

VAIB | Virginia Voice

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Conference Registration Open! Go online to register.

<http://vaib.org/education/one-voice-for-liberties-conference/>

One Voice for Liberties Conference | September 27-28, 2018

Future Conference Dates: Sep. 26-27, 2019 Sep. 24-25, 2020 Sep. 23-24, 2021

Strengthen: We Need More Churches!

For nine months each year, I travel to churches educating them on important issues and seeking support for VAIB. Currently, one hundred eighty-four churches faithfully support us. As with most missionaries, that number is subject to change. On average, two churches drop support each year. This year, five churches dropped support. Therefore, new churches must be added to make up the loss. We are so thankful that six new churches added support this year!

VAIB does all it can to represent our churches before the General Assembly, but the task of reviewing over three thousand bills each year is challenging. Our goal is to hire an assistant, which would require additional finances that we currently do not have. If each and every church would give financially toward this goal, it would make a huge difference. With over four hundred fifty churches on our list, it seems more help is available.

Last, let me encourage churches that do already support us to review their support level in consideration of economic changes, such as cost of living, and consider raising their level of support. Note how VAIB has helped your church:

- Savings in sales and use taxes by using Form ST13-A
- Expansion of sales and use tax exemptions over the past thirty years
- Savings to religious-exempt day cares who don't pay the license fee
- Help in keeping Christian schools open
- Help in keeping homeschooling as an educational option
- Work on building codes for churches and schools to save money
- Work to keep no-fee fire inspections by the state fire marshal's office and low local inspection fees
- Work against state licensure of Sunday school teachers, nursery workers, and VBS workers

If VAIB was no longer working for our churches, things could change very quickly.

Educate: How Did VAIB Begin? Part 2

Today's update covers VAIB's history regarding work done in the area of sales and use tax. In the 1970s, churches were only exempt from property taxes, but our pastors believed churches should be exempt from other taxes as well. A three-line bill was crafted and introduced in 1980 that essentially stated that

churches would be exempt from sales and use taxes. When the bill passed, it was then the responsibility of the tax department to create regulations to carry it out. Since the bill was so concise, the tax department had no specific direction as to how it was to be implemented. Over a two-year period, the department of tax researched how other states carried this out. The final regulations consisted of four pages, which essentially said that only items purchased and used within the confines of the church auditorium for worship purposes was tax exempt.

Our pastors were hugely upset and disappointed. This was not what they thought was intended by the bill. But the tax department said this was what they determined was correct, and if any changes were needed, then another bill should be introduced to clarify exactly what was wanted. So began the thirty-year saga of introducing additional bills to add more items to the exemption list.

VAIB is so thankful to Dr. Jack Knapp, our first executive director, for getting a second bill introduced and passed. I'm going to let you read it in his words:

I was working for Pastor John Halsey at that time and had been involved in the legislative process, and he said, "Jack, I want you to go to Richmond and be there to testify on our behalf for that bill." So I drove up from Chesapeake to Richmond, two hours away, and I got there in time to speak. The bill was being heard in a small committee room in the General Assembly building. Del. Claude Anderson was the chairman of the committee, along with several other members of the committee, and other interested people were there, like Del. George Jones and Mr. Forrest, who was the tax commissioner at that time. They had several other bills to hear, and when it came time for our bill to be heard, Del. Jones and another delegate got up to explain the bill. Then the chairman asked if there was anyone else there who wanted to testify on behalf of the bill. I stood to my feet and said, "I am Jack Knapp, and I am here on behalf of the Virginia Assembly of Independent Baptists." And I told him about the hymn book and the light bulb. Well, he looked at me in a way that said, "You're kidding;" and he turned to the tax commissioner and he said, "Is what this man told us true?" Well, the tax commissioner began to squirm because he did not want to answer the question. He hemmed, he hawed, he stammered. Finally, Del. Anderson said, "Just say yes or no. Is what the man said the truth?" The commissioner responded, "Well, um, um, uh, yes." In a rage, Del. Anderson says, "That's the most ridiculous thing I have ever heard!" So, he turns to the two delegates who introduced the bill, "I want you two to go out into the hall and put together one piece of legislation, and we are going to straighten out this mess once and for all."

Even though this was a big fix, it did not resolve all the issues that surfaced over time. The latest church sales and use tax bill was introduced in 2007 with the regulations coming out in 2009. We were very pleased with the end result and continue to monitor this area. What would have happened if VAIB hadn't been there to advocate for our churches?

Involve: *ONE Voice for Liberties Conference* Coming Soon!

Have you determined to join us for the conference September 27-28? Whether you work and can only attend the evening sessions or you can come to every session, please join us for the *ONE Voice for Liberties Conference*. Register online at <http://vaib.org/education/one-voice-for-liberties-conference/>.

Pastors and friends of VAIB, please consider a special offering to help with conference expenses. Thank you in advance for your help and support.

Closing Thoughts

In my first paragraph, I referenced some data related to independent Baptist churches in Virginia. Let me give a few more statistics. On average, two independent Baptist churches close each year in Virginia. Sometimes two churches will merge, meaning that just one church results. And the number of new churches starting does not compensate for those that close. I am encouraged, though, when I discover new churches I didn't know existed!

Will you help? If you know of an independent Baptist church that is not familiar with VAIB, please send me contact information so I can get in touch with that pastor. And let your friends know about signing up for VAIB emails so they can be kept informed.

Thank you for standing with VAIB.

Your voice for Christian liberties!

Eddy Aliff

Executive Director