

**REPORT OF THE  
VIRGINIA STATE CRIME COMMISSION**

**NON-SWORN PERSONNEL IN  
SHERIFF'S OFFICES**

**TO THE GOVERNOR AND  
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA**



**HOUSE DOCUMENT NO. 42**

**COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA  
RICHMOND  
1997**





# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

## VIRGINIA STATE CRIME COMMISSION

General Assembly Building

December 10, 1996

John R. Isom  
Executive Director

MEMBERS  
FROM THE SENATE OF VIRGINIA:  
Janet D. Howell, Vice-Chair  
Mark L. Earley  
Kenneth W. Stolle

FROM THE HOUSE OF DELEGATES:  
Clifton A. Woodrum, Chairman  
James F. Almand  
Jean W. Cunningham  
John J. Davies, III  
Raymond R. Guest, Jr.  
William S. Moore, Jr.

APPOINTMENTS BY THE GOVERNOR:  
Robert C. Bobb  
Terry W. Hawkins  
Robert J. Humphreys

ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE  
James S. Gilmore, III

TO: The Honorable George Allen, Governor of Virginia, and the Members of the General Assembly:

House Joint Resolution 254, agreed to by the 1996 General Assembly, directed the Virginia State Crime Commission to conduct a study of the compensation of non-sworn law-enforcement personnel in sheriff's offices, and to submit its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the 1997 session of the General Assembly.

In fulfilling this directive, a study was conducted by the Virginia State Crime Commission in 1996. I have the honor of submitting herewith the study report.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Clifton A. Woodrum".

Clifton A. Woodrum  
Chairman

CAW/jdw

**MEMBERS OF THE VIRGINIA STATE CRIME COMMISSION  
1996**

**From the Senate of Virginia:**

Janet D. Howell, Vice Chair  
Mark L. Earley  
Kenneth W. Stolle

**From the House of Delegates:**

Clifton A. Woodrum, Chairman  
James F. Almand  
Jean W. Cunningham  
John W. Davies, III  
Raymond R. Guest, Jr.  
William S. Moore, Jr.

**Appointments by the Governor:**

Robert C. Bobb  
Sheriff Terry W. Hawkins  
Robert J. Humphreys

**Attorney General:**

James S. Gilmore, III

**Law Enforcement Subcommittee studying the compensation of non-sworn  
law-enforcement personnel in sheriff's offices.**

**Law Enforcement Subcommittee Members**

Senator Janet D. Howell, Reston, Subcommittee Chair  
Delegate James F. Almand, Arlington  
Mr. Robert C. Bobb, Richmond  
Senator Mark L. Earley, Chesapeake  
Mr. James S. Gilmore, III, Attorney General of Virginia  
Mr Robert J. Humphreys, Virginia Beach  
Delegate William S. Moore, Jr., Portsmouth

**Staff**

John R. Isom, Executive Director

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## **HJR 254**

### **Study of the compensation of non-sworn law-enforcement personnel in sheriff's offices.**

#### **I. Authority for the Study**

The 1996 General Assembly approved House Joint Resolution 254 (HJR 254/Almand) directing the Virginia State Crime Commission to study the compensation of non-sworn law-enforcement personnel in sheriff's offices. Further, the Commission was directed to submit its findings and recommendations to the Governor and 1997 General Assembly.

Section 9-125 of the Code of Virginia establishes and directs the Virginia State Crime Commission "to study, report, and make recommendations on all areas of public safety and protection." Section 9-127, of the Code of Virginia provides that "the Commission shall have the duty and power to make such studies and gather information in order to accomplish its purpose, as set forth in Section 9-125, and to formulate recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly." Section 9-134 authorizes the Commission to "conduct private and public hearings." The Virginia State Crime Commission, in fulfilling its legislative mandate, undertook to study the compensation of non-sworn law-enforcement personnel in sheriff's offices.

#### **II. Members Appointed to Serve**

At the May 15, 1996 meeting of the Virginia State Crime Commission, Chairman Clifton A. Woodrum selected Senator Janet D. Howell to serve as Chair of the Law Enforcement Subcommittee, which was directed to study the compensation of non-sworn law-enforcement personnel in sheriff's offices. The following members of the Crime Commission were selected to serve on the Law Enforcement Subcommittee:

Senator Janet D. Howell, Reston, Subcommittee Chair  
Delegate James F. Almand, Arlington  
Mr. Robert C. Bobb, Richmond  
Senator Mark L. Earley, Chesapeake  
Mr. James S. Gilmore, III, Attorney General of Virginia  
Mr. Robert J. Humphreys, Virginia Beach  
Delegate William S. Moore, Jr., Portsmouth

### III. Executive Summary

Non-sworn law enforcement personnel in the Commonwealth's sheriffs offices provide a vital, yet little noticed, service to our citizens. By providing their specialized talents and expertise, they make the operation of sheriffs' offices possible. They allow for deputies to be in positions requiring sworn status by providing their services, generally at a lower cost. House Joint Resolution 254 was introduced by Delegate James Almand at the request of the Virginia Sheriff's Association representing the Commonwealth's Sheriffs.

Since 1990, non-sworn law enforcement personnel in the states sheriff's offices have received five cost of living adjustments. In 1994, sheriffs' offices which had pay-for-performance programs in place, did receive a salary increase for civilians in their agencies. This increase was 3.57% for approximately 50% of the sheriffs' offices that qualified. The other 50% of the sheriffs' offices received a 2.25% cost of living adjustment (COLA). For the period 1990 through 1996, increases in salaries and COLA's has lagged the cumulative Consumer Price Index by 4.32% to as much as 5.85%. This represents a loss of spendable income during the period.

A comparison of Compensation Board funded non-sworn positions in the Sheriff's offices against comparable state government positions shows that with the exception of cooks and classification officers, the sheriff's office positions lag behind their counterparts in state government by 2.4% to 4.4%, with the exception of dispatchers. The lowest entry level sheriff's dispatcher salary was behind the State Police dispatcher lowest entry level salary by \$2,301 or 12.9%. These positions perform virtually identical jobs.

In approximately 55.6% of the responding sheriff's offices, non-sworn personnel salaries are supplemented by local government. This helps to keep those positions on a comparable level with similar positions within the jurisdiction and keep the jurisdiction as a competitive employer. Approximately 23.1 % of the responding jurisdictions fully fund additional FTE's over the Compensation Board level.

**Recommendation:** Consideration should be given to increasing funding levels of the Compensation Board to effect raises for dispatchers and dispatch supervisors in sheriff's offices to address discrepancies between the sheriff's office dispatchers and similar positions in state government.

## IV. Study Results and Recommendation

Non-sworn law enforcement personnel in Sheriffs' Offices across the state provide a little noticed, but crucial service to this public safety function. Virtually all of the initial public contact with these law enforcement agencies will be through one of these individuals. Whether by phone in a call for service, or a walk-in for a copy of a theft report, or a concealed weapon permit, the non-sworn personnel in these offices will provide the public its first contact with the Sheriff's Office. Non-sworn personnel also must have different skills, knowledge and abilities than their counterparts in civilian business. These employees are often called on to deal with irate or very agitated people. Dispatchers, for example, are required to extract specific information from callers who are under considerable stress at the time. Not only do they have to get the dispatch information but other pertinent facts regarding officer safety issues must also be obtained. Secretaries and clerks must have a basic working knowledge of both criminal and civil procedure to assist persons looking for information on a myriad of different issues. Clerks and technicians involved with property and evidence functions must have a solid understanding of evidentiary procedures or criminal cases would be lost in court before they began. Without the support and skills of non-sworn personnel, the operation of sheriffs' offices would be less cost efficient and more sworn personnel would be tied up performing these necessary tasks instead of being out in the community where they are sorely needed.

In conjunction with this study, a survey was sent to all sheriff's offices in the state. One hundred and eight offices or 86.4% responded to the survey. Of those agencies responding, 55.6% of the jurisdictions supplement non-sworn persons salary over and above what the Compensation Board pays. Of those agencies responding, 23.1% of those jurisdictions fully fund additional non-sworn FTE's positions. These two facts are indications that the local jurisdictions *must* supplement salaries to remain a competitive employer and, it is more cost effective to put uniformed officers in positions that require sworn status and leave support positions in the hands of non-sworn personnel.

### **Past History of Salary Increases or Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA) 1990-1996<sup>1</sup> Compared against Consumer Price Index (CPI).**

During the period 1990 through 1996, approximately 50% of the non-sworn personnel in sheriff's offices received only one salary increase, and five or six cost of living increases. For comparison, the table below shows the pay/COLA increases against the changes in the Consumer Price Index<sup>2</sup> for the same period.

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<sup>1</sup> Information supplied by the Compensation Board.

<sup>2</sup> Consumer Price Index information supplied by the Virginia Department of Economic Development Research Section and represents all urban consumers for all items.

Date of Increase	Percent of Increase	COLA	Salary Increase	CPI (same period)	% Difference
12/1/96	4.35%	X		2.5%***	+1.85%***
12/1/95	2.25%	X		2.5%	-.25%
12/1/94*	2.25%-3.57%	X(1)	X(2)	2.7%	-.65%-.87%
12/1/93	3%	X		2.7%	+.3%
12/1/92	2%	X		2.9%	-.9%
07/1/90**	3%	X		6.1% +3.1%	-6.2%

**Figure 1**

\* In 1994, Sheriffs' Offices that had instituted Pay-For-Performance (PFP) programs received a 3.57% pay increase for their non-sworn employees in lieu of a 2.25% COLA. For the Departments that had not instituted PFP programs, their non-sworn employees only received a 2.25% COLA and no raise.

(1) COLA of 2.25% or;  
(2) Increase of 3.57%, but not both.

\*\* The CPI for calendar 1990 was +6.1%. The CPI for 1991, a year in which there was no increase or COLA was 3.1%. The % Difference for 1990 represents -3.1% for 1990 and -3.1% for 1991.

\*\*\* CPI for 1996 estimate.

Figure 1 above, shows that in the best case scenario, for the period 1990 through 1996, increases in salaries and COLA's has lagged the cumulative CPI by 4.32%. In the worst case scenario, this percentage increases to 5.85%. This, obviously, represents a loss of spendable income for all non-sworn employees.

**Comparison of non-sworn personnel in sheriffs' offices to equivalent positions within state government.**

For this comparison, the following state agencies were used for positions unique to law enforcement, such as, dispatcher, correctional nurses, correctional cooks and classification officers:

Department of State Police  
Department of Corrections

For all other positions that were not unique to law enforcement, such as, secretaries, clerks, and fiscal technicians, the general state salary scale for entry level at the lowest level was used. The Northern Virginia differential was not used for any positions.

Title	Comp.Bd. base	Comp.State Pos.	% Difference
Clerk	\$14,328	\$14,989	-4.4%
Cook A	\$15,662	\$13,711	+12.5%
Cook B	\$17,120	\$16,386	+4.3%
LPN-B	\$19,579	\$19,582	0
RN		\$27,966	N/A
Fiscal Technician	\$20,455	\$21,407	-4.4%
Secretary I	\$15,662	\$16,056	-2.4%
Classification Off.	\$19,579	\$17,552	+10.4%
Dispatcher	\$15,612	\$17,913	-12.9%
Admin. Specialist	\$20,455	\$19,188	+6.2%

Figure 2

With the exception of cooks and classification officers, unique only to the Department of Corrections, the non-sworn personnel in sheriff's offices lag behind slightly from their state government counterparts. Administrative staff specialists were difficult to compare with state positions because the job descriptions for these positions vary so widely. The most drastic difference occurs between State Police civilian dispatchers and sheriff's non-sworn dispatchers. The job descriptions and duties performed by both groups are virtually identical with the exception of the area covered by the patrol officers they dispatch. Most of the other positions are roughly comparable to their state counterparts.

**Comparison of similar positions in the same jurisdiction or nearby.**

Within the same jurisdictions, salaries for comparable jobs are relatively close. Many of the Sheriff's Office employees are on the salary schedule of the county or city. The jurisdictions that supplement, do so to remain competitive within the local job markets. In rural areas that are near some of the more metropolitan areas of Richmond, Northern Virginia, Tidewater, Roanoke and others, there is migration to the higher salaries offered in these areas. This, however, is no

different than in any other job market. Along with the higher salaries in most of these areas, comes a higher cost of living.<sup>3</sup> Another consideration is that areas of higher unemployment tend to pay less for unskilled workers or workers that can be trained to perform their job tasks while on the job. In these situations, they have a larger labor pool from which to draw and the demand for these positions is higher.

### **Dispatchers and Dispatch Supervisors**

These civilian positions within the law enforcement community are unique and need to be separated from other non-sworn personnel. The job they perform is like no other non-sworn position. After completion of the Basic Dispatchers school, these employees must successfully complete an on-the-job training program that ranges in duration from 3-4 weeks to as much as 6 months, depending on the complexity of the communications systems, computer-aided dispatch systems, and departmental standard operating procedures. Dispatchers are responsible for getting the right information from citizens under adverse conditions, maintaining patrol coverage, being the "eyes and ears" of the patrol deputies, warning them of potential dangers, interfacing with other jurisdictions, operate complex equipment, and follow to the letter, all departmental General Orders, directives and operating procedures. They must do all of these activities while remaining calm, professional, and in control.

Dispatchers and their civilian supervisors are the life-blood of the departments operations and life-lines for all patrol deputies. Without their valuable and tireless service, the law enforcement function simply could not be accomplished. Virtually all of the sheriffs' offices recognize and understand the special conditions that these people are asked to work under. Stress and anxiety for people in these positions is well known and documented. Most departments recognize and see cases of "dispatcher burn-out", and take steps to either prevent or alleviate it when it occurs.

As shown in Figure 2, sheriff's dispatcher starting salaries are behind State Police starting salaries by more than \$2,300. The job descriptions and responsibilities are virtually identical.

Contemplated salary increases for dispatchers should be carried through the supervisor rank and be without regard for longevity to prevent compressing the salary schedule. There are currently 384 Compensation Board positions for Communications Operators and Communications Operator Supervisors. A salary increase of \$2,300 per position, would make these dedicated employees on par with their counterparts in state government. The cost of this would be approximately \$883,200 annually.

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<sup>3</sup> ACCRA Cost of Living Index, Alexandria, Va., 1996.

**Recommendation 1: Consideration should be given to increasing funding levels of the Compensation Board to effect raises for dispatchers and dispatch supervisors in sheriff's offices to address discrepancies between sheriff's office dispatchers and similar positions in state government.**

## V. Resources

ACCRA Cost of Living Index, Alexandria, Virginia, 1996



## **VI. Acknowledgements**

The Crime Commission staff wishes to thank the following individuals for their assistance in the completion of this study:

James Matthews, Compensation Board

Robyn deSocio, Compensation Board

Diane Kennedy, Department of Corrections

Brenda Harmon, Virginia Economic Development Partnership

John Jones, Virginia Sheriff's Association



# **Appendix A**

House Joint Resolution 254



1996 SESSION

961900112

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 254  
AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE  
(Proposed by the House Committee on Rules  
on February 6, 1996)  
(Patron Prior to Substitute—Delegate Almand)

Directing the Virginia State Crime Commission to study the compensation of non-sworn law-enforcement personnel in sheriffs' offices.

WHEREAS, non-sworn law-enforcement personnel in sheriffs' offices include dispatchers, secretaries, clerks, and other support personnel; and

WHEREAS, such personnel play a vital role in preserving public safety in Virginia; and

WHEREAS, such personnel deserve to be adequately compensated for the invaluable service they provide to the citizens of the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, compensation, including salaries, for such personnel is inadequate to keep pace with the rising cost of living; and

WHEREAS, compensation, including salaries, for such personnel is well below comparable positions in state government; and

WHEREAS, such lower compensation results in high turnover and low morale among the personnel; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Virginia State Crime Commission be directed to study the compensation of non-sworn law-enforcement personnel in sheriffs' offices. The Commission shall examine the salaries of non-sworn law-enforcement personnel in sheriffs' offices and compare such compensation to that of comparable positions in state government. The Commission shall also examine methods to fund salary re-grades for such personnel where necessary. Upon request, all agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Commission.

The Commission shall complete its work in time to submit its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the 1997 Session of the General Assembly as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents.

961900112

HJ254HI

2/7/96 14:19

Official Use By Clerks	
<b>Passed By</b>	
<b>The House of Delegates</b>	<b>Passed By The Senate</b>
without amendment <input type="checkbox"/>	without amendment <input type="checkbox"/>
with amendment <input type="checkbox"/>	with amendment <input type="checkbox"/>
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Date: _____	Date: _____
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Clerk of the House of Delegates	Clerk of the Senate

