



Newsletter
Winter Edition 2026



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VSA's Legislative
Priorities in 2026



2025-2026

President

Sheriff Alisa A. Gregory
Henrico County

Immediate Past President

Sheriff Michael W. Taylor
Pittsylvania County

First Vice President

Sheriff Jeremy D. Fleming
Dickenson County

Secretary

Sheriff Mike W. Miller
Bedford County

Treasurer

Sheriff Travis M. Sumption
Clarke County

Board Members

Sheriff R. Tyrone Foster
City of Bristol

Sheriff Darrell L. Hodges
Cumberland County

Sheriff Eric B. Hess
Fluvanna County

Sheriff John A. Beauchamp
Northumberland County

Executive Director

John W. Jones

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



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VSA'S LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES IN 2026

This year, the Virginia Sheriffs' Association (VSA) will work with members of the 2026 Virginia General Assembly to advance legislation that strengthens public safety and supports the men and women serving in communities across the Commonwealth.



The upcoming session opens with a newly configured General Assembly, bringing fresh perspectives, concerns, and priorities to Richmond. As with any transition, this shift creates both opportunities and challenges. VSA is committed to constructive, professional engagement with every member — regardless of party — to ensure that public safety concerns remain clearly understood and effectively addressed.

VSA is preparing for the 2026 General Assembly with the continuing goals of

preserving the constitutional office of sheriff and protecting law enforcement officers. Sheriffs in Virginia are directly elected by the citizens of each county and city they serve. VSA will continue to safeguard this direct line of responsibility and service to the community.

VSA will resist any reductions in salary or benefits for sheriffs' deputies and will fight against attacks on law enforcement's ability to continue to do the honorable work protecting the community.

Your strong engagement gives sheriffs a unified voice in Richmond. As we navigate a new legislative landscape, the continued involvement of VSI members like you ensures that lawmakers hear firsthand the needs of your local community and in communities all across Virginia.

VSA AWARDS

The Virginia Sheriffs' Association (VSA) congratulates the 2025 recipients of the Deputy Sheriff of the Year, Dispatcher of the Year, and the Valor Awards. The awards were presented to these exceptional individuals during the VSA Annual Conference held on September 16-18, 2025, at the Virginia Beach Oceanfront Marriott.

While all of last year's nominees were honorable, the committee selected the following members for going above and beyond the call of duty.

2025 Deputy Sheriff of the Year Award:
Master Deputy Sheriff Christopher Meyer,
Fauquier County Sheriff's Office

2025 Dispatcher of the Year Award:
Kayleigh Jackson, Jonna Tuell, and Tommie
Wiles, Smyth County Sheriff's Office



2025 Valor Awards: Lieutenant Joey Adams, Halifax County Sheriff's Office; Deputies Eddie Daw and Norman Sibley, Lancaster County Sheriff's Office; Deputy Howard Phillips, Lunenburg County Sheriff's Office; Sergeant Shad Hudson, City of Lynchburg Sheriff's Office; Deputies Michael Fedorchuk, Michael Lester, and Hunter Reedy, Smyth County Sheriff's Office; Captain Daniel Harris, Spotsylvania County Sheriff's Office

These awards provide an excellent means for VSA to recognize the meritorious contributions of Virginia's professional deputy sheriffs and dispatchers.

2025 DONATION SUMMARY

If you would like to receive a summary of your 2025 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!

WINTER DOES NOT MEAN CRIME SLOWS

During winter months, criminals take advantage of early nightfall, colder weather, and routine changes that can leave vehicles and homes more vulnerable. In recent years, sheriff's offices across the Commonwealth have seen an increase in crimes of opportunity during the winter months — especially thefts involving unattended vehicles left running to warm up.

One of the most common risks this time of year is “puffing,” when drivers start their cars on cold mornings and leave them running unattended. It only takes a few seconds for a thief to spot an idling vehicle and take off. Sheriffs' offices also note that un-shoveled driveways and walkways can signal that no one is home, making certain residences become more attractive targets.

Packages left on porches, recently opened boxes set at the curb, or gifts left visible inside a home or vehicle can produce crimes of opportunity as well.

Virginia's sheriffs encourage all residents to take simple steps that make a big difference:

- Never leave a vehicle running unattended; lock car doors at all times.
- Keep valuables out of sight, and clear snow promptly so homes do not appear vacant.
- Install good exterior lighting and motion-activated cameras.
- Look out for your neighbors.
- Report suspicious activity promptly to law enforcement.

With increased awareness and commonsense precautions, you can help reduce crimes of opportunity and keep our communities safe throughout the cold-weather season.



NEW SHERIFFS' SCHOOL

The Virginia Sheriffs' Institute (VSI) is proud to welcome eight newly elected and appointed sheriffs in the Commonwealth who started serving on January 1, 2026. These eight individuals completed training at the VSI New Sheriffs' School, held December 2-4, in Richmond, Virginia.

The newly elected and appointed sheriffs had a great opportunity to become familiar with the VSI and the Virginia Sheriffs' Association (VSA) and get acquainted with experienced sheriffs who serve in positions of leadership for both organizations. Overall, the New Sheriffs' School offered Virginia's newly elected and appointed sheriffs an invaluable opportunity to improve their effectiveness as dedicated public safety officials — something from which every Virginian will benefit.

BECOME A MONTHLY GIVER

When you become a monthly giving member of the Virginia Sheriffs' Institute (VSI), 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 deputies in our state. To start your monthly gift, visit <https://vasheriffsinstitute.org/support-vsi/> and click “Monthly”.

UTILITY SCAMS ON THE RISE

Utility scams are once again on the rise. Scammers know that as temperatures drop, people are more concerned about keeping their homes warm and their power on. They often pose as utility representatives and pressure customers to make immediate payments, sometimes threatening to cut off service unless money is sent through gift cards, wire transfers, or digital apps.

Remember: real utility companies will never demand instant payment over the phone or insist on unusual payment methods. If you receive a suspicious call or visit, hang up or shut the door, then check your account directly using your provider's official phone number, website, or app. Taking a few extra minutes to verify legitimacy could save you and your loved ones from becoming the next victim of these costly schemes. If you believe you are the victim of a utility scam, please call law enforcement.

HONORING SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS

Each year on February 15, communities recognize National School Resource Officer Appreciation Day, a time to honor the dedicated men and women who serve as School Resource Officers (SROs) in our schools. SROs play a vital role in keeping students, teachers, and staff safe — not only by providing security, but by building trust, mentoring young people, and fostering positive relationships between law enforcement and youth.

A Message From VSI Executive Director John W. Jones



As we begin a new year, I want to extend my sincere thanks for your continued support of the Virginia Sheriffs' Institute (VSI). Your trust and partnership make a real difference in how we protect and serve your community.

Winter is settling in across Virginia, and while the season brings its own challenges, Virginia's sheriffs and deputies

remain fully committed to keeping you safe — on the roads, in your neighborhoods, and in your homes.

This year, we are renewing our focus on the issues that most directly affect public safety: strengthening our workforce, and ensuring our sheriffs and deputies have the tools and resources they need. Recruitment and retention continue to be challenges statewide, and we are working closely with our partners in the General Assembly to advocate for improvements that reflect the critical roles our personnel play every day.

Your continued strong support of VSI allows us to meet these challenges head-on and raise awareness about important crime-prevention efforts throughout the winter months. Whether it is staying prepared for severe weather, remaining vigilant in your community, or learning more about public safety issues highlighted in this newsletter, your engagement helps make all of us stronger.

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.

Thank you for your continued support!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John W. Jones". The signature is fluid and cursive, written on a light-colored background.

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

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.

FENTANYL-RELATED DEATHS DROP IN VIRGINIA

Virginia is seeing a dramatic and encouraging shift in its fight against fentanyl. In January 2022, Virginia recorded 2,015 deaths, and by April 2024, that number had dropped to 1,676. While 2025 figures have not been released, fentanyl-related deaths are projected to fall to just 830 statewide.

This marks a 50.5% decrease in only one year and a 58.8% decrease since January 2022. These are the lowest fentanyl-related death levels Virginia has seen since August 2018. The same CDC dataset also shows that total drug-overdose deaths across the Commonwealth have fallen to their lowest point since December 2016.

Sheriffs across Virginia have played a central role in this progress. Increased enforcement, directed investigations, and the steady dismantling of fentanyl trafficking networks have all contributed to this decline. Tougher penalties for dealing fentanyl — especially when it results in injury or death — have also helped deter criminal activity and disrupt distribution channels throughout the Commonwealth.

While this progress is significant, law enforcement remains clear-eyed about the ongoing threat. Fentanyl continues to be one of the most dangerous substances in circulation, and even small amounts can be deadly. Continued enforcement, stronger tools for prosecutors, stiffer penalties, and community outreach efforts are critical to keeping Virginia on this downward trajectory.

VSI LAW ENFORCEMENT MEMORIAL LICENSE PLATE



The Virginia Sheriffs' Institute (VSI) memorializes law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty through a special Virginia license plate offered through the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). The plate provides funding to commemorate Virginia's fallen law enforcement heroes through the Virginia Law Enforcement Memorial Fund.

Support law enforcement by ordering the Law Enforcement Memorial plate through DMV's website: <https://www.dmv.virginia.gov/vehicles/license-plates/search/law-officers-memorial-0>.

If you are already proudly displaying your plate on your vehicle, VSI thanks you for your support which continues to generate valuable resources to recognize Virginia's law enforcement officers.