Introduction to the Commonwealth’s Attorney’s Office

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The Commonwealth’s Attorney

The Office of the Commonwealth’s Attorney is established by the Constitution of Virginia.

There are 120 elected CAs in Virginia.

Some run as independents, others run as the nominee of a party.

The term is 4 years. City CAs are on the same cycle as the Governor, county CAs are offset by 2 years.
The Commonwealth’s Attorney

The duties of the CA include:
- Investigating suspected or alleged offenses against the Commonwealth of Virginia and the City of Alexandria;
- Authorizing or declining prosecution of criminal offenses;
- Determining the manner of prosecution and deciding trial-related questions;
- The Code of Virginia grants the Commonwealth’s Attorney the discretion to prosecute misdemeanors.
- We prosecute jailable misdemeanors.
The Commonwealth’s Attorney

As the elected CA, I have a varied job description:

- I set policy and goals for the office;
- I still prosecute exceptionally serious cases - usually murders;
- I have primary responsibility for hiring, promotion and discipline;
- I liaise with outside agencies, such as the Sheriff, CMO, APD and Probation;
- I routinely teach prosecutors and law enforcement officers;
- I am very involved with the state and national prosecutor’s associations.
My office currently has 29 full-time employees.

- There are 14 prosecutors (authorized) and one Special Assistant for Rehabilitative Programs.
- We have 7 administrative staff members.
- We have 7 VWAP advocates.
- We also rely heavily on law students, who generally work for credit and not for pay. We currently have 3-4 law students volunteering in our office.
All of the assistants carry an active caseload.
The newest prosecutors start in misdemeanor court, trying DUIs and Assault and Battery cases.
The more senior prosecutors handle murders, rapes and robberies.
The Commonwealth’s Attorney

- In FY 2022, our proposed budget was $3.285 million, which is down about 2% from the previous year.
- 97% of our budget is personnel-related.
- Also, the City is reimbursed by the Commonwealth every year for the state contribution – usually about 45% of our total budget.
- The citizens get a full-time office for a part-time price.
The Commonwealth’s Attorney

My Philosophy

The Role of a Public Prosecutor

Just results – not convictions
Holding people accountable
Rehabilitation

Criminal Justice Reform

Diversion
Cash bail
Mental Health Initiative
Treatment Court

Results
Questions?