

**Board of Veterans Services
Meeting Minutes
December 6, 2024**

A meeting of the Board of Veterans Services (BVS) was held on December 6, 2024 at the Virginia War Memorial 621 S. Belvidere St, Richmond VA 23220.

Members Attending – In Person

1. Victor Angry
2. David Ashe
3. Carl Bedell
4. Tara Durant
5. Malcolm Frost
6. Joyce Henderson
7. Kevin Hoffman
8. Matthew Miller
9. Wendall Warner
10. Bill Aramony Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations
11. Darius McKenney, representing the Virginia Veterans Services Foundation
12. Pam Seay, representing the Virginia War Memorial Foundation
13. Chuck Zingler, Commissioner, Virginia Department of Veterans Services

Members Attending – Virtual (Zoom)

1. Jason Ballard (travel/distance)
2. Joe Campa (travel/distance)
3. Jennifer Carroll Foy (travel/distance)
4. Michael Feggans (travel/distance)
5. Scott Davidson (travel/distance)
6. Robert Eisiminger (travel/distance)
7. Carlton Kent (travel/distance)
8. Russet Perry (travel/distance)
9. Joshua Thomas (travel/distance)

Members Absent

1. Jackie Glass
2. Vincent Griffith
3. Terence McKnight
4. Melissa Watts

Commonwealth of Virginia Officials Attending – In Person

1. Jordan Stewart, Deputy Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs
2. Todd Barnes, Department of Veterans Services (DVS)
3. Steven Combs, DVS

4. Michele Crone, DVS
5. Kendra Ellison, DVS
6. Dara Hechter, DVS
7. Eric Johnson, DVS
8. Clay Mountcastle, DVS
9. Griffin Ramsey, DVS
10. Tiffany Woody-Wiggins, DVS

Commonwealth of Virginia Officials Attending - Virtual

1. Terry Durkin, Office of Delegate Jason Ballard
2. Tramaine Carroll-Payne, DVS
3. Patrice Jones, DVS
4. Maya Mahdi, Office of Senator Russet Perry
5. Jessie Williams, Office of Senator Russet Perry

Members of the Public Attending

1. Cortez Dial

Materials Distributed as part of the Agenda Packet

1. Agenda
2. Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Services Report to the BVS
3. Virginia Veterans Services Foundation Report to the BVS
4. Virginia Department of Veterans Services Update for BVS

Item I. Opening and Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Carl Bedell called the meeting to order at 10:06 a.m., welcomed all attendees to the meeting, and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Item II. Roll Call, Introduction of Members, and Quorum Determination

The roll was called, and with only 13 of 26 members physically present a physical quorum was not established, meaning that the Board could not take recorded votes on issues. Nine members were present via Zoom. Their names are recorded above.

Item III. Approval of Agenda

Chairman Bedell called the members attention the meeting agenda, which is attached to these minutes.

Item IV. Approval of the Minutes of the September 26, 2024 meeting

Because there was not a physical quorum, the draft minutes of the September 26 meeting could not be approved.

Item V. Introduction of DVS Staff and Guests

Deputy Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs Jordan Stewart was recognized. Commissioner Zingler recognized the Department of Veterans Services (DVS) team members

and asked them to give a brief background. Their names are recorded above. No members of the public were present at the start of the meeting.

Item VI. Reports

- a. Joint Leadership Council (JLC) Chair Bill Aramony presented the JLC update.
- b. Mr. Darius McKenney presented the Virginia Veterans Services Foundation (VVSF) update. He highlighted recent fundraising efforts.
- c. Virginia War Memorial Foundation (VWMF) President Pam Seay presented an update on the VWMF. She highlighted the 75th Anniversary of the Virginia War Memorial, the efforts to gather and digitize records, and the pending publication of a 75th Anniversary book.

Item VII. DVS Operations Updates

Deputy Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs spoke briefly about legislative priorities for the upcoming General Assembly session and the partnership with the BVS and JLC. She noted that the Secretary's office may be contacting BVS members for assistance during the Session.

- a. Department of Veterans Services (DVS) Commissioner Chuck Zingler provided an update on DVS programs and services (see attached report). The Commissioner thanked the Executive and Legislative branches for their support of DVS and noted that DVS (and its predecessor organizations) had served Virginia's veterans and families for 97 years. He noted that the needs of veterans continue to grow, in areas such as transition and employment (attracting veterans to and retaining them in Virginia); suicide prevention and despair services, benefits, spouse employment, and the Virginia Military Survivors & Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP).

Commissioner Zingler spoke of the great work being done by DVS, the BVS, the JLC, and the VVSF, but that there was much undone and much more potential/things that could be done. He challenged DVS team members and the members of the three boards to step things up in service of Virginia's veterans and families in all the areas listed above.

- b. Senior Administrator Todd Barnes (Davis & McDaniel Veterans Care Center) provided an operations update on Virginia's veterans care centers. His presentation is attached to these minutes.
- c. Dr. Clay Mountcastle spoke about the programs and services at the Virginia War Memorial, including oral history interviews, programs for students and educators, and the upcoming new exhibit on Virginia's 1,200+ service members who are Missing in Action.
- d. DVS Director of Research & Program Evaluation Eric Johnson, the Virginia Veterans Network (VVN) program lead, provided an overview and "live demonstration" of the VVN system. He encouraged all BVS members to register and to recruit veterans to sign up. He asked Deputy Commissioner Combs to distribute the VVN program brochure to

the BVS members and for them to pass it to other veterans, post it on their LinkedIn site, and do all that they can to promote VVN and its benefits.

Item VIII. New Business

- a. BVS 2025 Meeting Schedule – BVS Chairman Carl Bedell called the members’ attention to the meeting schedule, which is attached to these minutes. There were no changes or objections to the schedule as presented.

- b. Good of the order reports – Chair Carl Bedell and Ms. Henderson attended the Commonwealth’s Veterans Day Ceremony at the Virginia War Memorial. Chair Bedell encouraged members to attend veterans ceremonies and events.

Item IX. Public Comment

Ms. Joyce Henderson recognized Mr. Cortez Dial.

Item X. Wrap Up & Adjournment

There being no further business before the BVS, Chairman Carl Bedell adjourned the meeting at 1:00. p.m.

Agenda

December 6, 2024

10:00 a.m.- 12:30 p.m.

Virginia War Memorial

621 S. Belvidere St

Richmond VA 23220

- I. Opening and Pledge of Allegiance – *Carl Bedell, BVS Chairman* (10:00-10:02)
 - II. Roll Call, Introduction of Members, and Quorum Determination – *Carl Bedell, BVS Chairman* (10:02-10:05)
 - III. Approval of Agenda – *Carl Bedell, BVS Chairman* (10:05-10:06)
 - IV. Approval of Minutes of the September 26, 2024 meeting– *Carl Bedell, BVS Chairman* (10:06-10:07)
 - V. Introduction of DVS staff and guests – *Carl Bedell, BVS Chairman* (10:07-10:08)
 - VI. Reports (10:08-10:30)
 - a. Joint Leadership Council – *Bill Aramony, JLC Chair*
 - b. Veterans Services Foundation – *Darius McKenney, VSF Chair*
 - c. Virginia War Memorial Foundation Update – *Pam Seay, VWMF*
 - VII. DVS Operations Updates (10:30-10:45)
 - a. DVS Operations, Priorities, and Updates – *Chuck Zingler, DVS Commissioner*
 - b. Veterans Care Centers – *Todd Barnes, Senior Administrator*
- 10:45 – 11:45 Members move to Shrine of Memory-20th Century for Commonwealth’s Pearl Harbor Day Remembrance Ceremony
- DVS Operations Updates (continued) (11:45-12:15)
- c. Virginia War Memorial – *Clay Mountcastle, Director*
 - d. Virginia Veterans Network – *Eric Johnson, Director of Research & Program Evaluation*
- VIII. New Business (12:15-12:25)
 - a. BVS 2025 Meeting Schedule – *Carl Bedell, BVS Chairman*
 - b. “Good of the Order” reports from BVS members and open discussion
 - IX. Public Comment – *Carl Bedell, BVS Chairman* (12:25-12:30)
 - X. Wrap Up & Adjourn – *Carl Bedell, BVS Chairman* (12:30)

BVS 2025 Meeting Schedule

General Assembly 2025 Session (begins Wednesday, January 8)

- Attend “JLC Day at the General Assembly” – Thursday, January 9
- Attend meetings of the General Assembly Military and Veterans Caucus (starting Wednesday, January 15, 0800)

Thursday, March 20

- Location: TBD

Thursday, June 5

- Location: TBD

Thursday, September 11 (in conjunction with Commonwealth’s Patriot Day Ceremony)

- Location: Virginia War Memorial, Richmond

Monday, November 10 (in conjunction with Army/Navy/Marine Corps 250th Birthday Celebration in conjunction with VA250)

- Location: Virginia War Memorial, Richmond



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF
VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

101 N. 14TH ST., 17TH FLOOR
RICHMOND VA 23219

Air Force Association
Air Force Sergeants Association
American Legion
AMVETS
Association of the United States Army
Disabled American Veterans
Fifth Baptist Veterans Ministry
Fleet Reserve Association
Hope for the Warriors
Iraq & Afghanistan Veterans of America
Legion of Valor of the U.S., Inc.
Marine Corps League
Military Officers Association of America
Military Order of the Purple Heart
Military Order of the World Wars
National Vet Court Alliance
Navy Mutual Aid Association
Paralyzed Veterans of America
Reserve Organization of America
Student Veterans of America
Veterans of Foreign Wars
Vietnam Veterans of America
Virginia Army/Air National Guard Enlisted Association
Virginia National Guard Association
Women Marines Association
Wounded Warrior Project

**JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL
REPORT TO THE BOARD OF VETERANS SERVICES
December 6, 2024**

The Joint Leadership Council (JLC) has not met since the Board of Veterans Services met last on September 26.

The JLC meets next on Thursday, December 12. We will also hold a short virtual meeting on Friday, December 20 to learn about the military/veterans items in the Governor's Introduced Budget.

Our 2025 "Day on the Hill" is planned for Thursday, January 9, 2025, where we'll advocate for our initiatives. We invite the BVS to join us – coordinating instructions will come out after our December 12 meeting.

A new Veterans Service Organization – Hope for the Warriors – joined the JLC on November 22, 2024, bringing the number of VSO represented on the JLC to 26.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Aramony
Bill Aramony
Chair

Atch: Approved/Prioritized JLC 2025 Indicatives



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

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Virginia National Guard Association
Women Marines Association
Wounded Warrior Project

Adopted 09.19.2024

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JLC Initiative 2025-01 **Verification of Veteran Status – Arrest, Jails, and Prisons**

OBJECTIVE: To identify arrested and incarcerated veterans in Virginia so to better connect them to U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs (USDVA), Virginia Department of Veterans Services, and community employment, education, and other resources to help lower their recidivism rate and connect them with federal and local court and community resources.

BACKGROUND: Some Virginia local and regional jails use the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, *Veterans Reentry Search Service* (VRSS) to identify justice involved veterans, but many do not. Veteran self-identification and the *Status Query and Response Exchange System* (SQUARES) also may be utilized by law enforcement for veteran status identification.

DISCUSSION: If veterans within the criminal justice process can be identified, they can be steered to federal, state, and local community veteran services, benefits, and other resources. Virginia should address the specialized needs of veterans criminally charged, at the time they are charged, and while incarcerated.

Doing so will enable connecting veterans to veterans benefits, mental health counseling, and other services, as well as enable connecting these veterans to local community and local Court veteran resources including veteran courts, community education, employment, and other resources so to lower recidivism.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Governor and General Assembly require that the Virginia Department of Veterans Services assist local and regional jails, sheriffs, and law enforcement officials to enable veteran self-identification and enable deploying and using the USDVA's *Veterans Reentry Search Service* and other services to record an individual's veteran status at the time of arrest, intake, and during incarceration to enable connecting these veterans to USDVA and community employment, education, and other resources to lower their recidivism rate.



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Wounded Warrior Project*

Adopted 09.19.2024

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JLC Initiative 2025-02

Stop Unscrupulous Firms from Exploiting Veterans

OBJECTIVE: Prohibit ‘Claim Shark’ companies from preying on veterans seeking to obtain or modify their VA entitlements.

BACKGROUND:

- The Commonwealth of Virginia adopted an amended version of HB736 in the 2024 Legislation Session to study the impact of predatory practices by companies taking advantage of veterans seeking to obtain or improve their Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits.
- These companies propose contracts beyond the scope of what the VA allows under federal law and do not file powers of attorney or fee agreements with the VA like is required for those accredited agencies who may charge allowed fees.
- Marketing practices of these companies are considered predatory by regulatory and consumer protection entities because promises of no-cost consultations or guarantees of increased benefits are hollow and do, in fact, come with fees attached – often in the form of a percentage of the veteran’s monthly disability compensation.
- Many of these companies often ask veterans for sensitive usernames and passwords for their eBenefits or VA.gov accounts. Such access allow these companies to circumvent VA policies and cybersecurity access controls, permit access to veterans’ sensitive and restricted information, expose personal identifying information (PII) and protected health information (PHI) to unauthorized users and criminal elements, and potentially violate numerous federal consumer protection statutes.

DISCUSSION:

Veterans who believe they have been scammed have little recourse. Many of these contracts include binding arbitration clauses designed to compel payment. Some contracts go so far as to include clauses that prohibit veterans from disclosing terms of the agreements or even speaking negatively about a company or their experiences without risking defamation litigation.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Governor and General Assembly propose and pass language banning the predatory practices used by these ‘Claim Shark’ companies preying on our veterans seeking to obtain or improve their VA benefits.



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Adopted 09.19.2024

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JLC Initiative 2025-03 **Virginia National Guard Tuition**

OBJECTIVE: Transition the Virginia National Guard State Tuition Assistance Program (STAP) from its current reimbursement model back to an upfront payment model.

BACKGROUND:

1. The Virginia National State Tuition Assistance Program (STAP) is a long standing benefit for the National Guard Members which provides tuition assistance for members of the Virginia National Guard.
2. In 2021 the STAP program shifted to a reimbursement model, leading to confusion and frustration as substantial costs were transferred to service members, requiring them to pay upfront and seek reimbursement at the end of the semester.

DISCUSSION:

1. The National Guard performs a critical and essential role in both service to the Commonwealth and to the Nation.
2. Virginia competes with neighboring states to attract and retain talented individuals in its National Guard.
3. The competitive landscape also includes civilian employers, many of whom offer substantial educational assistance benefits, making it imperative for the Virginia National Guard to provide equally competitive incentives.
4. The National Guard is an exceptional net-positive contributor to the Commonwealth, leveraging a 26-to-1 federal-to-state dollar ratio. Every state dollar allocated to the Guard results in a 26X return in federal funds, underscoring the Guard's significant economic impact on the state.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Governor and General Assembly revert the STAP program to an upfront payment model, eliminating the current reimbursement requirement and restoring the program's effectiveness as a key benefit for Virginia National Guard members.



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Virginia National Guard
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Wounded Warrior Project*

Adopted 09.19.2024

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JLC Initiative 2025-04
Suffolk State Veterans Cemetery Expansion

OBJECTIVE: Secure the necessary funds to expand the Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery in Suffolk, ensuring that it continues to meet the needs of our veterans and their families.

BACKGROUND:

1. The Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery in Suffolk is the second most heavily utilized veterans cemetery in Virginia (after Arlington) and the third most heavily utilized state veterans cemetery in the United States.
2. It provides a dignified final resting place for those who have served our country.
3. Due to its high usage, the cemetery is approaching its maximum capacity, and without proactive efforts to identify and acquire additional land for expansion, it will soon run out of space.

DISCUSSION:

1. Our nation owes a profound debt of gratitude to its veterans, and providing a respectful and enduring resting place is a fundamental obligation.
2. The Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery in Suffolk serves a large and growing veteran population in the region, making it an essential resource for veterans' families. The anticipated space shortage poses a significant risk to maintaining this vital service.
3. Expanding the cemetery would not only ensure that future generations of veterans are honored with the same dignity as those who have come before them but would also demonstrate the Commonwealth's commitment to veterans' care.
4. Identifying and acquiring additional land for the cemetery's expansion is both a practical and moral imperative. The cost of inaction is significant, as the cemetery could soon be unable to accommodate new burials, leading to a crisis in veterans' services in the region.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Governor and General Assembly allocate the necessary funds to secure land and expand the Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery in Suffolk. This expansion is critical to continuing to honor our veterans with the respect and care they deserve.



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Adopted 09.19.2024

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JLC Initiative 2025-05 **Women Veterans Day**

OBJECTIVE: to establish June 12th as Women Veterans Day in Virginia, recognizing the contributions and sacrifices of women veterans and commemorating the historic signing of the Women's Armed Services Integration Act.

BACKGROUND:

- **Historic Milestone:** on June 12, 1948, President Harry S. Truman signed into law the Women's Armed Services Integration Act, allowing women to serve as regular members of the U.S. military.
- **Recent Recognition:** on May 5, 2017, Representative Victoria Neave filed House Bill 2698, which led to the establishment of Women Veterans Day in Texas.
- **Virginia's Commitment:** Virginia has a significant population of women veterans who have served honorably in various capacities across all branches of the military.

DISCUSSION: Virginia should:

- Designate June 12th as Women Veterans Day in Virginia to commemorate the signing of the Women's Armed Services Integration Act.
- Recognize Women Veterans Day annually with official proclamations and events.
- This will:
 - **Recognize Contributions:** Honor the service and sacrifices of women veterans in Virginia.
 - **Increase Awareness:** Raise public awareness about the historical and ongoing contributions of women in the military.
 - **Provide Support:** Highlight and promote resources available to women veterans.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Governor and General Assembly establish June 12 as Women Veterans Day in Virginia to honor the significant contributions and sacrifices of women veterans, increase public awareness of their roles in the military, and provide additional support tailored to their unique needs. This initiative will foster greater recognition and appreciation for women veterans throughout the Commonwealth.



VIRGINIA VETERANS
SERVICES FOUNDATION
Virginia is for Every Veteran

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA VIRGINIA VETERANS SERVICES FOUNDATION

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT TO THE VIRGINIA VETERANS SERVICES FOUNDATION DECEMBER 5, 2024

Status of the Board: The Board remains at 15 of 16 positions filled now with no Trustees awaiting replacement. This continues the largest fill rate for a second consecutive quarter. The current fill rate has allowed the Chair to assign additional Trustees to fill Board positions and elevate the 1st and 2nd Vice Chair to fulfill additional duties in support of the Foundation.

New Trustees: Ms. Heather Hopkins, of Arlington, Head of Defense Policy, Amazon Web Services has been appointed to the Board to replace Mr. Jack Lanier. The Chair offers sincere thanks to Mr. Lanier for his many years of distinctive service to the Foundation and to the Veterans of the Commonwealth. His efforts on behalf of the Foundation have made a significant positive and lasting impact.

Committee Assignments: All Trustees have been assigned to serve on one of the three Committees and Chair's of the Development and Finance Committees are in place. The Chair is still seeking a new Chair for the Procedures and Policies (P&P) Committee, but important work in that area continues to move forward regardless.

Recent Events & Fundraising/Donations:

- Ann Hand provided a tremendous donation to VVSF/DVS by providing proceeds from her Veterans Pin sales through a "VSF" code. This was available for purchases between November 1 and 21, 2024. Several Trustees shared the flyer for this via sale their social media channels to help stimulate responses.
- Craig Colucci staged the Frieden Agency & Wealth Management Veteran's Hit-a-Thon on November 9th, 2024. Proceeds from this event will be directed to the Jones & Cabacoy Veterans Care Center.
- The VVSF Chair spoke at a Veterans Day dinner held by the CoStar Group in Richmond on Veterans Day, November 11, 2024 and provided comments on the value that our Veterans add to the Commonwealth after they transition or retire and remain in Virginia.

Upcoming Events:

- Pearl Harbor Ceremony, Virginia War Memorial, 6 December 2024 11 AM-12 PM.
- Wreath Laying, State Cemeteries, 14 December 2024, Time/Attendees TBD.
- Next VVSF Board Meeting TBD March 2025.

Brad Williamson

Brad Williamson
Chair, Board of Trustees



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Department of Veterans Services

Charles A. Zingler
Commissioner

Telephone: (804) 786-0220
Fax: (804) 786-0302

Department of Veterans Services Update for Board of Veterans Services December 6, 2024

Ladies & Gentlemen,

Thank you for all you do on behalf of our Veterans and their families.

Today, I can assure you that Virginia's Veterans and Families are well served by your Department of Veterans Services (DVS).

The new Virginia Veterans Network (VVN) launched state-wide on 11 November. DVS is connected to only a fraction of our service members, veterans, and their families (SMVF). When fully built out, VVN will change that, allowing our SMVF population to connect to:

- Thousands of vet-friendly businesses, healthcare providers, and services;
- Programs that honor our history, servicemen and women;
- Veteran directed community programs across the Commonwealth;
- How to navigate the challenge of transition from uniform to "civilian life" and career opportunities for service members and spouses;
- Podcasts that explain our programs how you can leverage them for your benefit; and
- Upcoming events at our memorials, cemeteries, and museums.

We want our SMVF to know specifics on the new services we are working on, and the new laws and policies our Governor and our General Assembly are working to help our entire military and veteran community. Registering in the new VVN portal will give us the opportunity to do just that while connecting our SMVF to additional statewide resources.

Governor Youngkin approved \$814,651 in FY25 carryforward funding for VVN in FY25, which unlocks an additional \$100,000 from the Veterans Services Foundation. This will fund FY25 system follow-on initiatives and development, plus VVN post-launch marketing/communications to grow awareness among SMVF in/out-of-state.

But...we need your support to make VVN a “program of record” with a specific budget line in the FY26 budget for dollars, people, sustainment costs, and continual improvement. This is critical to building awareness to our service members and families, well before their transition or retirement, as well as our veterans and their families and survivors. Far too few are aware of their “earned benefits” and supporting programs that continue to address issues that affect our community. Awareness early, and accessing our support before the stresses become desperate, can help stem the rising epidemic of addiction, homelessness, suicide, and lost relationships that is affecting our communities across the nation.

The launch of VVN is a significant augmentation to the “best in class” services that DVS currently delivers through our 50 statewide operating locations. But, over the next several years of continual program development and adding to the growing list of community, state and national resource partners, this can become a transformational resource for our service members, veterans and their families, and help us scale our support far beyond what we could achieve without unrealistic personnel and funding increases.

As noted in my last update, the Strategic Plan developed last year was our “North Star” in developing budget and legislative recommendations for the 2025 Session to operationalize the goals and objectives outlined in the plan.

The challenge to do as well as we want seems almost endless. Good ideas, likewise, are endless. So, determining “impact” has been a guide for me, and our strategic plan has been one useful product in that guide.

Our top DVS priorities for the next year are:

- Reaching more veterans through VVN and establishing it as a “program of record”. As we continue to grow in service to our Veterans our ability to do better will be constrained by money and numbers of personnel (talent/time).
 - The digital technology becomes a critical avenue to scale, especially as our younger (tech savvy) service members separate and join the general workforce. It will also allow us to deliver services (benefits, despair, homeless, health and behavioral/wellness counsel and care) in new and increasingly effective and efficient ways.
 - Support for a budget line that adequately prioritizes and funds a “fenced program” to develop, man, and operate the Virginia Veterans Network.
- Funding to attract, train, and retain top talent in DVS – Benefits veterans service representatives, VVFS resource and peer specialists, and nursing staff at our veterans care centers. These are highly needed professionals, and we are losing more than our share to both public and private sector businesses. The General Assembly asked for us to identify a competitive salary solution. We have delivered our recommendations; I solicit your endorsement and strong voice of support.
- Support to Career Transition & Employment has been a huge area for improvement across the country for service members, veterans, and families. Their needs do not sound as compelling as those in distress or those being aggrieved, but not serving this need grows into every problem of those communities of despair and underserved. Moreover, the return on investment in this area – young talented veterans and spouses – pays back “100 fold” in decades of contributors to our businesses, our revenue, our communities, and our security. Our executive branch is strongly considering improving on the current \$40K tax break on retirement pay. The retention of younger veterans, not those fully retired, should also be strongly considered.
- A DVS unique Transition Assistance Program would address the needs of all transitioning service members and spouse, as well as those Veterans and Spouse seeking better employment and

careers. Coaching/Mentoring, tools for connecting our people, regardless of background, to quality opportunities in all regions and across all industries, services, and markets. Virginia wins, Veterans win, families win.

- Consider incentives to attract and retain more than retirees (e.g., younger men and women as they consider leaving service). A one-time tax break or incentive for transitioning service members (in-state that “stay” and out-of-state that come to Virginia) would cost some, but potentially return much more to our industry, our revenue, and our communities for decades.

As we look to the future, we also celebrate our recent successes, which include:

- 6,334 V3 hires and 45 new V3 companies in 2024 Q3.
- 6,121 disability claims were submitted to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) in 2024 Q3. Approved claim = monthly payment and eligibility for USDVA medical care.
- Suicide Prevention and Opioid Addiction Services (SOS): Virginia was 1 of 12 states/territories funded (\$281,000) in the inaugural USDVA cooperative agreement partnership to build and expand suicide mortality review (SMR) capacity at the state level.
- The Virginia Veteran and Family Support (VVFS) program has opened 896 new clients for 2,026 individual service needs so far in FY25.
- The VVFS and Benefits teams have conducted 6,337 suicide screenings collectively so far in FY25.
- Donna Harrison, DVS Housing and Criminal Justice Director, was invited to meet with Martin Brown, the Chief Diversity Officer for the Commonwealth of Virginia, to discuss racial disparities in the criminal justice system and to promote opportunities for re-entering individuals. As a result, Ms. Harrison will be joining Chief Brown’s re-entry stakeholder team.
- DVS’s three Veteran Justice Specialists (VJS) are currently working with 60+ veterans on re-entry, housing, and treatment access. Two positions being recruited (recent separations). DVS VJS’s work with veterans treatment dockets and jail diversion programs, re-entry programs, and community-based support.
- The Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery (Suffolk) celebrated its 20th Anniversary and 20,000th interment on November 4. 168 interments in October – highest month ever. The Horton cemetery is the 2nd busiest in Virginia (after Arlington) and the third busiest state veterans cemetery in the nation.
- DVS received an award from the state for outstanding participation in the Commonwealth of Virginia’s Small, Women, and Minority (SWaM) Spend program.
- Governor Youngkin has approved \$200,000 in FY25 carryforward funds for VVFS to support shortfall in funding for housing and behavioral health counseling.
- One wing (40 beds of 200 beds) at the Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center (SBVCC) in Richmond was offline in 2024 for renovations. This wing has now reopened as the specialized dementia/memory care unit, providing exceptional space/programs for veterans with this level of need. The former dementia/memory care unit will be offline for most of 2025 as it is renovated to provide specialty care for veterans requiring short-term rehabilitation. It will also be configured to serve as an isolation unit if needed
- SBVCC passed its annual USDVA license inspection with minimal (administrative, not resident care) deficiencies noted.
- The Davis & McDaniel Veterans Care Center in Roanoke was recognized as a “Top 5” among all nursing homes in Virginia (public, private, and non-profit) by Newsweek Magazine for providing outstanding care to DMVCC residents and support to their families.
- Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP): DVS remains engaged on VMSDEP, providing technical assistance to the Governor’s Preserve VMSEP Task Force, the Joint

Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC), and the Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee (SFAC) Select Workgroup on VMSDEP. I urge you to stay engaged with this process and to ensure your voice, and those of your communities, continues to be heard.

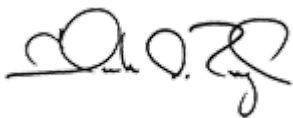
- The National Cemetery Administration (NCA) will award DVS three grants in FFY25 for phased expansion at our three state veterans cemeteries. Planning and design will take approximately 10 months, with construction to begin in late CY2025:
 - Suffolk: \$8M to add 6,380 pre-placed crypts; 2,400 in-ground cremation gravesites; add Space Force seal to service branch wall; and roadway to new burial sections (note: the crypts, valued at \$2-3M, will be paid for directly by VA, putting the overall value of the grant at \$10M+);
 - Amelia: \$500,000 to add 972 in-ground cremation gravesites; construct wall for service branch seals; and
 - Dublin: \$306,250 to add 500 in-ground cremation gravesites; add Space Force seal to service branch wall.

- People are at the heart of all that we do at DVS.
 - In November, we recognized 112 DVS team members who celebrated milestones in their service to the Commonwealth of Virginia. This included seven team members who 20 years of dedicated service, one with 25 years, and two with 30 years – Debra Blackmore (Benefits) and Donna Harrison (VVFS)!
 - Other team members we celebrate include:
 - Eric Johnson, VVN Program Manager – brought VVN to launch.
 - Michael Henshaw, Director of Virginia State Veterans Cemeteries – retiring after 35+ years of US Army (mortuary affairs), USDVA (cemetery director) and DVS service.
 - Guy Dinkins and Tom Holley – new Benefits Director and Deputy.
 - Keith Wilson, COE Director – retiring after 30+ years of USDVA and 10+ years of DVS service – SME in all things disability benefits/claims.
 - Kim Barton, Glendalynn Glover, Maria Bryant, Eric Johnson, Serita Lee, and Steven Combs served as Officers of Election on November 5th.

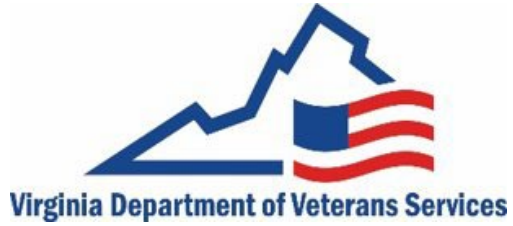
My commitment to you is that we will work every day to serve our SMVF. We will listen to understand them and their experience, and especially their frustrations. We will listen to them to measure our successes, but also our areas for improvement. For those who have not been served well, we will work to re-earn their trust. And we will never fail to give our best.

Thank you for your significant service to our Nation and our Commonwealth. Yours is an impressively talented group of leaders with relevant experience to the challenges we face. I look forward to working with you to serve our service members, veterans, and their families. Your ideas, vision, and efforts are solicited and important to me, our leadership, and those that we aim to serve!

With great respect and my personal appreciation,



Charles A. (Chuck) Zingler
Commissioner



Department of Veterans Services Veterans Care Centers Update

December 6, 2024

Todd Barnes
Senior Administrator



Virginia's Veterans Care Center Summary



Name	Location	Year Opened	Number of Beds	Type of Rooms	Type of Bathrooms
Davis & McDaniel	Roanoke	1992	204 (196/8)	Semi-Private	Shared
Sitter & Barfoot	Richmond	2007	200	Private	Private
Jones & Cabacoy	Virginia Beach	2023	128	Private	Private
Puller	Warrenton	2025	128	Private	Private



Virginia's Veterans Care Centers Operating Principles



- The centers are first-class facilities designed to enhance quality of life in a clean, caring, and dignified setting befitting men and women who served our country with honor.
- DVS operates the centers to provide our residents with exceptional care in a home-like environment that enhances their overall well-being. To do this, DVS:
 1. Takes a “whole person” approach that focuses not just on physical health care to residents, but also provides recreational, therapeutic, spiritual, and social opportunities that contribute to physical and mental wellness;
 2. Operates the care centers as symbols of the Commonwealth’s commitment to her veterans; and
 3. Serves the greatest possible number of veterans by maintaining the highest practical facility census.



Virginia's Veterans Care Centers Admission Criteria/Licensure



Admission criteria

- Honorably discharged veteran of the United States Armed Forces;
- Resident of Virginia at time of admission or entered service from Virginia;
- Medical need for care (the prospective resident must need the care the centers provide, and the centers must be able to provide the care the prospective resident needs); and
- Means/method of payment.

Licensed by

- The Federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), as implemented by the Virginia Department of Health, Office of Licensure & Certification (VDH/OLC);
- The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA); and
- The Virginia Department of Social Services (Roanoke only – assisted living beds).



Davis & McDaniel Veterans Care Center Roanoke



- Named in honor of Medal of Honor recipient Colonel Paris Davis, US Army (Retired) and Navy Cross recipient Captain Eugene “Red” McDaniel, US Navy (Retired).
- Accomplishments
 - Achieved 5 - STAR Quality of Care Rating.
 - Recognized as a “Top 5” among all nursing homes in Virginia (public, private, and non-profit) by Newsweek Magazine for providing outstanding care to DMVCC residents and support to their families.
 - Hosting facility for nursing colleges with exceptional feedback.
 - Acquired 160 new beds that will help in reducing risk of falls.
 - Fully staffed.



DMVCC Updates



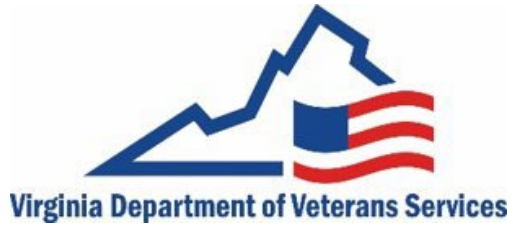
- Accomplishments (cont)
 - Updating wander management, nurse call and water safety systems.
 - Successful VA recognition survey in January. Deficiency free.
- Challenges
 - Self-funding.
 - Aging building as industry moves towards neighborhoods and private rooms.
 - Increasing regulations at the VA and CMS levels.



Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center Richmond



- Named in honor of Medal of Honor recipients Colonel Carl Sitter, US Marine Corps (Retired) and Colonel Van Barfoot, US Army (Retired).
- Accomplishments
 - Remodeled area for memory care neighborhood giving more space and activity areas to enhance quality of life.
 - Participating in special dementia program for memory care residents. Will be second certified facility in Virginia.
 - Using grant to implement art program for our residents with amazing results.
 - Updating wander management, nurse call and security systems.
 - Successful annual VA survey in November. No clinical or life safety code violations.



SBVCC Updates



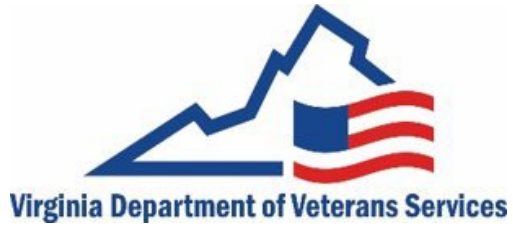
- Challenges
 - Self-funding.
 - Staffing and competition with other care centers for workers.
 - Age of facility repairs/updating with little or no excess revenue stream.
 - Census growth.
 - Increasing regulations at the VA and CMS levels.



Jones & Cabacoy Veterans Care Center Virginia Beach



- Named in honor of Medal of Honor recipient Colonel William Jones III, US Air Force and Staff Sergeant Christopher Cabacoy, US Army, who was killed in action in Afghanistan.
- Accomplishments
 - Opened in November 2023. State of the art 128-bed facility was built to serve Hampton Roads-area veterans. Organized around a “household” model with individual rooms/bathrooms and common living/dining spaces in a community setting.
 - Successful VDH initial certification survey. Deficiency free.
 - Successful VA recognition survey in May. Deficiency free.
 - Current census is 54 and growing.



JCVCC Updates



- Challenges
 - Self- funding.
 - Delay in obtaining Medicaid CCN Approval has been pending since January 2024.
 - Census growth.
 - Increasing regulations at the VA and CMS levels.



Puller Veterans Care Center Fauquier County



- Named in honor of Lieutenant General Lewis Puller, US Marine Corps (Retired), Lieutenant Lewis Puller, Jr., US Marine Corps, and former State Senator Linda “Toddy” Puller.
- Status
 - Have hired and trained 15 essential staff members.
 - January/February 2025: Substantial Completion.
 - February/March 2025: DVS Occupancy.
 - Summer 2025: Resident Occupancy.



THE VIRGINIA VETERANS NETWORK Connecting Veterans With Gold Standard Resources

The Virginia Veterans Network is a free online hub of resources and services for veterans and service members. The network provides direct access to resources and services—covering everything from job training and employment to health care and wellness—from trusted veterans service organizations, nonprofits, and state agencies.

Get Connected. Here's how:

1. Visit dvs.virginia.gov to create a profile and validate your veteran or service member status.
2. Browse categories of services or search for specific keywords.
3. Select the services that meet your needs and interests. The services you select will respond with more information within 72 hours.

You can return to the network anytime to request services or browse resources without filling out new forms or paperwork.

NEED ASSISTANCE? Contact DVS for assistance at VirginiaVeteransNetwork@dvs.virginia.gov or 804-786-0286.



GET SUPPORT.

Access the **Virginia Veterans Network** at dvs.virginia.gov. There you'll find services and resources from hundreds of local and nationwide organizations vetted by the Virginia Department of Veterans Services (DVS).

Resources include:

- Benefits
- Career Services
- Claims Assistance
- Education
- Entrepreneurship
- Financial Assistance
- Fitness
- Health Services
- Legal Assistance
- Social Life
- Volunteer Engagements



The Virginia Veterans Network is here for you.

Find more information about resources and support at dvs.virginia.gov through the Virginia Veterans Network. Our offerings include:

				
Burial Services	Career Services	Education	Entrepreneurship	Financial Assistance
				
Fitness	Health Services	Homeless Assistance	Legal Assistance	Life Wellness
				
Mental Wellness	Social Life	Veteran Benefits	Volunteer Engagements	Workshops



Scan QR code to visit the Virginia Veterans Network.

The Virginia Veterans Network is managed by the Virginia Department of Veterans Services.



The Virginia Department of Veterans Services connects Virginia's veterans and their families to the federal and state benefits, support, quality care, and recognition they have earned.