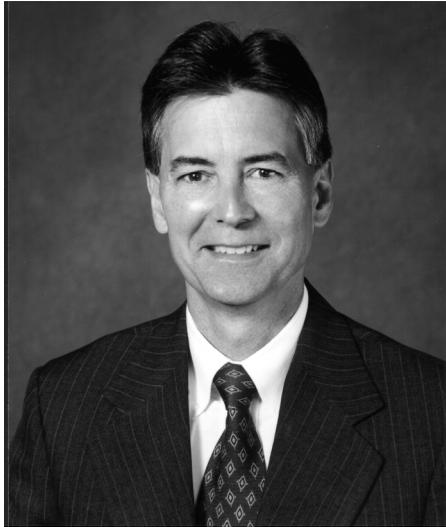


A MESSAGE FROM YOUR COMMONWEALTH'S ATTORNEY



As your Commonwealth's Attorney, I will do everything in my power to enforce the laws of this state and to see that justice is done. To do this, I need your help. *Report crimes when you see them. Assist the police in their investigations. Testify honestly and completely in court.* If you do these things, the possibility of arrest and conviction of criminals will be greatly increased.

My staff and I are dedicated to serving the citizens of Suffolk. We stand ready to work with you to make Suffolk a safe place in which to live, work and raise our families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Phil Ferguson".

C. Phillips "Phil" Ferguson
Commonwealth's Attorney

OUR VISION STATEMENT

It is the duty of the Commonwealth's Attorney's Office to pursue justice and protect the rights and safety of the citizens of Suffolk. While our job is to prosecute crimes, our goal is crime prevention. Our vision is to enhance the quality of life in Suffolk by taking a proactive role in preventing crime, prosecuting with integrity, equality and excellence, and protecting the community by effectively dealing with those who prey upon our citizens.

INTRODUCTION

C. Phillips "Phil" Ferguson has served as Suffolk's Commonwealth's Attorney for over 40 years. The Commonwealth's Attorney is elected to a four-year term and appoints Assistants under his supervision to prosecute felony cases, which include murder, rape, robbery and other serious crimes.

In Suffolk, we also prosecute all misdemeanor cases in which a crime victim requests assistance, all drunk driving cases, certain domestic violence cases, all crimes that occur in schools and all misdemeanor and traffic appeals to Circuit Court, including violations of local ordinances.

In addition, we contract with the State Department of Taxation to collect unpaid fines and court costs from people convicted of felonies, misdemeanors and traffic offenses in the Suffolk Court System. In the last year alone over \$762,131.038 returned to the state and local treasuries through these collection efforts.

Over the years we have instituted a number of programs *not* required by State Law but which are of enormous importance to the citizens of Suffolk, some of which are outlined as follows:

VICTIM/WITNESS PROGRAM

In 1983, C. Phillips "Phil" Ferguson instituted Suffolk's first Victim/Witness Assistance Program. At that time, we were one of the few localities in the State with such a program. It began with a part-time director, who was also an investigator. In 1986, a full-time director was hired through a State Grant and now there are four persons in the program.

This program ensures that victims of and witnesses to crime: ***are informed of their rights; are treated with dignity, respect, and sensitivity; receive authorized services; have the opportunity to be heard at all critical stages of the criminal justice process; and can make the courts aware of the full impact of the crime.***

Services provided in Suffolk are equal to any provided in the State of Virginia and range from advance court notification to financial assistance. Should you have any questions concerning this program, please call Victim/Witness Services, at 514-4366, or visit our Website: www.suffolk.va.us/cwatty/vwsp/

CRIME FREE SCHOOLS PROGRAM

In 1995, C. Phillips "Phil" Ferguson instituted a Crime Free Schools Program at no additional cost to taxpayers. This program focuses on three areas:

- ❖ ***Prevention*** of crime is accomplished through in-school educational presentations on crime and the consequences of committing a crime. Additionally, students are brought to court to see and observe real cases that are being heard.
- ❖ ***Assistance*** is provided to principals, teachers, and other school personnel on criminal law, legal issues and procedures.
- ❖ ***Prosecution*** services are provided for all crimes that occur in or on school property. In the last year alone over 100 cases were prosecuted. In addition, every effort is made to get school witnesses in

and out of court as quickly as possible.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROSECUTION PROGRAM

In 1998, C. Phillips "Phil" Ferguson implemented a Domestic Violence Prosecution Program to assist those who were victimized by domestic violence. Generally, it is the spouse or partner who is physically assaulted or abused, however, among the greatest victims of domestic violence are the children, who can be permanently scarred by the observing of this violence.

In Suffolk, this office has put together a task force of over 20 agencies that work together to provide services to victims of domestic violence. We have found that a domestic violence victim who is well informed with the knowledge of the available resources will be more likely to alleviate the violence in her/his family than a victim who is unsure about what will happen to her/him physically, financially, and emotionally once the perpetrator is out of her/his life. The bulk of the funding for this program is provided through a state grant, yet 100% of the services are going to the citizens of Suffolk.

TRIAD PROGRAM

In 1998, this office entered into an agreement that creates a partnership between the Suffolk Commonwealth's Attorney's Office, Sheriff's Office, Police Department, American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), and the Attorney General's Office to protect the elderly population by implementing educational and crime prevention programs which help keep senior citizens from becoming victims of abuse, fraud, scams, and other types of crimes.

SANE NURSE PROGRAM

The Suffolk Commonwealth's Attorney's Office has a cooperative agreement with Chesapeake Forensic Specialists, LLC and Children's Hospital of King's Daughters to provide sexual assault examination services. These SANE nurses conduct examinations, gather evidence and are available to testify as witnesses in sexual assault cases. As a result, the cases are generally stronger

and there is a greater likelihood of conviction for those who commit these heinous crimes. There is also an improved sensitivity to the needs of the victim through this program.

VIRGINIA EXILE PROGRAM

Designed to take illegal guns off our City's streets, this program breaks the link between guns and drugs, guns and schools and guns and crime in general. Specifically targeted are: (1) those persons who possess a firearm within a school building with the intention to use it, and (2) those persons who simultaneously possess a firearm and drugs, and (3) those persons who possess a firearm and have a previous conviction for a felony. Convictions under these laws would lead to a *mandatory minimum* sentence of 2 to 5 years in a Virginia prison. The laws in Virginia are not focused on preventing law-abiding citizens from their right to bear arms, but are geared to preventing the possession of firearms by certain persons. In simple terms, the Exile Law serves as a pre-emptive strike to take people who are more prone to commit violence because of their past activities off the street before they can commit additional violence using a firearm.

GANG VIOLENCE PROSECUTION PROGRAM

The fight against gangs is one of the top priorities of our office. We know that when gangs exist in a community they can seriously impact schools, using them as recruitment centers and claiming them as gang territory. Perhaps the most threatening aspect of gang proliferation has been the increasing use of firearms. Studies have shown that gang members possess significantly more guns than other at-risk youth, making gang violence even more deadly. For these reasons, we have combined gang education with our Suffolk Exile message which targets the illegal possession of guns by educating the public about the consequences of guns and schools, guns and drugs, and guns and felons. It's important to remember that we all have a role to play in solving problems within our communities, and crime and gang violence are no exception. To remove the scourge of gangs – and gang violence – from the experience of Suffolk's youth requires an integrated,

comprehensive approach that includes education, prevention and prosecution.

ASSET FORFEITURE PROGRAM

The purpose of this program is to employ the Commonwealth's asset forfeiture powers in a manner that enhances the public safety and security of our City. This is accomplished by removing the tools utilized by criminals and their associates to perpetuate criminal activity in our community and to deprive those criminal enterprises from profiting from illegal activities. Asset forfeiture has the power to disrupt and dismantle criminal organizations that would continue to function if we only convicted and incarcerated specific individuals. By removing the profit motives from criminal activity, our Office deters many criminals from benefiting financially from their activities and some of the assets forfeited are then used in the fight against crime by our law enforcement community. This program is an effective and powerful tool in the fight against crime.

TRAINING FOR POLICE OFFICERS

This office is continuing to provide hundreds of hours of instruction to Suffolk Police Officers and Suffolk Firefighters in our local in-service training programs on topics such as search and seizure, laws of arrest, legal updates, courtroom demeanor, and testimony.

MULTI-DISCIPLINARY TEAM

Under VA State Code: 15.2-1627.5, the Suffolk Commonwealth's Attorney coordinates the multi-disciplinary child sexual abuse response team. This team (MDT) conducts regular reviews of new and ongoing report of child abuse and sex offenses involving children that occur in Suffolk.

TECHNOLOGY

This office uses technology both in and out of the courtroom to enhance the presentation of evidence to Judges and Juries. As a result, it is easier for those determining guilt or innocence to better understand the evidence and it maximizes this office's effectiveness in the courtroom.

SPEEDY TRIAL OF CASES

Suffolk has statistically ranked above the state average since 2001 in the processing of felony criminal cases.

EXPERIENCED PERSONNEL

C. Phillips "Phil" Ferguson is most proud of the fact that he has been able to hire and retain some of the most experienced prosecutors in the State. In addition, the administrative and victim/witness personnel are highly experienced and skilled.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

C. Phillips "Phil" Ferguson has made it a point to be active in the community. He and his employees regularly make appearances and presentations to schools, civic leagues, fraternal organizations, churches and other community groups on a wide range of topics. In addition, Mr. Ferguson leads the Suffolk Commonwealth's Attorney's Citizens Academy for all adult citizens to better understand the mission, policies, vision and operation of the office and included are the other four Constitutional Officers. Further, informative brochures are available on such helpful issues as: *Keeping Our Children Safe, Home Security Tips, Senior Safety Tips, Identity Theft: How To Protect Yourself* – and many others. If you would like to request brochures, or should your group or organization wish to schedule a presentation, please contact our Community Outreach Coordinator at 514-4379.

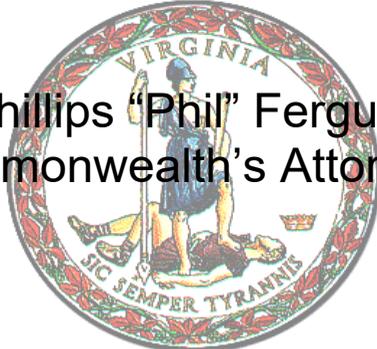
SUMMARY

The State Code mandates that Commonwealth's Attorney carry out certain duties and responsibilities. In Suffolk, we have gone and will continue to go beyond what the Code requires. C. Phillips "Phil" Ferguson is a firm believer in being proactive and being on the cutting edge of providing the best possible services to the citizens of Suffolk within the resources allocated to him and in the most cost effective way possible. For detailed information about our programs and services, please visit our Website: www.suffolk.va.us/cwatty/



Suffolk Commonwealth's Attorney's Office

*An Information Guide
for
The Citizens of Suffolk*



C. Phillips "Phil" Ferguson
Commonwealth's Attorney

Office of the Commonwealth's Attorney
Mills E. Godwin, Jr. Courts Building
150 North Main Street
Suffolk, Virginia 23434-4552

Visit our Websites:

www.suffolk.va.us/cwatty/
www.suffolk.va.us/cwatty/vwsp/

(757) 514-4365