



Virginia Sheriffs' Institute

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VSI Member Sheriffs,

Thank you for being a member of the Virginia Sheriffs' Institute (VSI). A VSI prospective member mail campaign to citizens in your localities asking them to become individual associate or business members of the VSI will be mailed in February 2023. Virginia sheriffs and deputies repeatedly support this program to promote access to public safety information and to generate valuable resources for use in all our programs. We appreciate your participation in this community effort.

The week of February 20, 2023, a **brief membership acceptance letter** signed by each participating sheriff will mail into localities across the Commonwealth asking citizens to join for \$25 for individuals and \$40 for businesses. A postage-paid return envelope will be included for the citizens to submit their checks to VSI - or they can conveniently donate online at our secure **website**. Upon receipt of the contribution, the VSI will mail "premiums" back to the citizens, which include a thank you letter, 2 bumper stickers/decals and a subscription to our quarterly newsletter, which has generated much revenue and garnered numerous positive comments from the membership. Your office will not be directly responsible for any details associated with this program. Any questions or requests you receive can be directed to me at any time. However, there are some things you can possibly assist with from your office:

1. You may receive a few phone calls or walk-in inquiries after the mailing reaches your locality. Please make sure your staff is aware of this and have them review the **VSI Fact Sheet** to assist them with handling questions or complaints. Please circulate this document and advise your staff to inform the citizens:

- The mailing is legitimate and personally endorsed by you
- The Virginia Sheriffs' Institute never solicits by telephone
- Online donations can securely be made **HERE**
- The VSI's 990 IRS tax returns are available online, and audit reports are available upon request
- Joining VSI is completely voluntary for citizens and businesses
- Associate and business membership supports VSI with:
 - Technical services and training conferences for sheriffs, deputies and staff
 - In-the-line-of-duty death benefit to sheriffs and deputies

- Crime prevention and awareness programs
- Public service and safety programs
- Fighting for strong laws to secure our mission and keep families safe
- Essential scholarships for Virginia students

2. Some citizens may come to your office in person to join VSI. These individuals may send their tax-deductible check to the Virginia Sheriffs' Institute's office, or they can contribute online on the **VSI website** for easy and secure online donations.

3. Occasionally, citizens may call you with complaints or may be upset about the cost of membership. In these cases, offer them a complimentary one-year membership. By doing so, you can transform a potentially unpleasant situation into a positive one - and hopefully they will realize what a great benefit it is to be a member of VSI.

4. Below is a partial list of programs approved by the VSI Board of Directors for fiscal year 2022-2023:

- Support for families of sheriffs and deputies killed in the line of duty in an effort to relieve personal and community distress relating to such incidents.
- The annual spring and fall conference for sheriffs and deputies.
- A scholarship program for people majoring in criminal justice at Virginia colleges and universities (56 scholarships were awarded in 2022)
- Sponsorships to the Concerns of Police Survivors, VA Coalition for the Prevention of Elder Abuse conference, Virginia Victim Assistance Network, VA State Police Assn Emergency Relief Fund
- Lawful employment classes
- Legal consultations to sheriff's office
- Virginia Law Enforcement Memorial Fund to provide funds to memorialize Virginia law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty.
- VSI Executive Management Training Conference for sheriffs and chief deputies
- Sheriff's Office Administrative Professionals Training Conference
- New Sheriffs' School
- Sheriff and Deputy certification program in partnership with VCU
- Weekly Virginia Sheriff Dispatch email

5. The Virginia Sheriffs' Institute has received a determination letter from the Internal Revenue Service indicating that associate and business memberships are tax-deductible. A copy of this document can be sent to you or a citizen upon request or found on the VSI website.

6. The Virginia Sheriffs' Institute (VSI) has met all twenty standards of charity accountability of the Better Business Bureau (BBB). The BBB Wise Giving Alliance Standards for Charity Accountability were developed to assist donors in making sound giving decisions and to foster public confidence in charitable organizations. The standards seek to encourage fair and honest solicitation practices, to promote ethical conduct by charitable organizations and to advance support of philanthropy. Click **HERE** to review the VSI's report.

We have prepared a sample press release to help develop positive media coverage for you, VSI and our upcoming membership drive. Click **HERE** for the sample press release in .docx form. We have also drafted **two Public Service Announcements (PSA's)** for you to submit to local radio stations. One is a 10-second spot, and the other is a 30-second spot. We ask that you deliver this information to your local newspapers, radio and television stations before the campaign is mailed. Before taking the news release to the media, you need to print it on your office letterhead and simply fill in the blanks with your name and your locality name. A personal request from you that the news release and PSA's be printed/aired in late January/early February just before the mailing would be most helpful. Publicity efforts such as this are an opportunity to gain widespread support for VSI and to promote good public relations for you, personally, in your locality.

Thank you very much for your support. Please call me at (804) 225-7152, if you have any questions.

Thanks again,

John W. Jones
Executive Director
Virginia Sheriffs' Institute