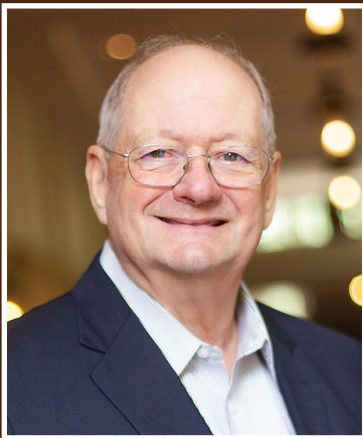




Newsletter
Summer Edition 2026



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New Gun-Related Laws Passed in the General Assembly





2026-2027

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Executive Director

John W. Jones

NEW GUN LAWS AMONG THOSE PASSED IN THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

We wanted to make you and other VSI members aware of new laws that take effect on July 1, 2026, which are related to gun possession and purchase by underage people, the safe storage of firearms, domestic assault, and driving. These bills were passed by the 2026 General Assembly session and were signed into law by Governor Spanberger.

HB320 — Bans Live Streaming While Driving:

Drivers are now prohibited from live streaming video on phones or other devices while operating a motor vehicle. The law is intended to reduce distracted driving and improve roadway safety.

HB1525 — Raises Minimum Age for Certain Firearm Purchases:

This law prevents anyone under 21 from buying a handgun or assault-style firearm. It also tightens rules for minors possessing firearms by requiring parental or guardian permission and parent or guardian ownership of the firearm in certain situations. Minors may still use firearms at shooting ranges, in firearms safety classes, while hunting with an adult present, or during official law enforcement training.

SB348 — Safe Firearm Storage

Requirements: Gun owners must now securely store firearms in locked containers in a residence if minors or people legally



prohibited from possessing firearms are in the home.

HB110 / SB496 — Firearms Left in

Vehicles: Leaving a handgun unattended in a vehicle is now a criminal offense unless the firearm is locked inside a hard-sided compartment or secured container attached to the vehicle, such as a glove box, center console, or lockbox.

HB19 / SB160 — Expanded Domestic Relationship Definition:

Virginia law now expands the definition of a “family or household member” to include dating or intimate partners from the past 12 months. This change affects laws related to domestic assault, firearm possession following domestic violence convictions, and stalking offenses.

HB40 — Undetectable “Plastic” Firearms

Prohibited: This law bans the manufacture or transfer of firearms or firearm parts that cannot be detected by standard security screening equipment.

VSI 2026 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

We are very pleased to announce that 66 scholarships were awarded to deserving students across the Commonwealth pursuing a career of service in law enforcement, thanks to the generosity of citizen supporters like you.

One of our most recent scholarship award recipients is Evan J. Dyer, of Clarke County, Virginia. Evan is planning on attending Liberty University and pursuing a course of study in criminal justice.



Full-time students are awarded \$1,000 scholarships; part-time students are awarded \$500 scholarships. That is an impressive \$64,000 going toward education costs for some great young people that will benefit everyone in our state. Your support is the reason we have had such tremendous success with our scholarship program year after year!

VSI is the only organization in Virginia helping the state's law enforcement students with criminal justice scholarships.

We Want to Hear from You ...

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Find Us On Social Media:

✕ twitter.com/VSIInstitute

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CELEBRATING AMERICA'S 250th ANNIVERSARY

As our nation prepares to celebrate America's 250th anniversary, communities across Virginia will come together for parades, cookouts, and fireworks displays. While fireworks are a long-standing tradition of Independence Day celebrations, they also come with real risks if not handled properly.

In fact, even small fireworks can cause serious injuries or spark dangerous fires. If you plan to celebrate at home, here are a few important safety tips to keep in mind:

- Only purchase and use legal fireworks and be sure to check local regulations in your community.
- Always use fireworks outdoors in a clear, level area — away from homes, dry grass, trees, or anything that can burn.
- Have a bucket of water, hose, or fire extinguisher ready in case of sparks or accidents.
- Never allow young children to handle or light fireworks and keep pets at a safe distance.
- Maintain a safe distance after lighting fireworks and never attempt to re-light a malfunctioning device.
- Soak used or unused fireworks in water before discarding them to prevent fires.

This summer, as we celebrate our nation's historic milestone, let's do so responsibly. By taking a few simple precautions, you can help ensure that this once-in-a-generation anniversary is both memorable and safe for you, your family, and your community.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN VSI & VSA?

The Virginia Sheriffs' Institute (VSI) is the educational arm of the Virginia Sheriffs' Association (VSA) in which citizens, like yourself, are eligible to become members. The proceeds supporting the 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. VSI is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. 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. Only sheriffs, deputies, and their staff are eligible to be members. It is a professional trade organization in which contributions are not tax deductible. VSA is a 501(c)(6) organization. We send out appeals on their behalf twice a year.

For more information, please visit their websites:

VSI – www.vasheriffsinstitute.org | VSA – www.vasheriff.org

DID YOU KNOW?

The office of sheriff predates the founding of the United States and has remained one of the most enduring institutions in American government. As the nation prepares to commemorate 250 years of independence, Americans are reflecting not only on our history — but on the institutions that continue to uphold it.

Sheriffs are elected by the people and accountable to their communities. This reflects the founders' vision of government closest to the people. Long before federal institutions took shape, local leaders, like sheriffs, ensured order and justice in their communities — a tradition that continues across Virginia today.

100 DEADLY DAYS OF SUMMER



The stretch between Memorial Day and Labor Day is often called the "100 Deadly Days of Summer" — and for good reason. During these months, traffic fatalities rise as more Americans hit the road for vacations, holidays, and long-distance travel.

Several factors make summer driving especially risky. Roads are more crowded, drivers are more likely to be distracted on long trips, and holidays often bring an increase in alcohol-related crashes. Add in sudden summer storms, wet roads, and flash flooding, and driving conditions can quickly turn dangerous.

The data is especially alarming for younger drivers. Studies show a significant increase in fatal crashes during this period, with more than 30% of teen-related crash deaths occurring between Memorial Day and Labor Day.

Recognizing these dangers, Virginia's law enforcement are cracking down on extreme speeding and strengthening vehicle safety standards — part of a broader effort to reduce preventable crashes during high-risk travel periods.

A Message From VSI Executive Director John W. Jones



As we move into the summer months, I want to personally thank you for your continued support of the Virginia Sheriffs' Institute (VSI). Your partnership plays an important role in helping law enforcement keep our community safe during one of the busiest times of the year.

Summer in Virginia brings more travel, outdoor events, and time spent with family and friends. It is also a time when we ask everyone to stay especially mindful of safety — whether you are attending community celebrations, enjoying time on the road, or simply going about your daily routine.

With America's 250th anniversary celebration taking place this season, many families will be enjoying fireworks and large gatherings. I encourage you to do so safely by following local laws, keeping a safe distance, and remaining aware of your surroundings. Small precautions can help prevent serious injuries and keep these celebrations enjoyable for everyone.

We also want to remind residents to stay alert for seasonal scams. During the summer, we often see an increase in fraudulent activity, including individuals posing as utility company representatives and pressuring residents for immediate payment. If something feels suspicious, take a moment to verify before acting.

It is my privilege to serve as Executive Director of VSI. If you have questions or concerns about crime prevention or public safety efforts in your community, I urge you to contact your sheriff's office.

Thank you again for your continued support, and I wish you and your family a safe and enjoyable summer.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "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

VSI STICKER/DECAL: OPT OUT OPTION

Many of you enjoy displaying our annual VSI stickers/decals. But for those who do not use them and would like to opt out of receiving them in your October renewal mailer, please check the box provided on the reply form or email us at vsavsi@virginiasheriffs.org.

2026 CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

VSI recognized and presented participants of the 2026 Certification Program a certificate of completion at the Spring Conference in April. The Certification Program is offered by VSI to recognize the continued individual professional development of Virginia sheriffs and deputies. Certification through this voluntary program provides recognition of a sheriff's or deputy's commitment to excellence, life-long learning, and advancement of public safety as a profession.

UTILITY SCAMS

As temperatures rise, so do reports of utility scams targeting consumers. Each summer, there are reports of scammers posing as representatives from local power or water companies, warning that your service will be shut off within hours unless you make an immediate payment.

These messages are designed to create panic — especially during extreme heat — and often demand payment through gift cards, wire transfers, or payment apps. That is a major red flag. The truth is that legitimate utility companies do not demand immediate payment or threaten shutoffs without advance notice. They will never ask you to pay with gift cards or apps.

If you receive a suspicious call, text, or email, do not respond or send money. Instead, contact your utility provider directly using a trusted number. Staying alert and taking a moment to verify can help protect you and others from falling victim to these increasingly common scams.