

The 2016-2017 Year in Review and Plans for the Future

The Virginia Assembly of Independent Baptists (VAIB) has a vision to advance the rights, values, and liberties of the independent Baptists in Virginia. To accomplish this vision, we work in the following three areas:

1. **Strengthen**. We strengthen your liberty by keeping informed on the issues and pursuing strategic relationships.
2. **Educate**. We educate God's people on the issues that are facing independent Baptists at both the state and federal levels.
3. **Involve**. We involve everyone as one voice in the process by providing opportunities for action.

I am encouraged to see what the VAIB has accomplished and has planned for the future.

Strengthen

We again built new relationships with legislators in Richmond while maintaining strong relationships with others. Of the 2900+ pieces of legislation introduced in the 2017 General Assembly, we opposed fifty bills with forty-three being defeated and supported thirty-nine bills with sixteen passing. Fifteen other related bills were monitored for possible changes. Through our work, we see a majority of legislators supporting religious liberties in Virginia. Unfortunately, Gov. McAuliffe vetoed some good legislation and the General Assembly failed to override these vetoes.

Along with our work in Richmond, in 2017 (March 15-17) I visited our Virginia delegation in Washington, D.C. We were received kindly by all Congressional offices. When we brought our issues to our Congressmen, all Republicans were in agreement with our positions while all Democrats had "philosophical differences."

The VAIB does not endorse candidates or political parties. Using legislators' voting records and stated positions, we strive to provide constituents with information to assist them in making wise voting decisions. We continue to encourage our constituents to register to vote, to vote in every election and primary, and to contact elected officials regarding issues.

Educate

To expand our base, I continue to seek contact with more non-supporting churches. By the end of 2017, we will have been in nearly seventy churches. Joseph Naylor, the VAIB representative will have been in ten of those churches by the end of the year.

The VAIB's Strategic Plan 2017-20 continues to follow this pattern of scheduling as many non-supporting churches as possible in hopes of increasing support while also reporting to regularly supporting churches.

Overall, last year's conference was successful with about two-hundred in attendance. This year's conference will again feature five forums during the day on Friday with two evening forums on each night. For more details, go to www.vaib.org and click on the conference banner. You can register online, too!

The [website](#) continues to be a valuable resource, especially with the integrated CapitolALERTs used to connect you with your legislator on issues. Google analytics indicates that fifty to one-hundred people visit our website each week. The VAIB Facebook page continues to increase in outreach having over 2,000 visits per month. This page offers daily postings of news articles and comments by the Executive Director.

The first Regional Luncheon was held at Abingdon on August 12. Moderator Shahn Wilburn joined the Aliffs in hosting this event which had fifteen pastors and two legislators (Sen. Ben Chafin and Del. Israel O'Quinn) in attendance. There were seven supporting pastors which attended. The total cost of the event was about two-thousand dollars which included: rental for community center, lunch meal, mailings, information packets and other materials, plus expenses for the Aliffs being there for one week to visit area churches. The Aliffs spent several days in advance of the event making phone calls, sending mailings, and sending emails, plus during the week prior to the luncheon they visited thirty-seven churches/pastors over four days. During the process, twelve new churches were added to the list of churches.

I want to extend my special thanks to Pastor Rick Gibson and Copper Ridge Baptist Church (Cleveland, VA) for allowing Carol and me to use the mission apartment from August 5 to 14. Pastor Gibson also helped in taking one day to drive me around to visit churches. Unless you are familiar with driving in this mountain area, you truly cannot appreciate how thankful I am!

Involve

The number of regularly-supporting churches is 189, virtually unchanged from last year. Follow up on churches which give once a year continues to be vital to maintain those donations. One pastor from the Regional Luncheon indicated that his church will begin in November giving once a year. Therefore, he is not yet included as a supporting church. To date, two churches began support and two churches dropped support. However, the financial impact is not necessarily "one-to-one" due to varying support levels. Therefore, I am glad to report that income was slightly improved. I am also thankful for those few individuals who have sent in donations directly to VAIB. This has definitely helped in offsetting loss in income from churches which dropped support.

Our "14K Voices" campaign continues to add more folks to VAIB's email list. Nearly fifteen-hundred are signed up and legislators are taking notice when a CapitolALERT is sent. I am thankful for pastors who periodically remind their churches to sign up with VAIB.

Future Goals 2017-2020

Stengthen: We will continue to work and build relationships at the General Assembly, at Washington DC with Virginia legislators, in various state agencies, and in local government meetings as time permits. A future goal is to add an assistant to work in these areas, probably as a part-time position in the near future until finances allow for a full time hire.

Educate: We will continue to seek out non-supporting churches to increase the VAIB support level. Having an additional person to visit churches should assist in this effort. While Joe Naylor currently is speaking in supporting churches, the goal is to allow the VAIB representative to present VAIB in non-supporting churches once he is sufficiently grounded in the work of VAIB. A financial review must also support the continuation of the VAIB representative.

The current format of the yearly conference will continue to be used and evaluated as to any future changes. The Regional Luncheon format will be evaluated for possible use in other areas as a tool to connect with and discover more Independent Baptist churches in the Commonwealth. While there is

no desire to diminish the purpose and effectiveness of the yearly meeting in September, the reality that many pastors are unable or choose not to come to Richmond for the yearly meeting cannot be ignored. The possible inclusion of a regional conference is under consideration as a way to draw more churches into involvement with VAIB.

Involve: We will continue to encourage individuals to sign up for emails and be responsive to CapitolALERTs. We will also use Facebook as a tool to raise involvement. Non-supporting churches will continue to be followed up in a more strategic manner to keep VAIB before the pastor and church. Informational pastor packets have been developed and are sent or given to these churches.

Supporting churches will be contacted monthly with regular updates (Virginia Voice letter) and a yearly letter thanking each church for support and the amount sent for that year.

The Value of VAIB

A pastor made this statement to me: **“VAIB is the only missionary which puts money back in our pocket.”**

How does VAIB save your church money?

- If your church takes advantage of the sales and use tax exemption (see Form ST-13A), you have this benefit because the VAIB continues to make the case for exempting churches and their ministries.
- If your church takes advantage of having a religious exempt day care, you have this benefit because the VAIB, along with ODACS, continue to make the case for exempting churches and their ministries.
- If your church has not been required to install sprinklers in its auditorium, retroactively I might add, in the past five years, you have this benefit because the VAIB was the *only* church organization to successfully convince the board reviewing building code to reject the proposed amendment.
- If your nursery staff, VBS staff, and Sunday school teachers have not been required to be licensed to work with children (*and they haven't*), you have this benefit because the VAIB continues to urge lawmakers against such legislation.
- A bill (SB1365) to allow the State Fire Marshal's office to charge for inspecting church schools and day cares was again defeated preventing unreasonable expense to our churches.

In Conclusion

Of the nearly five hundred Independent Baptist churches in the Commonwealth, a little over two hundred are engaged with this ministry. Those who are not involved may be due to a lack of knowledge or understanding or finances. Some fault us for being too intimately involved in the government and therefore being too political. My resolve is to continue our practices in light of our mission statement. VAIB will continue to respond to and help every Independent Baptist church in the Commonwealth.

While our Constitution gives us opportunity, we ought to stand for and exercise our religious liberties. Our forefathers gave us these freedoms but it is our responsibility to keep them. So as long as it is in my power and there are sufficient independent Baptist churches financially supporting, I will urge our government leaders to uphold religious liberties and our churches to be involved.

Respectfully submitted,

Eddy Aliff

Rev. Eddy Aliff
Executive Director