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On behalf of everyone here at the Virginia Sheriffs’ Institute, thank you again for your steadfast support — I hope you have a safe and happy summer!

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Sincerely,

John W. Jones
Executive Director
701 East Franklin Street, Suite 706
Richmond, VA 23219

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In just one example of this effective partnership between federal and local law enforcement, Loudoun County agencies collected over 1,000 pounds of expired or unused pharmaceuticals which will no longer pose a threat to the public. Along with the Loudoun County Sheriffs’ Office, officers from the Leesburg, Middleburg, and Purcellville Police Departments, and concerned citizens worked together to collect and dispose of the medications.

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RICHMOND REVIEW: LOOKING AT RECENT LEGISLATION FROM VIRGINIA’S CAPITOL

Three important new bills concerning privacy and crime have passed through the House of Delegates and Senate, and have been signed into law by Governor McAuliffe this spring. HB 526, introduced by Delegate Robert Bell and encompassing the earlier HB 49, makes it a Class 1 misdemeanor for a person to distribute or disseminate images of another person for malicious intent, and updates terminology to keep pace with the increasing vulnerability of privacy to widespread use of personal electronics devices. In an era when cell phones with photographic and filming capabilities and internet communications are widespread and subject to abuse, the new law seeks to safeguard the privacy of Virginians.

HB 1251, introduced by Delegate David Ramadan, requires that individuals registered with the Sex Offender and Crimes Against Minors Registry must re-register in person with local law enforcement within three days following a change of the offender’s name. It also requires that an incarcerated or civilly committed person must notify the Registry within three days following a name change. Previously, there was no specified time period for when offenders had to re-register. The bill also requires that during the period for which an individual is required to be included in the Registry, any former name must also be included. Registered offenders who have changed their name prior to July 1st of this year who have not already re-registered following a name change must register within three days of July 1, 2014.

Similarly, HB 233, also introduced by Delegate Bell, requires a circuit court to find good cause before accepting name change applications from certain individuals, including probationers, sex offenders, and those incarcerated. With the obvious danger of concealing the person’s accurate profile due to the name change, these measures are hoped to reduce the likelihood of criminals using name changes to avoid compliance with the law.

VIRGINIA’S SHERIFFS ARE PROUD TO ANNOUNCE 2014 VSI SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS

With the help of supporters like you, VSI secures the critical funding needed to continue providing desperately needed scholarships to Virginia citizens to pursue Criminal Justice degrees — a great source of pride for us all and a vital step in ensuring our safety. VSI is the only organization in Virginia helping the state’s law enforcement students with Criminal Justice scholarships.

One of our most recent scholarship award recipients is Benjamin W. Rupert, of New Kent County, Virginia. Benjamin is planning on attending Virginia Commonwealth University where he will be pursuing a course of study in Criminal Justice.

U.S. SUPREME COURT HEARS ARGUMENTS ON CELL PHONES AND SEARCHES

Cellular phones and other handheld communications devices have become a ubiquitous feature of modern society, with over 90% of American adults possessing one. They’ve had a remarkable impact on our lives, allowing the sharing of information quickly and easily from virtually any location, and helping us record and enjoy our experiences. As we saw in the Spring 2013 Newsletter, however, the widespread use of cell phones creates new issues of concern as well (see “Tough New ‘Texting While Driving’ Legislation Moving Through Virginia General Assembly”).

The United States Supreme Court recently heard arguments on appeals involving individuals in California and Massachusetts who were convicted of criminal offenses involving drugs and gang activity on the strength of evidence obtained from their personal devices, such as contact phone numbers, texts, pictures, and addresses. At issue is whether law enforcement must obtain a search warrant to access data on the personal cell phone of an individual under arrest — a classic instance of weighing an individual’s right to privacy against reasonable concerns of law enforcement.

As new technologies present new opportunities — for both law-abiding citizens and criminals alike, our society grapples with how best to navigate the corresponding application of laws. As Virginia Sheriffs’ Institute Executive Director John W. Jones puts it, “the use of cell phones is a public safety issue — we have been able to locate missing persons, solve crimes.” But just as with texting while driving — the tool that can so quickly summon help to save lives can also, through irresponsible use, endanger them — there has to be a balance between privacy and protection of the public with regard to cell phone data and evidence. The VSI has not yet taken an official position on the cases before the Justices, but will monitor the situation closely as the Court deliberates this summer.

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On the evening of Tuesday, May 27th, Governor Terry McAuliffe presided over the 2014 Virginia Law Enforcement Officer’s Memorial Service at the Virginia State Capitol in Richmond. While gathering to remember and honor all Virginia law enforcement officers who have given their lives in the performance of their duties, this year’s ceremony was dedicated to the memory of Virginia State Police Sergeant J. Michael Phillippi and Greensville County Deputy Sheriff Percy L. House, III.

Sergeant Phillippi, a native of Gate City, was a 42-year veteran of the Virginia State Police who served in the Martinsville, Henry County and Patrick County region. He was involved in an early morning traffic accident on January 11th of this year which caused his death. Later that month, on the last day of January, 52-year old Greensville County Deputy Sheriff Percy House was also killed in an accident blamed on icy road conditions while responding to a call in his patrol car.

Losing both of these dedicated officers and valued colleagues to wintry road conditions underlines the many sources of danger which law enforcement personnel face on our behalf. The grateful thanks, thoughts and prayers of the entire Virginia law enforcement community are with their families — they will not be forgotten.

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LIKE THE VIRGINIA SHERIFFS’ INSTITUTE ON FACEBOOK!

Do you have a Facebook account? So do we! The Virginia Sheriffs’ Institute has set a goal of reaching 500 “likes” on our Facebook page, and we’d really appreciate your “electronic approval” as well! Please visit our Facebook page today and help us reach 500 likes at www.facebook.com/vasheriffsinstitute!

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