



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

900 EAST MAIN STREET
RICHMOND, VA 23219

*Air Force Association
American Legion
AMVETS
Association of the United
States Army
Disabled American
Veterans
Fleet Reserve Association
Korean War Veterans
Association
Legion of Valor of the
U.S., Inc.
Marine Corps League
Military Order of the
Purple Heart
Military Officers Association
of America
Military Order of the
World Wars
National Association for
Uniformed Services
Navy Seabee Veterans of
America
Non-Commissioned
Officers Association
Paralyzed Veterans of
America
Reserve Officers Association
Roanoke Valley Veterans
Council
Veterans of Foreign Wars
Vietnam Veterans of America
Virginia Army/Air National
Guard Enlisted
Association
Virginia National Guard
Association
Women Marines Association*

Adopted
July 15, 2015

JLC Contact
Stuart Williams
(703) 595-3252
shw13@att.net

Position Paper 2016-02 DVS Benefits Services

1. **OBJECTIVE:** Provide sufficient funds to support the hiring and retention of Benefits Services' staff in the Department of Veterans Services, especially in high cost of living areas of Virginia; and to provide continued improvement in their support services. This is to facilitate assurance and consistency in the timely preparation and submission of accurate veterans claims to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.
2. **BACKGROUND:**
 - a. Veterans are entitled to disability compensation from the federal government for injuries or illnesses resulting from military service. To obtain this compensation, veterans must file claims with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).
 - b. Filing a claim is a long, complex process – most veterans seek assistance to file a claim.
 - c. To assist Virginia veterans, the Virginia Department of Veterans Services (DVS) operates 24 Benefits Field Offices (growing to 26 in FY16) that provide free assistance to Virginia veterans in developing and filing VA compensation and pension claims.
 - d. Virginia receives a considerable return on investment for helping Virginia veterans. In FY14, DVS filed 23,241 claims on behalf of Virginia veterans, resulting in an estimated \$239M in new disability compensation and pension payments.
 - e. DVS Benefits Offices are staffed by trained claims agents who provide direct, one-on-one assistance to veterans in developing and filing claims.
 - f. Knowledgeable, trained, and experienced claims agents are in high demand. DVS has had a very high claims agent turnover during the past several years, with many DVS agents leaving for higher paying jobs at a level that DVS could not match.
 - g. DVS requires additional financial resources in FY17/18 to hire and retain trained and experienced claims agents by being able to offer them competitive salaries based on their operational base.
3. **DISCUSSION:** The solution is to provide sufficient funding so that DVS can offer competitive salaries within existing authority based on each agent's operational base.
4. **RECOMMENDATION:** That the Governor and General Assembly support funds to provide continued improvement to training, services, compensation, facilities, and equipment for DVS Benefits Services' staff in the FY17/18budget.