



# Newsletter

Winter Edition 2024

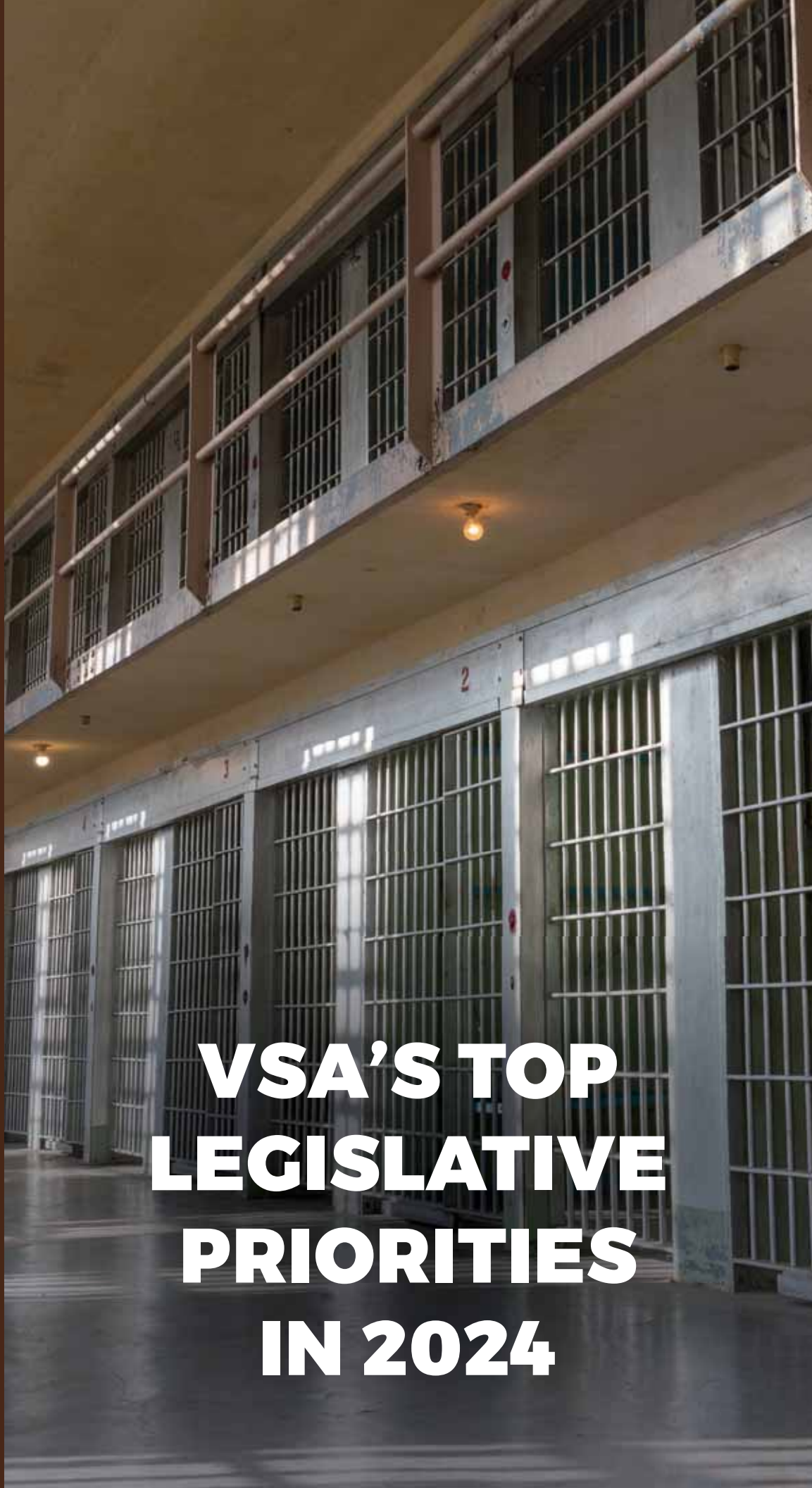


Sheriff April M. Staton  
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# VSA'S TOP LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES IN 2024



**2023-2024**

**President**

Sheriff Michael W. Taylor  
Pittsylvania County

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Sheriff Karl S. Leonard  
Chesterfield County

**First Vice President**

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**Executive Director**  
John W. Jones

## LAW ENFORCEMENT RETENTION AMONG VSA'S TOP LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES IN 2024



This year the Virginia Sheriffs' Association (VSA) will work with members of the 2024 Virginia General Assembly (GA) to focus on issues that help promote law enforcement and criminal justice in the Commonwealth.

Among our top legislative priorities in the 2024 GA for the upcoming session is addressing the ongoing law enforcement recruitment and retention crisis by putting in place solutions that will redefine the profession of law enforcement, as well as address dispatcher shortages.

VSA also wants the GA to improve public safety by funding every position authorized by current law, beginning with 1 deputy per 1,500 population, consistent with Va Code § 15.2-1609.1. In addition, VSA urges the GA to address the opioid and drug epidemic

in our jails and our communities by fully funding the Opioid Use Reduction & Jail-Based Substance Use Disorder Treatment and Transition Fund.

Increasingly, sheriffs and jail administrators are on the frontlines of the opioid epidemic. Jails often encounter individuals who are suffering with substance use disorders or withdrawal and are uniquely positioned to offer treatment and prevent the cycle of drug abuse and reincarceration.

This fund was established by law in the 2023 GA. The fund is to be administered by the Department of Criminal Justice Services for the purpose of funding and supporting the planning and implementation of locally administered jail-based addiction recovery and substance use disorder treatment and transition programs in local and regional jails. The bill goes into effect on July 1, 2024.

Through your strong 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 the City of Salem and all the communities Virginia sheriffs and deputies represent.

## SHOPLIFTING CRIMES ON THE RISE

Cities across the country are experiencing a sharp increase in retail theft. Perhaps you have seen online videos or news reports showing large groups of thieves stealing merchandise from stores. Even if a store has hired security guards, they are often prohibited from physically intervening if they witness theft.

In Virginia alone, approximately \$1.3 billion in merchandise is stolen annually. This stolen merchandise results in a significant revenue loss for our state. Retailers are often forced to raise prices to offset the financial impact of retail theft.


The items that are most prized by retail


thieves include clothing, grocery items, infant formula, diapers, cigarettes, designer brands, denim, and handbags. Stolen items are then sold on Amazon Marketplace or eBay for half the original retail price.

In response to this growing and costly trend, Virginia's General Assembly (GA) passed a law in the last GA that aims to crack down on organized retail theft.

The new law makes it a Class 3 felony for anyone to conspire or act in concert with one or more people to steal retail merchandise with a value exceeding \$5,000 in a 90-day period, with the intent to sell the stolen goods for profit.

### We Want to Hear from You ...


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### Find Us On Social Media:

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

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

## VSA AWARDS

The Virginia Sheriffs' Association (VSA) congratulates the 2023 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 last year's nominees were all honorable, the committee selected the following members for going above and beyond the call of duty.

### **2023 Deputy Sheriff of the Year Award:**

Investigator Scott Chambers, a four-year member of the Chesapeake Sheriff's Office, is assigned to its Criminal Apprehension Unit where he is a sworn Special Deputy with the United States Marshals Service and a member of the Capital Area Regional Fugitive Task Force. In this role on January 11, 2023, Investigator Chambers apprehended Lamont Lewis who was wanted for the homicide of his wife. During a vehicle take-down, Chambers ensured the safe exit of the vehicle's other occupant and was then struck by three rounds fired by Lewis. Investigator Chambers returned fire striking Lewis several times. Chambers was transported to a medical center in critical condition and underwent two surgeries and a weeklong hospitalization.

**2023 Dispatcher of the Year Award:** Lieutenant Janie Jenkins, a 21-year member of the Rappahannock County Sheriff's Office, routinely handles life-threatening fire, emergency medical, and law enforcement emergencies. She spends countless hours in the Communications center ensuring that the staff are performing their duties correctly and that the needs of the citizens are being fully served.

**2023 Valor Award:** Wise County Deputy Robbie Robinson demonstrated exceptional bravery and survival skills when he responded to reports of a missing 13-year-old girl and a possible stolen vehicle on July 17, 2021. Despite being stabbed by the suspect and thrown in a secluded area, Deputy Robinson managed to apply self-aid while radioing for help. His actions not only saved his life, but also potentially the life of a 13-year-old missing child.

These awards were presented to these exceptional individuals during the VSA Annual Conference held on September 19-21, 2023, at the Virginia Beach Oceanfront Marriott.

## 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 law enforcement officers in our state.

Other benefits include:

- The convenience and security of having your gift debited automatically from your checking or debit/credit card.
- Helping save on costly postage and administrative fees.
- The option to receive less mail from VSI.
- The option to cancel your monthly gift at any time by calling 804-225-7152.

**If you would like to become a monthly giver, please visit <https://vasheriffsinstitute.org/support-vsi/> and be sure to select the "Monthly" donation option.**

## WINTER SAFETY TIPS

We are just getting into the thick of winter and the threat of wintry conditions could last for a couple more months. Here are a few tips from the National Weather Service:

### **Dress for the Cold:**

- Wear layers of loose-fitting and lightweight clothing. Trapped air between the layers will insulate you.
- If doing strenuous outdoor activities, avoid wearing cotton. Once wet, cotton takes a long time to dry and will sap your heat. Use synthetic fabrics that wick moisture from your skin and dries quickly.
- Outer garments should be tightly woven, water repellent, and hooded.
- Wear a hat because 40% of your body heat can be lost from your head.
- Cover your mouth to protect your lungs.
- Mittens, snug at the wrist, are better than gloves.
- Try to stay dry and out of the wind.

### **When Traveling:**

- Your vehicle's winter survival kit should include warm clothes, boots, blankets, flashlight with extra batteries, candy bars or cereal bars.
- Always carry a charged cell phone and tell others of your travel plans.

## 2023 DONATION SUMMARY

If you would like a summary of your 2023 tax-deductible donations to the Virginia Sheriffs' Institute, please contact us at [vsavsi@virginiasheriffs.org](mailto:vsavsi@virginiasheriffs.org) or call (804) 225-7152. We will compile the information and send it to you!

# A Message From Sheriff April M. Staton on Behalf of VSI



On behalf of all of us at the City of Salem Sheriff's Office, Happy New Year! I hope you enjoyed the holiday season, and you were able to spend time with your loved ones.

As we settle into a new year, we have the potential for some wintry weather conditions to hit our area in the weeks and months ahead. It is so important you prepare for the conditions and be aware of roads that may look wet but are actually frozen. Please remember to use extra

caution on bridges and ramps which can often become icy without warning.

Another danger you should be aware of, especially during winter months, is the risk of frostbite or hypothermia from exposure to cold temperatures. As a reminder, animals are also affected by freezing temperatures and wind, so try to limit their time outdoors in extreme weather conditions.

With your continued strong support, my office will work to promote crime prevention and law enforcement efforts in our community and all across Virginia during this winter season. At the same time, I am committed to bringing much-needed attention to the ongoing issue of law enforcement retention and improving the working conditions of our hardworking deputy sheriffs.

It is my privilege to serve as your Sheriff. Please contact my 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 our community.

Thank you for your continued support!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "April M. Staton". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Sheriff April M. Staton  
2 E Calhoun St  
Salem, VA 24153  
540-375-3040

## SOCIAL MEDIA SITES POSE RISKS



Scammers are increasingly turning to social media to scam unsuspecting people out of their money and identity. On social media, it is easy to create fake profiles and personas or hack into your profile and pretend to be you.

According to the Federal Trade Commission, one in four people who reported losing money to fraud since 2021 said it started on social media, and financial losses due to social scams came to a staggering \$2.7 billion during that same period. The vast majority of social media scams are not reported, so those figures could be much higher.

The three leading types of social media scams are online shopping, investment, and romance scams. Fraudsters will lure people to fake websites or apps promoting fake products or promoting lucrative investment opportunities if you send money.

Scammers may even create advertisements using a social media platform's own tools and target their victims based on age, interests, or past purchases. The purchases victims make never arrive or if someone invests in a bogus company using cryptocurrency that investment is lost.

Romance scams are another leading type of online scam that affects people using Facebook, Instagram, or Snapchat. They often start with a friend request from a stranger and it quickly progresses to requests for money.

### Tips to avoid these types of costly scams:

- Go to the privacy settings on your social media sites and limit who can see your posts and personal information. You should also set restrictions on what information platforms like Facebook and Instagram can collect.
- If a friend reaches out via social media requesting urgent help and money, verify that it is really them by calling them directly. Their account may have been hacked.
- Be wary of strangers who want to start quick friendships or romantic relationships, and never send money to someone you have never met.
- Before you buy or invest in a company, search online for a "scam" or "complaint" related to that company name.