER**  
WINTER EDITION 2023



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**GOVERNOR'S  
NEW  
ANTI-CRIME  
INITIATIVE**





2022-2023

**President**

Sheriff Karl S. Leonard  
Chesterfield County

**Immediate Past President**

Sheriff Mark A. Amos  
Orange County

**First Vice President**

Sheriff Michael W. Taylor  
Pittsylvania County

**Secretary**

Sheriff J. J. McLaughlin, Jr.  
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Sheriff Darrell L. Hodges  
Cumberland County

Sheriff Alisa A. Gregory  
Henrico County

Sheriff April M. Staton  
City of Salem

**Executive Director**  
John W. Jones

**We Want to  
Hear from You ...**

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## GOVERNOR YOUNGKIN'S INITIATIVE TO FIGHT CRIME

Recent data released by the Virginia Department of Health cites that emergency room visits for gun-related injuries in Virginia increased by 72 percent between 2018 and 2021. The data also showed that Black patients, particularly young Black men, were disproportionately impacted by gun violence. According to Governor Glenn Youngkin, from 2019 to 2021, fatal shootings rose by 39% across the Commonwealth.

As Virginia law enforcement officers tackle the growing issue of gun-related violence in our state, they are backed by Governor Youngkin and Attorney General Jason Miyares who announced a new initiative last year aimed at curbing the rise in violent crime.

Operation Bold Blue Line calls for a comprehensive and coordinated effort aimed at supporting the recruitment and retention of law enforcement officers and increasing their pay, offering more training and equipment, ensuring law enforcement is backed by prosecutors who will work to keep violent offenders behind bars, and providing additional resources to support victims and witnesses of violent crime. The initiative also aims to provide law enforcement officers with resources to improve their mental and physical health.



According to Governor Youngkin, the initiative builds on the common themes from the 14 meetings of the Violent Crimes Task Force. The Virginia Sheriffs' Institute (VSI) has long supported vital investments in law enforcement, and we believe additional funding to help recruit and train law enforcement officers is critical to the success of curbing rising crime rates in our state.

Governor Youngkin also authorized an abbreviated eight-week course for prospective law enforcement officers to become fully certified in Virginia if they are officers moving from other states, are federal law enforcement, or have served in the military. Since the pandemic, Virginia law enforcement agencies endured persistent unfilled vacancies among their ranks. The Virginia Sheriffs' Association (VSA) estimates vacancy rates at nearly 20 percent in sheriffs' deputy positions throughout the Commonwealth.

## BECOME A MONTHLY GIVER

When you become a monthly giving member of the Virginia Sheriffs' Institute, your support will go a long way in helping provide VSI with a reliable, steady stream of income that we can use to fund our critical education and training programs and initiatives that benefit sheriffs and the public safety officers in our state.

Here are a few other benefits of becoming a monthly giving member of VSI:

- You have the convenience, ease, and security of your gift debited

automatically from your checking or credit card;

- You will help save on costly postage and other administrative fees;
- You will have the option of receiving less mail from VSI;
- You can cancel your monthly gift at any time by calling 804-225-7152.

If you would like to become a monthly giver, please visit [donate.vasheriffsinstitute.org](https://donate.vasheriffsinstitute.org) and be sure to check the box to make your gift monthly.

**SOCIAL MEDIA:**



[twitter.com/VSInstitute](https://twitter.com/VSInstitute)



[www.facebook.com/vasheriffsinstitute](https://www.facebook.com/vasheriffsinstitute)

# VSA'S PRIORITIES IN THE VA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

This year the Virginia Sheriffs' Association (VSA) will work with members of the 2023 Virginia General Assembly (GA) to focus on issues that help promote public safety and criminal justice in the Commonwealth.

Among our top legislative priorities in the 2023 GA for the upcoming session include providing adequate compensation for sheriffs' office staff and increasing staffing in sheriffs' offices, as well as the following:

## Mental Health Transportation

Continue efforts to reduce the burden on law enforcement as they hold mental health patients waiting for emergency treatment for long periods of time, unnecessarily using law enforcement resources. Reduction in this burden will provide necessary treatment for those in need and allow law enforcement to return to the community and ensure public safety.

## Jails

Enhance programming to assist in drug rehabilitation in jails and fight efforts to reduce program funding.

## Restore Tools to Law Enforcement

Support efforts to revise or repeal laws passed in prior sessions that unduly restrict the tools of law enforcement (for example, allow law enforcement to once again enforce all traffic violations, restrict sealing/concealing of criminal felony convictions and revise search warrant requirements).

Through your assistance, the sheriffs are able to send a strong message, and as in the past, we will show a strong engagement with the General Assembly on behalf of your locality all the communities in Virginia.



# WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN VSI & VSA?

The proceeds supporting the Virginia Sheriffs' Institute (VSI) are used exclusively for the many training and educational programs held each year and our annual scholarship program, of which we are very proud. All contributions to the VSI are tax deductible.

The Virginia Sheriffs' Association (VSA) is an organization established to represent the interests of sheriffs and law enforcement before the General Assembly in Virginia. It is a professional trade association of which contributions are not tax deductible.

# HEAT YOUR HOME SAFELY



The peak months for home heating fires are December, January, and February. There are some simple precautions you can take to keep yourself and your family safe.

If you are using a space heater, make sure you are using it safely:

- Keep anything that can burn, like bedding, clothing, and curtains, at least 3 feet away from your heater.
- Place space heaters on a solid, flat surface.
- Make sure your heater has an automatic shutoff, so if it tips over, it shuts off.
- Turn heaters off when you go to bed or leave the room.
- Do not plug anything else into the same circuit as the one you are using for your space heater. This can cause overheating.
- Never use an extension cord or power strip.

Also, be aware of safety factors concerning the use of wood stoves:

- Open the damper before starting a fire.
- Keep children away from the stove.
- Keep the door closed unless you are tending to the fire.
- Use gloves when tending to the fire.
- Burn dry and well-seasoned logs.
- Have a carbon monoxide detector.
- Never burn household trash.
- Do not use flammable liquids to get the fire started quickly.
- Always put the fire out before you go to bed; do not leave a fire unattended.
- Never leave flammables near the stove.
- Ashes should not build up in the stove.

# 2022 DONATION SUMMARY

If you would like to receive a summary of your 2022 tax-deductible donations to the Virginia Sheriffs' Institute, please contact us at [vsavi@virginiasheriffs.org](mailto:vsavi@virginiasheriffs.org) or call phone (804) 225-7152. We will compile the information and send it to you!

# PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM VSI EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, JOHN W. JONES



On behalf of all of us at the Virginia Sheriffs' Institute, Happy New Year! I hope you and your family had a wonderful and safe holiday season, and that you have had a great start to 2023.

As you know, winter brings unique challenges to drivers when faced with snow-covered or icy

roadways, so I urge you to take extra precautions if you are driving in wintry conditions. Another danger you should be aware of, especially during winter months, is the risk of house fires from space heaters or wood stoves. I have included some tips on how you can safeguard your home from these potential hazards.

With your continued strong support, VSI will work to promote crime prevention and public safety efforts in your community and all across Virginia during this winter season. At the same time, VSI is focused on continuing to bring much-needed attention to improving the working conditions and compensation of Virginia's hardworking deputy sheriffs and enhancing the criminal justice system to deal with the ever-increasing challenges faced by law enforcement, the courts, and correctional system.

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 concerns about crime prevention or public safety efforts in your community.

Thank you for your continued support!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John W. Jones". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

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

## ANNUAL SPRING CONFERENCE

The VSI Spring Conference & VSA Exhibition is designed to inform sheriffs and deputies on matters relating to their office that passed during the most recent session of the General Assembly. This year's Spring Conference is scheduled for April 26-28, 2023 at the Omni Resort The Homestead in Hot Springs, VA.

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## "YOU'RE SUMMONED" — THIS SCAM HASN'T GONE AWAY

Once again, some Virginia residents have reported receiving calls from scammers who say they have missed jury duty. You know the scam: The caller identifies himself as law enforcement and says you will have to pay a fine and maybe go to jail for missing jury duty ... unless. There is always an unless.

The scammer says you can clear the matter up by paying money. Sometimes, the caller directs you to wire the money; other times you're told to buy a gift card and then call them with the card information. A new twist being reported is that the scammer sends a QR code that you scan to pay. Doing that can give the person access to your bank accounts.

Some people have called their sheriff's office to ask whether they had outstanding warrants for missing jury duty. Other people are not so lucky. The Jury Duty Scam happens year round, so it is always a good time to remind people that they will NEVER receive calls or texts like these from law enforcement, a government agency, or the courts.

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## VSI SCHOLARSHIP DEADLINE MAY 1<sup>ST</sup>

The VSI scholarship — funded 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. With the help of loyal members like you, we awarded 56 scholarships for the 2022-2023 school year to Virginia's youth.

Scholarship applications are currently available on our website at <https://vasheriffsinstitute.org/scholarship/>. In addition to the application, students must submit transcripts, a copy of the student's voter registration card if the student is 18, and an essay. A full list of application materials can be found on the website. Applications are due May 1, 2023.

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.