



DATE: December 8, 2015

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## Media Advisory

**Richmond, VA** - In preparing for the 2016 Virginia General Assembly, many citizens are gravely concerned about a number of critical issues that are *already* being debated by influential lobbyists *who represent self-serving clients*. It is troubling many Virginia lawmakers seem to sheepishly follow the lead of lobbyists – *too often to the harm of vulnerable citizens in Virginia*. These early discussions also include many governmental agencies, special commissions and McAuliffe Administration officials.

A significant concern of the statewide organizations and groups listed below - and many others - is Virginia's \$200 Felony Grand Larceny Threshold (FGLT). The alarming fact is Virginia's \$200 FGLT is sadly among the lowest in the entire nation (along with New Jersey) – ***see details below***.

To both strongly voice widespread voter and citizen outrage about Virginia's embarrassingly low \$200 FGLT and also ***demand passage of legislation that substantially increases Virginia's FGLT up to \$1500***, a wide array of community leaders, church leaders, statewide church leadership organizations encompassing many denominations, activists, taxpayers, consumers and many others have come together in a historic way working to bring about change in Virginia's outdated and punitive \$200 FGLT.

The Virginia State Conference NAACP (and members of 100 branches), Virginia Alliance Against Mass Incarceration, Baptist General Convention of Virginia (with pastors and members in 1200 congregations, Baptist Minister's Conference of Richmond & Vicinity, Richmond Crusade for Voters, African American Family Initiative, Baptist Minister's Conference of Goochland & Vicinity, African American Lecture Series Committee, Henrico Minister's Conference, Virginia's Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), Men on the Mainline along with many other concerned statewide groups, organizations and citizens all FORMALLY call on all General Assembly members, Governor McAuliffe and the Virginia Retail Merchants Association to introduce, ***FULLY SUPPORT*** and pass legislation to increase Virginia's FGLT up to \$1500.

Virginia's \$200 FGLT is embarrassingly low in comparison to such in other mid-Atlantic states which have levels that are much higher: **-PA & SC at \$2000 -DE at \$1500 -NC, MD, DC & WV at \$1000.**

Virginia's archaic \$200 FGLT has been debated for decades in the General Assembly, among Commonwealth Attorneys and their Association, the Virginia State Bar Association, Sheriffs across Virginia and their Association, Clerk of Courts, Judges, attorneys, pastors and church congregations of all faiths and denominations and in both Republican and Democrat organization.

Heretofore, years of discussion has been unsuccessful resulting from extremely conservative / outdated General Assembly attitudes along with ardent refusal by the Virginia Retail (and other) Merchants Association, their lobbyist henchmen and corporate members with whom Virginia consumers patronize every day - *i.e.*, ***Walmart, Home Depot, Lowe's, CVS, Food Lion, Walgreen's, Sam's Club, Kroger, Bank of America, Martins, COSTCO, RiteAid*** and many, many others.

Totally lost in these discussions are cost savings to taxpayers resulting from even a modest increase in Virginia's FGLT. As reflected in a 2008 Virginia Department of Correction report, whose researchers informed the Virginia Crime Commission that from 2008 – 2014 Virginia could have **saved over \$14,000,000** in taxpayer dollars simply by (at that time) increasing the FGLT up to a modest **\$600**.

Virginia taxpayers, their families, communities and persons of all denominations should not have to bear the burden imposed upon them by paying such an onerous price to protect profits of the same cash-rich retailers who many faithfully patronize everyday – *such is simply corporate welfare on the backs of taxpayers*.