



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
Association of the United States Navy
Disabled American Veterans
Fifth Baptist Veterans Ministry
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
Navy Mutual Aid Association
Navy SEAL Foundation
Northern Virginia Veterans 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
Wounded Warrior Project
JLC Contact

VSO: Wounded Warrior Project

Name: Jose Ramos
Phone Number: 904-716-7837
Email:
Jramos@woundedwarriorproject.org

JLC Initiative 2026-01 **Secure the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program**

OBJECTIVE: To keep Virginia's 95-year promise to surviving dependents of servicemembers and of disabled veterans by saving and securing the Military Survivors & Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP)

BACKGROUND:

1. Current appropriations cover the 2024–2026 biennium (through June 30, 2026), totaling roughly \$125 million annually for FY 2025 and FY 2026. Without reauthorization in the next state budget cycle, tuition waiver guarantees and stipends will expire mid-2026
2. Without intervention during the 2026 General Assembly session, the Commonwealth is projected to exhaust VMSDEP appropriations, triggering another breakdown between the state and its higher education institutions, with disabled veterans and survivor families once again caught in the middle. Continued state commitment to VMSDEP is essential for Virginia's reputation, economy, and veteran community:

DISCUSSION:

1. **Moral Responsibility:** The Commonwealth has a duty to uphold its promise to those who have sacrificed in service, but also chose to reside in Virginia ensuring families are not left behind or placed in jeopardy
2. **Economic Strength:** Veterans and their families are vital contributors to Virginia's economy. Many reside in Virginia because it is veteran friendly. Investing in their education is not just right, it's smart economic policy
3. **Public Trust:** The 2024 repeal of benefits, enacted without public input, severely damaged trust. Stability, transparency, and codification are needed to restore public trust.
4. **Sustainability:** The current model of intermittent funding tied to budget cycles leads to repeated crises. A long-term, reliable funding stream is necessary to prevent cyclical panic and trauma.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Governor and General Assembly ensure the program is saved and secured indefinitely; supporting a study and report which include recommendations to General Assembly no later than November 1, 2026.