



2019 Annual Report

*28 years of work to end the death penalty
through education, organizing and advocacy*



*From Left: Executive Director Michael Stone,
activist and actor Mike Farrell, former death row inmate
Joe Giarratano, and Field Director Dale Brumfield
at our March 2019 awards luncheon.*

Virginians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty

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A Message from the VADP President

Dear Abolition Colleague,

The death penalty is a horrific punishment that violates the dignity of a human being.

As VADP begins work in 2020 to seek an end to capital punishment, Virginia is not in this alone. Our fight to become the first Southern state to repeal the death penalty is being fought in many other parts of the country.

In 2019 New Hampshire became the 21st state to end the death penalty thanks to the leadership of Renny Cushing, a member of that state's House of Representatives. Many of you heard him speak at our annual awards luncheon in October.



Governor Gavin Newsom issued a moratorium on executions in California (where 740 prisoners are on death row) and ordered the execution chamber at San Quentin State Prison to be dismantled.

Since 2007 nine states have abandoned the death penalty entirely. Four more have suspended use of capital punishment — California, Oregon, Colorado and Pennsylvania.

Twenty-nine states, including Virginia, retain the death penalty. However, twelve of these states have not executed anyone in over ten years!

Only eleven states, including Virginia, have carried out an execution in the past five years.

Public opinion is changing. For the first time in more than three decades, a majority of Americans say life imprisonment is a better approach for punishing murder than execution.

According to the 2019 Gallup Poll, sixty per cent of Americans would support life imprisonment

without the possibility of parole over death. Only thirty-six percent favored the death penalty.

Seven states executed 22 detainees last year, the fifth year in a row that fewer than 30 people suffering that fate. On a more positive note, two more death-row prisoners were exonerated, bringing the national total to 166 since 1973.

I would like to recognize the fine work that your Board of Directors does in helping guide the strategies and tactics of this organization. It's a diverse and committed group, comprised of individuals who come to us from a wide variety of views and political affiliation.

Among my colleagues are a criminal defense attorney, community volunteer, retired reference librarian, university law professor, corporate marketing strategist, Libertarian activist, and Conservative think tank president.

Together, with our hard working staff, and the hundreds of donors who provide us with needed funds, VADP is a formidable force that will soon put an end to the state's grim legacy.

– Kristina Leslie, VADP President



Sen. Barbara Favola (Arlington) accepts the VADP 2019 Legislator of the Year award.

Challenge and Opportunity During 2019

Dear VADP Supporters,

This past year was a challenging one for VADP, and set the stage for a 2020 rich with the prospect of great progress toward death penalty abolition.

In January we had a legislative breakthrough in the Virginia General Assembly. The state Senate, in a 23-17 bipartisan vote, approved a bill to exempt people with severe mental illness from capital punishment.



It was the first time that either chamber of the legislature had voted to limit the death penalty. Since 1991, when we were founded, VADP has had to fight efforts to expand the scope of capital punishment.

Even though this bill was defeated in the House of Delegates, it was a watershed moment. Death penalty reform, and even abolition, now seemed within reach and no longer a far-off dream.

In February VADP joined with three evangelical faith communities to bring Shane Claiborne to Charlottesville. Shane is an evangelical leader, popular author, and death penalty abolitionist.

Shane gave a powerful, faith-based argument for ending capital punishment to an enthusiastic audience of about 75 people. It was the first time that, to my knowledge, VADP had ever had an educational event in an evangelical church.

In March VADP hosted an awards luncheon in Northern Virginia, delayed from its scheduled October 2018 date due to circumstances beyond our control. We were privileged to have social activist and actor Mike Farrell give a powerful keynote address and honor former Virginia death row inmate Joe Giarratano. VADP presented Joe with our Lifetime Achievement Award for his tireless legal advocacy on behalf of other inmates during 38 years of incarceration.

In October VADP held its 2019 awards luncheon. We were fortunate to have Rennie Cushing, a New Hampshire state legislator and a murder victim family member, present our keynote address. He shared the story of that state's abolition campaign.

The November election for 100 members of the House of Delegates and 40 Senators produced a political earthquake, shifting party control in both chambers. In 2020 there will be a dramatically different state legislature, far friendlier to the death penalty abolition cause.

Despite this progress, VADP faces a financial challenge. We still feel the serious impact of the loss of a \$40,000 grant (25% of our 2018 budget). Thanks to increased contributions from supporters like you, VADP had enough funds to get through 2019 without staff reductions.

However, we must raise \$35,000 in new funds during 2020 to replace two grants from religious organizations for which we are no longer eligible.

With your continued and increased support, Virginia will become the first Southern state to abolish the death penalty!

– Michael Stone, VADP Executive Director



Keynote speaker Rennie Cushing discusses how New Hampshire abolished the death penalty, at the VADP October 2019 awards luncheon.

Progress Made Across Virginia

Dear VADP Supporters,

VADP's strategy for repealing the death penalty depends on educating influential members of the community. These people then carry our message to their legislators who will vote on abolition.

For almost three years, my work had been largely focused on more rural parts of the state. In 2019 we made the strategic decision to shift the focus of my work to Northern Virginia and Tidewater.

I continue to see a positive shift in opinion. More people sense that the death penalty is an outmoded relic of a previous century and it is time to end it.

During 2019 I spoke to 27 groups across Virginia, ranging from three to 75 attendees. I made great progress in Northern Virginia where I spoke to large meetings as well as small grassroots groups.

Many of these groups are now contacting their legislators and spreading the word. Fairfax and Loudoun County Democrats especially are actively assisting with educating about repeal.

As a result I received speaking engagements with political action and criminal justice reform groups. I spoke to many Northern Virginia Democrats as well as Libertarians.

In Tidewater, I spoke to local Democrats and civic groups, but made more significant inroads with faith communities.



I was the keynote speaker at the Prison Ministry Summit of the Catholic Diocese of Richmond.

I also spoke and led breakouts at regional summits in Richmond, Waynesboro and Norfolk. One talk sparked a letter-writing

campaign by Holy Family Parish in Virginia Beach to their legislators advocating repeal.

I have given presentations to several social ministry groups in Tidewater Catholic parishes, with more scheduled in 2020.

– Dale Brumfield, VADP Field Director

Why Board Members Support VADP

Jayne Barnard, Williamsburg

I was shocked to learn that Virginia holds the “silver medal” for the most people executed since 1976. The death penalty is disturbing when we recognize the repeated failures of our criminal justice system.

And for what? A punishment that is not a deterrent; a costly process that re-victimizes families of those murdered; and an institution that dehumanizes both defendants and those who must work with them every day.



Virginia can do better. Virginia can be better.

I am proud to be part of an organization that seeks an end to the death penalty and deploys the talents of its members to achieve that goal.

Todd Peppers, Salem

My research has shown me that the death penalty is wrong. It doesn't deter. It costs too much. It's applied in a discriminatory way against minorities and the poor. It can lead to the conviction of the innocent.

It hurts prison staff, the execution team, and the families of both the victims and the defendants.

Plus it's immoral. To paraphrase Sister Helen Prejean, it's moral lunacy to argue that we should kill to show that killing is wrong.



I am proud to be a member of Virginians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty and to join the fight against state-sanctioned killing.

Our Accomplishments in 2019

Public Education

- ◆ VADP Field Director Dale Brumfield spoke at 27 public education events, including:
 - Clifton Republican Women
 - Chesterfield & Rockingham County Libertarians
 - Seven local Democratic Party groups in Northern Virginia and Tidewater
 - Greenspring and Westminster at Lake Ridge retirement communities in Northern Virginia
 - Virginia Beach Kiwanis Club
 - Three regional prison ministry summits put on by the Catholic Diocese of Richmond
- ◆ Shared materials at conferences of the Virginia Community Criminal Justice Association and the Virginia Federation of Republican Women.
- ◆ Provided death penalty information on our website to a monthly average of 774 visitors.

Media

- ◆ Organized press conference with murder victim family members urging abolition in Virginia that was covered by the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, *Roanoke Times*, *Fredericksburg Free Lance-Star*, *Daily Press*, *Virginia Lawyers Weekly*, the Capital News Service, six local television news programs (in Richmond, Charlottesville, Harrisonburg, Lynchburg, and Northern Virginia), *US News & World Report*, *Chicago Tribune*, and two Texas newspapers.
- ◆ Assisted Rachel Sutphin, daughter of a sheriff's deputy killed in Virginia, on an abolition op-ed that was published in *The Washington Post*.
- ◆ Worked with capital murder exoneree Keith Harward on an abolition op-ed that was printed in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*.
- ◆ Had letters to the editor published by *The Washington Post*, *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, and *Fredericksburg Free Lance-Star*.
- ◆ Met with *Richmond Times-Dispatch* editorial board to discuss the death penalty in Virginia.

- ◆ Assisted media outlets with their news stories, including *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, Capital News Service, Associated Press, Feature Story News, TRT World News, Sky News (UK), ABC Australia, WRVA News Radio, WRIR-FM, WLS-AM (Chicago) and VoxFairfax.com.
- ◆ Field Director appeared as a guest on the “Breakfast with Bacon” radio show in Norfolk.

Public Policy Advocacy

- ◆ Worked with mental health organizations to support legislation that would ban executions of people with severe mental illness (SMI).
- ◆ Created online Action Alert used by 314 people during January to contact their state Senator in order to support the SMI exemption bill.
- ◆ Obtained the signatures of 18 state and local Conservative leaders on a letter supporting the abolition of the death penalty in Virginia.
- ◆ Received support from 13 family members of murder victims for a letter calling on the state legislature to abolish capital punishment.

Organizing

- ◆ Met with VADP supporters at five regional meetings in Arlington, Richmond, Norfolk, Charlottesville and Roanoke in the spring.
- ◆ Convened a series of three “Insider Update” conference calls for supporters in the autumn.

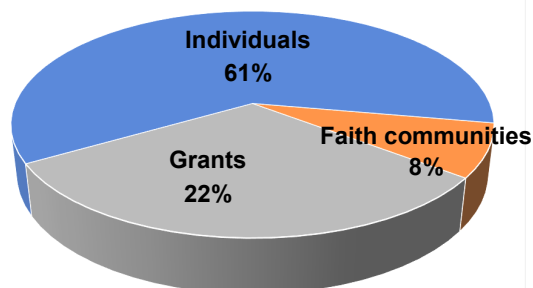


Panel of speakers at an educational event in a Charlottesville evangelical church.

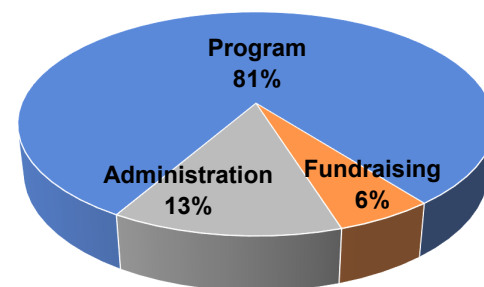
How VADP Funds Its Work

	2018	2019
Income		
Individuals	\$ 89,129.17	\$ 97,529.55
Faith communities	15,122.16	12,095.69
Grants	30,000.00	50,000.00
TOTAL	\$ 134,251.33	\$ 159,625.24
Expenses		
Staff	\$ 111,086.53	\$ 111,457.76
Travel	9,770.56	10,875.70
Telephone	896.40	896.40
Postage and printing	759.10	1,732.08
Fundraising	8,541.57	8,968.87
Technology	13,863.61	8,775.42
Contract services	16,876.35	8,836.19
Miscellaneous	3,754.31	7,578.94
TOTAL	\$ 165,548.43	\$ 159,121.36
Net Income		
	- \$ 31,297.10	+ \$ 503.88

Income: \$159,625



Expenses: \$159,121



VADP Board of Directors

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VADP board members and staff at our March 2019 awards luncheon.