



2020-21 Annual Report

*Celebrating death penalty repeal after
three decades of VADP activism*



*VADP board, staff members, and guests celebrate online
after the House of Delegates joined the Senate in
passing the death penalty abolition bill.*

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A Message from the VADP President

Dear Abolition Colleagues,

We have achieved what once seemed impossible. Virginia has become the first Southern state to abolish capital punishment and the significance of this historic moment cannot be overstated.

For decades, VADP, along with allies, has worked tirelessly to bring an end to the death penalty in the Commonwealth. This effort was deliberate and strategic. People from different backgrounds, geographic regions, belief systems, and political views united on the sole issue of abolishing the death penalty to create a more just and humane society.



I am tremendously grateful for the hard work and dedication of VADP’s staff: Executive Director Michael Stone and Field Director Dale Brumfield as well as its volunteer Board of Directors. Their thoughtful leadership and unwavering commitment were vital to our success. Many thanks are owed to our donors and members whose continued support was essential to securing this victory.

I joined the cause 11 years ago as a student at the Virginia Capital Case Clearinghouse, a legal clinic that provided support to attorneys representing capital murder defendants at trial. Prior to law school, I had not given much thought to the death penalty. I learned about its grim legacy, its racist roots, and its overtly prejudicial use.

Most disturbing to me was that the modern death penalty was still plagued by these issues and had “legalized” other unconscionable acts. It was not until 2005 that it became unconstitutional to execute children in the United States.

In the late 1990’s the Commonwealth of Virginia tried to execute Darryl Atkins, an intellectually disabled Black man from York County. His case gained national attention when the United States Supreme Court issued a blanket prohibition on the execution of intellectually disabled persons.

I witnessed the biased and arbitrary manner in which the death penalty was sought and ultimately imposed. I heard horrific stories from colleagues about Virginia’s bloody spree in the 1990’s, once killing 14 condemned prisoners in a single year.

I have experienced how capital prosecutions can traumatize everyone involved – the victims’ loved ones, defendants, their families, jurors, lawyers, court staff, police officers, and the community.

A government’s decision to have a death penalty is not a criminal justice or political issue. It is a question of human rights and moral principle.

In abolishing the death penalty, we have finally ended a barbaric, ineffective, and cruel practice that has systematically targeted minorities. Let the Commonwealth of Virginia be an example of reconciliation to the country. We can make amends for wrongs of the past and advance toward a more humane, just, and unbiased future.

– Kristina Leslie, VADP President



Rachel Sutphin accepts the VADP 2020 Citizen Advocate of the Year award.

Winning Death Penalty Abolition

Dear VADP Supporters,

Thirty years ago the founders of what came to be known as VADP took the first steps toward ending state-sponsored killing. Our journey is now almost over, thanks to all of you and many others who supported us in every way over these decades.

Here is how we were able to achieve this milestone, which is having a huge impact on the national abolition movement.



Like everyone else, we had to dramatically adjust our work in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Fortunately, Field Director Dale Brumfield and I had been working from home for several years, but we had to learn how to convene people online and give virtual presentations.

In the spring I produced online Insider Updates and Abolition University sessions about the national abolition movement and how our work in Virginia advances the broader national mission.

The *Richmond Times-Dispatch* carried VADP President Kristina Leslie’s op-ed, “Death penalty repeal is essential to racial healing,” on July 2. “Nowhere is racial bigotry more insidious than in the application of America’s harshest punishment — death,” she wrote.

The Washington Post published an op-ed by board member Paul O’Shea, “The time has come to end Virginia’s death penalty,” on July 26. “[Abolition] will be an historic step in acknowledging the systemic injury inflicted on Black Virginians over centuries,” he wrote.

In September VADP allied with Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy to link abolition with wider criminal justice reform. Justice Reform Organizer Rev. LaKeisha Cook became a key ally in our work to build support within the African-

American community, particularly with religious leaders and their congregations.

In the latter half of 2020, Dale and I met with over 50 members of the Virginia General Assembly by phone or Zoom to discuss death penalty abolition. Between these dialogues and advocacy by our supporters in key legislative districts, we steadily built support among legislators.

This work culminated in a series of General Assembly committee hearings and floor debates in January and February of 2021. VADP and its allies helped to organize prosecutors, victim family members, faith leaders, and civil rights advocates to testify for ending capital punishment.

Our legislative patrons – Del. Mike Mullin and Sen. Scott Surovell – led the bills through the long legislative process. Powerful floor testimony by legislators who lost loved ones to homicide helped secure the final victory. All seven of the murder victim family members who serve in the General Assembly voted to end capital punishment.

Without your financial support and advocacy, we would not have achieved our goal of becoming the first Southern state to end the death penalty. All of us at VADP are deeply grateful.

– Michael Stone, VADP Executive Director

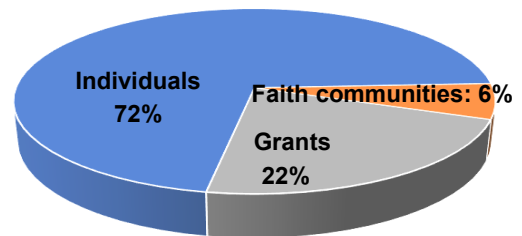


VADP Executive Director Michael Stone speaks at a January 2021 prayer vigil organized by the Virginia Interfaith Center.

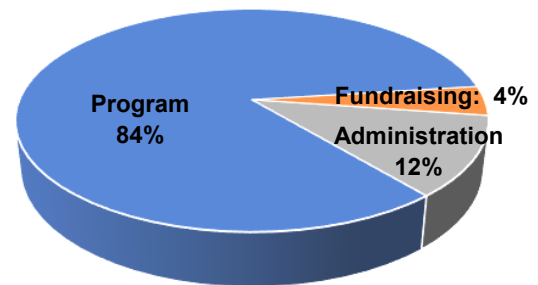
How VADP Funds Its Work

	2019	2020
Income		
Individuals	\$ 97,529.55	\$ 123,295.69
Faith communities	12,095.69	10,680.00
Grants	50,000.00	38,562.50
TOTAL	\$ 159,625.24	\$ 172,538.19
Expenses		
Staff	\$ 111,457.76	\$ 108,868.07
Travel	10,875.70	3,258.47
Telephone	896.40	847.05
Postage and printing	1,732.08	648.51
Fundraising	8,968.87	6,743.74
Technology	8,775.42	7,239.02
Contract services	8,836.19	26,075.41
Miscellaneous	7,578.94	3,321.17
TOTAL	\$ 159,121.36	\$ 157,001.44
Net Income		
	\$503.88	\$15,536.75

Income: \$172,538



Expenses: \$157,001



VADP Board of Directors

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Kristina Leslie
Annandale

Vice President

Jayne Barnard
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Nancy Ritter	Richmond
Jean Segner	Richmond
John Tucker	Richmond
Gerald Zerkin	Richmond



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