

**Virginia Department
of Veterans Services**

**Executive Order 19
Serving Virginia's Veterans**

Interim Report

October 15, 2006

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Current State Agency Services to Virginia's Veterans

As citizens of the Commonwealth of Virginia, veterans have access to the state services available to the general population. This section outlines those state services available exclusively to veterans or targeted to the specific needs of veterans.

Listed below are the state agencies serving veterans, the secretariats to which the agencies are assigned, and the services provided by those agencies. The Department of Veterans Services is listed first, with other state agencies grouped by secretariat.

- Department of Veterans Services (Secretary of Public Safety)
 - Lead veterans services agency in state government
 - Four service delivery areas: benefit services, care center services, cemetery services, and education services
 - Benefit Services – Assists veterans and eligible dependents in accessing federal and state veterans benefits through claims development and representation
 - 28 Veterans Service Representatives (31 by end of FY07)
 - 20 Field Offices: Accomac, Alexandria, Big Stone Gap, Bristol, Cedar Bluff, Charlottesville, Danville, Fairfax, Front Royal, Hampton, Lynchburg, McGuire VAMC, Norfolk (2 offices), Quantico, Richmond, Roanoke, South Hill, Staunton, and Wytheville
 - New offices will open in Hampton, Portsmouth, and Salem in FY07
 - 20,424 claims filed in FY06
 - Care Center Services – Delivers skilled nursing and domiciliary care to veterans
 - Virginia Veterans Care Center
 - 240-bed facility in Roanoke
 - 93% average occupancy rate – 224 of 240 beds
 - Sitter-Barfoot Veterans Care Center (under construction)
 - 160-bed facility in Richmond
 - Scheduled opening – Summer 2007
 - 40-bed addition planned
 - Hampton Roads Veterans Care Center – in the early planning stages
 - Cemetery Services – Provides honorable burial and memorial services to veterans
 - Virginia Veterans Cemetery (Amelia) – 231 burials in FY06
 - Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery (Suffolk) – 478 burials in FY06
 - Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery – in the early planning stages

- Education Services – Certifies that post-secondary educational institutions meet G.I. Bill funding and eligibility requirements, enabling veterans to use their G.I. Bill benefits to pursue educational opportunities
 - Over 750 institutions certified
 - Certified institutions include universities, colleges, community colleges, trade schools, vocational programs, and licensure certification programs
 - In Federal Fiscal Year 2005, 19,982 veterans were awarded educational benefits worth \$165.7 million

- Virginia War Memorial (Secretary of Administration)
 - On the soaring glass and marbles walls of the Virginia War Memorial are inscribed the names of over 11,600 Virginians who gave their lives in defense of freedom during World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the Gulf War

 - The Virginia War Memorial also seeks to teach the children of Virginia of the sacrifice and service of Virginians during World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. This is accomplished through displays at the Memorial and through the Virginians At War series – video programs and classroom materials founded on the real-life wartime experiences of Virginians and their participation in events that changed history

- Department of Human Resource Management (Secretary of Administration)
 - Responsible for administering, developing, and overseeing the Commonwealth’s human resource management system

 - Provides veterans seeking employment with access to information about available services and assistance

 - Through the DHRM Veterans Outreach Council
 - Operates an active recruitment program that targets the employment of qualified veterans in state government
 - Works to enhance the exchange of information between veterans and state agencies that will facilitate the employment of individuals currently being discharged from the military and those with prior military service
 - Participates in career fairs targeted toward military personnel

 - Veterans preference in state government
 - If a veteran applies for employment with the Commonwealth that is based on the passing of any written examination, the veteran’s grade or rating on such examination is increased by five percent. If the veteran has a service-connected disability rating fixed by the U.S. Department of Veterans

Affairs, his grade or rating shall be increased by 10 percent on such written examination

- If any veteran applies for employment with the Commonwealth that is not based on the passing of any examination, such veteran's military service is taken into consideration by the Commonwealth during the selection process, provided that such veteran meets all of the knowledge, skill, and ability requirements for the available position. Additional consideration is given to veterans who have a service-connected disability rating fixed by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

- Virginia Employment Commission (Secretary of Commerce and Trade)

- Promotes economic growth and stability by delivering and coordinating workforce services
- Serves Virginia veterans through the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) and Local Veterans Employment Representative (LVER) Program
 - Specifically focused on veterans employment and outreach
 - 38 DVOP and 40.5 LVER specialists work at VEC offices statewide
- Provides Transition Assistance Program (TAP) services at eight military bases
 - Targets personnel separating from the military
 - Three-day workshop that teaches job search and interview skills
 - Serves over 15,000 future veterans a year
- Registered 35,824 Virginia veterans in FY06
- Helped 20,775 Virginia veterans secure employment in FY06

- Virginia Housing Development Authority (Secretary of Commerce and Trade)

- Administers the Granting Freedom Program
 - Grant program that pays for modifications to make living spaces more accessible for servicemen or women who sustained injury during service in a combat theatre of operations
 - Funds can be used to widen doorways and add ramps to make a home wheelchair accessible, to install grab bars in a bathroom, or to make other modifications designed to improve a home's accessibility and functionality
 - Currently, over \$1 million of funding is available to pay for modifications to houses and apartments
 - The maximum award available for each dwelling unit is \$4,000

- Offers VA loans as part of 30-year fixed rate home loan program for first-time homebuyers
- Provides home ownership education classes on military bases (open to active duty and veterans)
- Department of Housing and Community Development (Secretary of Commerce and Trade)
 - Point in Time (PIT) counts put the number of homeless veterans in Virginia between 600 and 900. Through grants, DHCD supports homeless shelters that serve homeless veterans
 - The Governor's Housing Conference 2006 will feature a workshop on meeting the needs of homeless veterans. Sponsored by the Virginia Inter-Agency Council on Homelessness, the session will focus on the resources available to organizations seeking to meet the housing and service needs of homeless veterans
- Department of Education (Secretary of Education)
 - Offers the Virginia Veteran Honorary High School Diploma to recognize the life experiences of veterans who were unable to complete their high school education because of service in the armed forces during World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War
 - Since the first honorary diplomas were issued in 2001, more than 1,000 have been awarded to veterans of the three wars
- Library of Virginia (Secretary of Education)
 - The Virginia World War II Separation Notices collection contains approximately 250,000 notices for World War II veterans who were discharged between 1942 and 1950 (with the bulk between 1944 and 1946) and were seeking employment in Virginia
 - For some veterans, these notices may be used as proof of service to access veterans disability and health care benefits
- Virginia's Public Colleges and Universities (Secretary of Education)
 - Through the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program, waive tuition and required fees for qualified spouses and dependents

- Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (Secretary of Natural Resources)
 - Offers the “Virginia Resident Disabled Veteran’s Lifetime State License to Hunt and Freshwater Fish in Inland Waters” for \$10
 - Offers the “Virginia Resident Disabled Veteran’s Lifetime State License to Trap” for \$10

- Marine Resources Commission (Secretary of Natural Resources)
 - The Disabled Resident Lifetime Saltwater Fishing License is available to certain disabled veterans for \$5

- Department of Motor Vehicles (Secretary of Transportation)
 - Offers 33 military/veteran themed license plates, with four plates in development

- Virginia Department of Transportation (Secretary of Transportation)
 - Through the VDOT Wounded Veteran Program, offers disabled veterans internship positions that are designed to help the veterans gain skills relevant to employment in the public or private sectors

Opportunities for improving current services to Virginia's veterans, and for partnering with the Department of Veterans Services to offer new, expanded, or customized services

The Department of Veterans Services (DVS) has entered into initial discussions with over a dozen state agencies on ways to improve current services or to offer new, expanded, or customized services. Before the process is complete, DVS expects to open discussions with a dozen additional agencies.

Broadly speaking, efforts to improve current services or to identify new, expanded, or customized services fall into five categories:

1. In-depth, resource-intensive services that address the continuum of care needs of disabled veterans
 - a. Such services would capitalize on the expertise and service capacity of current state agencies and facilities
 - b. To address this category of service, DVS has had initial discussions with state agencies that include the Department of Rehabilitative Services, the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation, and Substance Abuse Services, and Virginia Commonwealth University
2. New benefits and services
 - a. Such services could be provided to targeted groups of veterans (disabled veterans, homeless veterans, etc.) or to the veterans population at large
 - b. To address this category of service, DVS has had initial discussions with state agencies that include the Department of Military Affairs and the State Council on Higher Education for Virginia
3. Referrals to/from other state agencies
 - a. Such services would serve to link Virginia's veterans with the broad range of services provided by other state agencies, and would help make Virginia's veterans aware of the services provided by the Department of Veterans Services
 - b. To address this category of service, DVS has had initial discussions with state agencies that include the Department for the Aging (SeniorNavigator.org), the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation, and Substance Abuse Services, the Department of Rehabilitative Services, the Department of Social Services, the Virginia Employment Commission, and the Secretary of Technology
4. Ways to recognize veterans for their service to our nation and Commonwealth
 - a. Such recognition would serve as an everyday reminder to veterans that the Commonwealth of Virginia recognizes the service and sacrifice they made in defense of freedom

- b. To address this category of service, DVS has had initial discussions with state agencies that include the Department of Conservation and Recreation, the Department of Forestry, and the Department of Motor Vehicles
- 5. Partnerships with state agencies to assist the Department of Veterans Services with the business operations of the Department
 - a. Such partnerships would assist DVS in operating more efficiently as an enterprise, thereby enabling the Department to better serve Virginia's veterans
 - b. To address this category of service, DVS has had initial discussions with state agencies that include the Department of Conservation and Recreation, the Department of Forestry, the Department of Motor Vehicles, the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation, and Substance Abuse Services, and the Department of Rehabilitative Services

Appendix A: Executive Order 19

SERVING VIRGINIA'S VETERANS

Importance of Veterans' Services

For almost 400 years, Virginians have defended our great nation and Commonwealth. Today, the Commonwealth is home to 744,000 veterans who served the cause of freedom in war and in peace, at home and abroad. Our Commonwealth owes a great debt to the brave men and women and their families who answered liberty's call and protected all that we hold so dear, and it is only right that our Commonwealth do all that it can to ensure that our veterans and their families receive the benefits, support, quality care, and recognition they have earned through service and sacrifice.

Veterans accounted for almost \$6 billion in direct federal spending in Virginia in 2004. Expenditures by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs on compensation and pension benefits, health care, cemetery services, and construction totaled \$1.8 billion, while the U.S. Department of Defense paid \$4 billion in retirement pay to Virginia's veterans. Capitalizing on available federal funding not only benefits our veterans, but is a good for Virginia's economy.

Directives for Serving Virginia's Veterans

By virtue of the authority vested in me as Governor under Article V of the Constitution of Virginia and under the laws of the Commonwealth, including but not limited to, Chapter 1 of Title 2.2 and Section 2.2-2100 of the Code of Virginia, I hereby set forth the Commonwealth's policy for improving services to Virginia's veterans.

- I hereby direct the Commissioner of Veterans Services to prepare a comprehensive report on the status of current Commonwealth programs and services that are either offered exclusively to veterans or are tailored to the specific needs of veterans. The report shall identify opportunities for improving services and shall address the continuum of care needs of disabled veterans. An interim report shall be prepared by October 15, 2006, and a final report shall be completed by April 30, 2007. All executive branch agencies shall work with the Commissioner of Veterans Services to assist as requested.
- I hereby direct all state agencies to identify opportunities to partner with the Department of Veterans Services on ways to offer new, expanded, or customized services that meet the educational, health care, and social service needs of Virginia's veterans. Agencies will identify the resources required to implement the new, expanded, or customized services for veterans and will report such requirements to the Commissioner of Veterans Services no later than April 30, 2007.
- I hereby direct the Department of Veterans Services, working with all appropriate state agencies, to give special attention to opportunities for improving services to disabled veterans, including all aspects of the continuum of care and service delivery.

- I hereby request the Board of Veterans Services and the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations to jointly develop legislative proposals to be considered by the Governor for introduction in the 2007 General Assembly. Such proposals shall be submitted to the Governor's Office no later than September 30, 2006.
- I hereby direct the Commissioner of Veterans Services and the Veterans Services Foundation to continue to give high priority to efforts to obtain federal grants, private contributions, and other resources for improving services to veterans in Virginia.
- I hereby direct all state agency heads to renew their commitment to veterans' preference in hiring.

Effective Date of the Executive Order

This Executive Order rescinds Executive Order 40 (2002) issued by Governor Mark R. Warner. This Executive Order shall be effective upon its signing and shall remain in full force and effect until June 30, 2010, unless amended or rescinded by further Executive Order.

Given under my hand and the Seal of the Commonwealth of Virginia, this 16th day of June, 2006.

/s/ Timothy M. Kaine, Governor

Attest:

/s/ Secretary of the Commonwealth