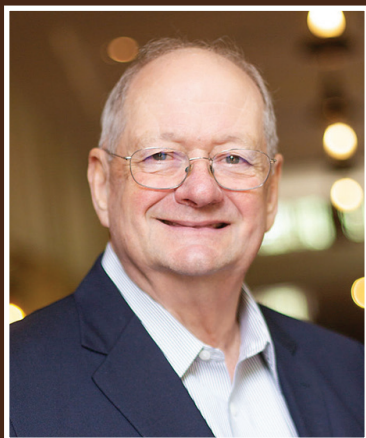




Newsletter

Winter Edition 2025



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VSA's Top Legislative Priorities in 2025



2024-2025

President

Sheriff Michael W. Taylor
Pittsylvania County

Immediate Past President

Sheriff Michael S. Mondul
City of Danville

First Vice President

Sheriff Ernest L. Giles, Sr.
Sussex County

Secretary

Sheriff Alisa A. Gregory
Henrico County

Treasurer

Sheriff Jeremy D. Fleming
Dickenson County

Board Members

Sheriff Mike W. Miller
Bedford County

Sheriff Travis M. Sumption
Clarke County

Sheriff Darrell L. Hodges
Cumberland County

Sheriff Eric B. Hess
Fluvanna County

Executive Director
John W. Jones

INCREASING DISPATCHER PAY AMONG VSA'S TOP LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES IN 2025



This year the Virginia Sheriffs' Association (VSA) will work with members of the 2025 Virginia General Assembly (GA) to focus on issues that help promote public safety and criminal justice in the Commonwealth.

Retention, pay, stressful work, and long hours are all issues impacting dispatchers. Among our top legislative priorities in the 2025 GA session, is addressing the issue of dispatcher pay, as well as the ongoing law enforcement recruitment and retention crisis.

Virginia dispatchers engage in high-stress, life-saving work with the public. A calm

and experienced response could mean the difference between life and death. Yet, while dispatching centers in Virginia are dealing with staffing shortages, pay continues to be a big issue for hiring and retaining staff.

In addition, stress and burnout due to long hours required at the job remain persistent problems among dispatcher staff. The current turnover rate for communication operator positions is at an unmanageable 30% rate.

Increasing the time it takes for a dispatcher to pick up a 911 call could lead to devastating consequences. That is why in the year ahead, VSA will be requesting an increase in starting salaries and funding for all communication operator positions at appropriate levels.

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

KILLED IN THE LINE OF DUTY


In the summer of 2024, the Virginia Sheriffs' Institute (VSI) was honored to be able to provide support to the family of a fallen deputy as part of our in-the-line-of-duty death benefit. As a dedicated member of the Virginia Sheriffs' Institute, your


support enables us to provide up to \$5,000 to help relieve distress for the family of any sheriff or deputy killed in the line of duty during their time of greatest need. **Thank you for allowing us to offer this help when it is needed.**

2024 DONATION SUMMARY

If you would like to receive a summary of your 2024 tax-deductible donations to the Virginia Sheriffs' Institute (VSI), please contact us at vsavsi@virginiasheriffs.org or call (804) 225-7152. We will compile the information and send it to you!

We Want to Hear from You ...


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Find Us On Social Media:

 twitter.com/VSInstitute

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VSA AWARDS

The Virginia Sheriffs' Association (VSA) congratulates the 2024 recipients of the Deputy Sheriff of the Year, Dispatcher of the Year, and the Valor Award. These awards provide an excellent means for VSA to recognize the meritorious contributions of Virginia's professional deputy sheriffs and dispatchers. While all of last year's nominees were honorable, the committee selected the following members for going above and beyond the call of duty.

2024 Deputy Sheriff of the Year Award: Detective Shannon Almborg, a member of the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office since 2013, is a Defensive Tactics Instructor, a member of the Crisis Negotiations Team, and a co-founder of RISE, a mentorship program for women in law enforcement. Detective Almborg has emerged as a cornerstone in advancing cryptocurrency investigations within the Financial and Cybercrimes Unit and has a position on the FBI Cyber Task Force. She has successfully traced over five million stolen crypto funds and generated countless leads. Detective Almborg pursues and has obtained numerous certifications in cryptocurrency investigations. Her unwavering dedication, initiative, and outstanding contributions to mentorship, defensive tactics instruction, and financial and cybercrime investigation make her truly deserving of the prestigious VSA Deputy of the Year Award.

2024 Dispatcher of the Year Award: Supervisor Tammy Witt from the Goochland County Sheriff's Office (GCSO), has transformed the GCSO emergency dispatch services by establishing a promotional process and providing meticulous attention to the training and preparation of supervisors. As well, in 2024 she conceived, created, and launched the Communications Officer Academy program for the Goochland County Sheriff's Office. Tammy actively engages with the community and builds positive relationships within the community, highlighting her unwavering dedication to public service. Tammy's extraordinary leadership, dedication to professional development, and unwavering commitment to community safety make her a truly exceptional winner of the distinguished VSA Dispatcher of the Year Award.

2024 Valor Award: Deputy Amanda Mele with the Spotsylvania County Sheriff's Office, Deputies Chastity Toretta and Ryan Carreira of the City of Norfolk's Sheriff's Office, Deputy Brian Thomas with the Frederick County Sheriff's Office, Deputy Bryan Sparks of Hanover County Sheriff's Office, and Sergeant Michael Panos with the Henry County Sheriff's Office were awarded the 2024 Valor Award each for demonstrating heroic and lifesaving actions while on duty.

These awards were presented to these exceptional individuals during the VSA Annual Conference held on September 24-26, 2024, at the Virginia Beach Oceanfront Marriott.

CRIME-FIGHTING INITIATIVES DELIVER REAL RESULTS

Efforts to reduce violent crime in Virginia are yielding impressive results, thanks to two innovative programs championed by Governor Glenn Youngkin's office. These initiatives — **Operation Ceasefire Virginia** and **Operation Bold Blue Line** — are making a tangible difference in the safety of our communities. Over the past year, violent crime has dropped by an incredible 11%, with participating cities leading the way in these improvements.

Operation Ceasefire Virginia was launched to help get guns off our streets and hold people who want to do harm accountable; while Operation Bold Blue Line is helping to strengthen relationships between law enforcement agencies and communities. Another focus of these initiatives is ensuring criminals serve the majority of their sentences, which has proved to be a strong deterrent to future crimes.

Thirteen cities across Virginia have adopted these initiatives, and the results speak for themselves. According to the Attorney General's Office, homicide rates and violent crime rates have decreased significantly in 2024 compared to 2023.

Here are a few highlights from Operation Ceasefire Virginia's achievements:

- Violent Repeat Offenders Convicted; Over 470 Years of Total Prison Time;
- Ceasefire Cities Responsible for 66.4% of Reduction in Murder Rate; 40.1% Reduction in All Violent Crime; and
- Virginia Murder Rate Down 30% Statewide from Previous Year; Violent Crime Down 11%.

The Virginia Sheriffs' Association applauds these initiatives and their remarkable results. We are proud to support efforts that make our communities safer and better places to live, work, and raise families.

By working together, we can build on this momentum and ensure that Virginia continues to lead the way in public safety.

A Message From VSI Executive Director John W. Jones



On behalf of all of us at the Virginia Sheriffs' Institute (VSI), Happy New Year! I hope you had a joyous and safe holiday season, and that you are enjoying your New Year so far.

With the prospect of winter finally making its presence known in our region, I urge you to take extra care and caution when traveling on Virginia's roadways. I've included some tips on how to prepare for the next winter storm and stay safe in your

home during these cold winter months.

The men and women of your local Sheriff's Office are committed to keeping residents and visitors safe during this winter season. With your continued strong support, VSI will work to promote crime prevention and public safety efforts in your community and all across Virginia. At the same time, VSI is focused on continuing to bring much-needed attention to the ongoing issue of law enforcement retention and improving the working conditions of Virginia's sheriffs and deputy sheriffs.

During the 2025 Virginia General Assembly, the Virginia Sheriffs' Association (VSA) will be supporting efforts to improve the compensation of our hardworking dispatchers who are generally underpaid and overworked. They are also working to improve 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 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.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John W. Jones". The signature is fluid and cursive.

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

WINTER STORM SAFETY TIPS



Do not let the next winter storm catch you off guard: prepare now! Here in the Commonwealth of Virginia, we could receive anything from snow, sleet, and freezing rain. Every winter storm comes with the potential for not only hazardous conditions on our roadways, but the possibility of unsafe conditions in our homes.

According to emergency response officials, you and your family should prep for winter storms by keeping these essential items in your home: flashlight, extra batteries, a portable charger, a weather radio, adequate fuel for generators and other equipment, and bottled water (at least three gallons for each person in your household and your pets). You should also be sure to have enough perishable food and hygiene products on hand for three days.

If you must use a space heater during the winter, be sure to keep it in a well-ventilated area with at least three feet of space between your space heater and anything else. It is recommended that you turn off space heaters if you leave the room or are going to bed.

If you are outdoors this winter, keep yourself hydrated, dry, and warm. Do not forget about your pets! If you take your pet out for a walk in wintry conditions, make sure to remove any damp pet coats or boots so they stay warm. Remember to wipe their paws after each walk to remove ice-melting chemicals which, if ingested, can cause illness, or even death, in dogs.