

Insurance Fraud Program Honors Virginia Fraud Fighters

Awards Recognize Efforts to Stamp Out Insurance Fraud

RICHMOND, VIRGINIA, USA, March 21, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Virginia State Police (VSP) [Insurance Fraud Program \(IFP\)](#) presented awards to six individuals in recognition of their efforts to fight [insurance fraud](#) in the Commonwealth. The awards were presented by First Sergeant Peter Lazear, Virginia State Police Insurance Fraud Program Coordinator, on March 15, 2023, during the Virginia Chapter of the International Association of Special Investigation Units (VA IASIU) annual conference held in Richmond, Virginia.

A graphic logo for the "Stamp Out Fraud" campaign. The words "STAMP OUT" are in a large, bold, green, sans-serif font. Below them, the word "FRAUD" is also in a large, bold, green, sans-serif font. The letter "D" in "FRAUD" is replaced by a green footprint icon with a white outline.A graphic logo for the Virginia State Police Insurance Fraud Program. The words "VIRGINIA STATE POLICE" are in a green, sans-serif font. Below them, the words "INSURANCE FRAUD PROGRAM" are in a larger, bold, green, sans-serif font.

Investigator Richard Popielarz, Cincinnati Insurance Companies, was honored for his ongoing commitment to fighting insurance fraud, including initiating a training program for new adjusters in Virginia to help them recognize potential cases of attempted insurance fraud in their claim files.

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Insurance fraud is not a victimless crime. It places a heavy financial burden on us all.”

*First Sergeant Peter Lazear,
IFP Coordinator*

The next award was presented to Detective Shelly Koziana, Suffolk Police Department, and Senior Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney Joshua Jenkins, Norfolk Commonwealth's Attorney's Office, for a case involving

obtaining money by false pretenses. The suspect was indicted on 12 felonies, sentenced to five years in prison (suspended), and ordered to pay more than \$38,000 in restitution.

The final awards were given to Deputy Commonwealth's Attorney Kelli Burnett, Richmond Commonwealth's Attorney's Office, Special Investigator Christopher Hatcher, National General Insurance Company, and Detective Michael Valentine, Henrico County Police Division. Through

the combined investigation of Special Investigator Hatcher and Detective Valentine, five subjects were arrested for staging an auto crash — a case of insurance fraud that would have resulted in an insurance payout of more than \$100,000. Deputy Commonwealth's Attorney Burnett is now prosecuting the case.

Virginia IASIU also recognized several fraud fighters. Mark Beavers, Travelers Insurance, was named a Life Member. The Outstanding Public Service Award was presented to Captain William "Bud" Herndon, Loudoun County Fire Marshal's Office, and the Covington Award was presented to First Sergeant Peter Lazear, Virginia State Police Insurance Fraud Program.

Virginia IASIU presented challenge coins to 17 fraud fighters, including three individuals from the Virginia State Police — Lieutenant David Beckner, First Sergeant Peter Lazear, and Senior Special Agent Shannon Pinto. A newly cast challenge coin was unveiled this year honoring Philip Wong, retired Senior Investigator from Erie Insurance. Mr. Wong is a past president of the Virginia IASIU Chapter and was the recipient of The Covington Award and a Life Member.

"Insurance fraud is not a victimless crime. It places a heavy financial burden on us all," says First Sergeant Lazear. The Coalition Against Insurance Fraud estimates that insurance fraud costs Americans nearly \$309 billion annually—and these costs do not stop with insurers. "False claims against insurance companies ultimately mean increased premiums for every Virginian."

Learn more about the program at www.StampOutFraud.com.

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(L to R) Lieutenant David Beckner, VSP, congratulate Deputy Commonwealth's Attorney Kelli Burnett, Office of the City of Richmond Commonwealth's Attorney, with and First Sergeant Peter Lazear, IFP Coordinator.



Mike Burton, VA IASIU, presents the Covington Award to First Sergeant Peter Lazear, IFP Coordinator

About the Fraud Fighters Awards

The annual Fraud Fighters Awards program was developed in 2003 to assist in stemming the growing incidence of insurance fraud in Virginia by recognizing individuals for their special efforts in insurance fraud reduction. The Virginia State Police Insurance Fraud Program sponsors the awards program. Awards are presented to insurance companies' fraud investigators, Commonwealth's Attorneys, and members of Virginia's law enforcement community who have made exemplary efforts in helping reduce insurance fraud.

About the Virginia State Police Insurance Fraud Program

Established in 1999, the Insurance Fraud Program educates citizens on identifying insurance fraud, a crime that costs Virginians millions of dollars. IFP trains and supports local law enforcement agencies in their efforts to prevent insurance fraud and works to increase citizen awareness and cooperation through educational and rewards programs.

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