



**JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF
VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS**

CHAIRMAN'S 2014 ANNUAL REPORT

TO

COMMISSIONER JOHN L. NEWBY II

AND

THE BOARD OF VETERANS SERVICES

November 26, 2014

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Chairman's Message

The Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (the JLC) is comprised of 24 veterans service organizations (VSOs) and represents over 250,000 members. JLC members give selflessly of their time and energy to serve Virginia's 781,000 veterans. Veterans comprise almost 10% of the Commonwealth's citizenry, giving Virginia one of the highest per capita populations of veterans in the country.

The JLC is proud to represent not only our member VSOs, but to serve as the voice of all of Virginia's veterans. The JLC's primary focus is on veteran-related issues, but the JLC also advocates for issues impacting the entire military community, including active duty service members, the National Guard and the Armed Forces Reserves, and military families.

We deeply value our partnership with the Department of Veterans Services, the Board of Veterans Services, the Governor, and the General Assembly as we work together to serve Virginia's veterans and their families. The JLC has developed, unanimously approved, and submitted six initiatives to the Governor and General Assembly for consideration during the 2015 session. A summary of those initiatives and supporting positions papers are included below.

The JLC looks forward to our continued involvement and partnership with the Department of Veterans Services, the Board of Veterans Services, and all of the veterans service organizations represented on the JLC.

Respectfully,

Chip Moran
Chairman

The Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations

The members of the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (the JLC) represent 24 veterans service organizations (VSOs) in Virginia, that, combined, have more than 250,000 members. The JLC was created by Virginia statute in 2003 to be the voice for Virginia's veterans service organizations, and, by extension, for Virginia's veterans. JLC members are appointed by the Governor for three-year terms. The JLC typically meets five times a year and meetings are open to the public.

Member Organizations

As of November 26, 2014, twenty-four VSOs were represented on the JLC:

- Air Force Association
- American Ex-Prisoners of War
- American Legion
- AMVETS
- Association of the United States Army
- Disabled American Veterans
- Fleet Reserve Association
- Korean War Veterans Association
- Legion of Valor of the US, Inc.
- Marine Corps League
- Military Officers Association of America
- Military Order of the Purple Heart
- 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 of the United States
- Roanoke Valley Veterans Council
- Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States
- Vietnam Veterans of America
- Virginia Army/Air National Guard Enlisted Association
- Virginia National Guard Association
- Women Marines Association

Mission Statement

The Council provides advice and assistance to the Governor and the Department of Veterans Services on matters of concern to the veterans community and provides a conduit of information to and from the veterans service organizations on policy and legislation, pending and enacted, as well as information on existing services.

Vision

The Council will:

- *Give the Department of Veterans Services a broader understanding of the services needed by veterans.*
- *Give veterans a broader understanding of the services available to them as citizens of Virginia.*
- *Help veterans and veterans' organizations achieve legislation or policy changes needed to improve veterans' services.*
- *Enhance communications between the public, the state government, and the state's veterans.*
- *Help the Governor and the Department of Veterans Services develop policies that improve services for Virginia's veterans.*
- *Help the General Assembly develop and pass laws that more clearly respond to veterans' needs.*

Issue Identification, Development, and Advocacy

As the voice of Virginia's veterans, the JLC identifies issues of concern to veterans, their spouses, orphans, and dependents and serves in an advisory capacity to the Virginia Department of Veterans Services. Each year, the JLC presents a list of key initiatives for consideration by the Governor and General Assembly. So, when you ask, "*What are Virginia's veterans' issues?*" the answer is clear – *these* are the top issues.

Communication

The JLC supports DVS by communicating information to veterans about their benefits, events, and issues. JLC members promptly relay information to the members of their respective organizations, amplifying the effectiveness of DVS' communications and initiatives. Additionally, cross-sharing of information has resulted in partnerships and cooperative efforts among the various veterans service organizations.

2014 Meetings

The JLC typically holds five business meetings and one conference each year. The 2014 meeting schedule is as follows:

- January 9: JLC Conference at the General Assembly
- March 19: business meeting
- May 21: business meeting
- July 16: business meeting
- October 15: business meeting
- December 18: business meeting (scheduled)

Minutes of JLC meetings are provided to the Board of Veterans Services (BVS) Chairman and Vice Chairman, and are posted on the Commonwealth Calendar and on the JLC page on the DVS website. The JLC also submits a report at each BVS meeting.

2014-2015 Officers

- Chairman: Thomas O. “Chip” Moran, National Association for Uniformed Services
- Vice Chairman: Brett Reistad, American Legion
- Legislative Officer: Abe Zino
- Assistant Legislative Officer: Tom Gimble
- Chaplain: George Corbett
- Constitution & ByLaws Committee:
 - Chairman: Pete Fairchild
 - Members: Allan McCroskey and John Prendergast
- Nominating Committee:
 - Chairman: Carmen Gentile
 - Members: Don Kaiserman, Bill Barrett, and Glenn Rodriguez

JLC Representation on other boards, councils, etc.

- Board of Veterans Services: JLC Chairman Chip Moran serves as an *ex officio* member;
- Veterans Services Foundation: JLC Chairman Chip Moran serves as an *ex officio* member;
- Virginia Military Advisory Council: JLC Chairman Chip Moran serves as the primary JLC Representative, while Harold Barton serves as the alternate;
- Virginia War Memorial Board: JLC Chairman Chip Moran serves as an *ex officio* member;
- State Board of Elections (SBE) Electronic Ballot return working group: Stu Williams

For More Information

Please visit the JLC page on the DVS website at <http://www.dvs.virginia.gov/dvs/joint-leadership-council-veterans-service-organizations/> or contact:

Chip Moran
Chairman
(757) 735-2171 (h); (800) 296-1516 (w)
chip.moran@yahoo.com

Steven J. Combs
Director of Policy & Planning
Virginia Department of Veterans Services
(804) 786-0294
Steven.Combs@dvs.virginia.gov

2014 Initiatives - Status

The following initiatives were adopted by the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (the JLC) on July 17, 2013 and presented to the Governor and General Assembly for consideration in the 2014 Session.

<i>Initiative</i>	<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Status</i>									
JLC 2014-01	That the Governor and General Assembly support competitive compensation authority and funding for DVS claims agents.	No additional funding approved for FY2015 or FY2016.									
JLC 2014-02	That the Governor and General Assembly adopt budgeting/legislation that will allow the continuance of base funding for the Virginia Values Veterans (V3) Program to support hiring and retention of veterans, particularly those who have served during the past decade, and those returning from deployment.	Base funding continued at \$450,000 (GF) in FY2015 and FY2016									
JLC 2014-03	That the Governor and General Assembly continue and increase funding for the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program as a priority in the development and approval of the 2014-2016 biennial budget.	Additional funding approved: <table style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>FY2015</th> <th>FY 2016</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>GF</td> <td>\$372,835</td> <td>\$383,462</td> </tr> <tr> <td>NGF</td> <td>\$378,300</td> <td>\$378,300</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		FY2015	FY 2016	GF	\$372,835	\$383,462	NGF	\$378,300	\$378,300
	FY2015	FY 2016									
GF	\$372,835	\$383,462									
NGF	\$378,300	\$378,300									
JLC 2014-04	That the Governor and General Assembly enact legislation to permit the electronic return of absentee ballot by overseas uniformed military voters.	House Bill 759 (Rust) and SB11 (Puller) passed the General Assembly and were approved by the Governor. As noted in the bill summary: "provisions of this bill amending § 24.2-706 will not become effective unless reenacted by the 2016 Session of the General Assembly."									
JLC 2014-05	That the Governor and the General Assembly approve funding in the 2014-2016 biennial budget to move the Homeless Veterans Program forward. Up to \$450,000 in FY2015 and \$970,000 in FY2016.	No additional funding approved for FY2015 or FY2016.									
JLC 2014-06	That the Governor and General Assembly provide one-time funding in the FY2015 budget to commission an update to the 2010 Virginia Tech report " <i>Assessing the Experiences, Supportive Service Needs</i>	No additional funding approved for FY2015 or FY2016.									

	<p><i>and Service Gaps of Veterans in the Commonwealth of Virginia”</i> to measure progress in access to health care, behavioral healthcare and supportive community services, including employment, housing and financial assistance, for veterans, members of the National Guard and Reserves not in active federal service and their families in the Commonwealth.</p>	
JLC 2014-07	<p>That the General Assembly pass a resolution to provide a Real Property Tax Exemption for Spouses of Military Killed in Action, identical to the resolution (HJ551) passed by the 2013 General Assembly, and that the Governor and General Assembly enact legislation to place a referendum on the ballot for the November 4, 2014 general election.</p>	<p>HJ8 (Ramadan) and HB46 (Ramadan) passed the General Assembly. HB46 approved by the Governor (HJ8 did not require action by the Governor). The proposed change to the Virginia Constitution was approved by the voters on November 4, 2014.</p>

2015 Initiatives

The following initiatives were adopted by the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (the JLC) on July 16, 2014. These issues have the unanimous support of the 24 Veterans Service Organizations represented on the JLC.

SUMMARY

<i>Initiative</i>	<i>Recommendation</i>
JLC 2015-01	That the Governor and General Assembly support the hiring, training, and retention of Department of Veterans Services (DVS) claims agents by approving additional funding in FY16.
JLC 2015-02	That the Governor and General Assembly support the delivery of mental health and rehabilitative services for Virginia veterans, Guardsmen, Reservists, and family members through continued and increased funding for the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program (VWWP) in the FY16 budget.
JLC 2015-03	That the Governor and General Assembly authorize five additional positions for the Virginia War Memorial in FY16 and appropriate the necessary funding for these positions.
JLC 2015-04	That the Governor and the General Assembly support the further reduction of veteran homelessness by approving additional funding in FY16 for: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to support increases in general statewide homeless prevention, rapid re-housing, and permanent supportive housing funding to help veterans living in rural areas and/or ineligible for VA services. b. DHCD for development of a statewide homeless data warehouse system to permit a better understanding of the needs of veterans accessing mainstream homeless services. c. DVS/VWWP to add three new Housing Resource Specialist (HRS) positions in order to expand coverage to Roanoke and Northern Virginia, and to add a second HRS position in Hampton Roads. d. DVS/VWWP to add one position to work with the criminal justice system to facilitate statewide coordination of federal, state, and community resources.
JLC 2015-05	That the General Assembly and the Governor approve the establishment of a veterans' lottery as part of the Compact with Virginia's Veterans to supplement the General Fund's support of approved veteran's requirements, with any residual lottery funding reverting back to Education.
JLC 2015-06	That the Governor and General Assembly continue state support for the Hampton Roads and Northern Virginia veterans care center construction projects and continue certification of the availability of 35% state funding to match the federal grant funds, thereby maintaining both projects on the VA Priority List Group 1.

Position Paper 2015-01: Hiring, Training, and Retention of DVS Claims Agents

1. **OBJECTIVE:** Provide funds to fully staff, train, and retain Department of Veterans Services (DVS) claims agents to ensure the timely development and submission of accurate veterans claims to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).
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 VA.
 - b. Filing a claim is a long, complex process – most veterans seek assistance to file a claim.
 - c. To assist Virginia veterans, DVS operates 23 Benefits Field Offices that provide free assistance to Virginia veterans in developing and filing claims for compensation and pension benefits with the VA.
 - d. Virginia receives a considerable return on investment for helping Virginia veterans.
 - In FY2010, DVS filed 26,431 claims on behalf of Virginia veterans, resulting in an estimated \$122 million in new disability compensation payments.
 - In FY2011 the number of claims increased to 28,541 with an estimated in new payments impact of \$154 million.
 - e. DVS Benefit Field Offices are staffed by trained claims agents, particularly in using the automatic claims processing system, who provide direct, one-on-one assistance to veterans in developing and filing claims with the VA.
 - f. Knowledgeable, trained, and experienced claims agents are in high demand and many DVS agents leave for higher paying jobs that DVS cannot match.
 - g. DVS has had a 70 percent claims agent turnover during the past five years.
 - h. DVS does not have the financial resources to recruit 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 based on each agent's operational base and qualifications.
4. **RECOMMENDATION:** That the Governor and General Assembly support the hiring, training, and retention of DVS claims agents by approving additional funding in FY16.

Position Paper 2015-02: Virginia Wounded Warrior Program

1. **OBJECTIVE:** Provide funding to ensure that veterans, Guardsmen, Reservists, and their families, especially those affected by stress-related conditions and traumatic brain injuries, have access to a network of community-based services for healthcare, behavioral healthcare, rehabilitative services and other critical support.

2. **BACKGROUND:**
 - a. The Virginia Wounded Warrior Program (VWWP) was established by the 2008 General Assembly to ensure that services to veterans, Guardsmen, Reservists, and their families are readily available in all areas of the Commonwealth.
 - b. VWWP monitors and coordinates behavioral health, rehabilitative, and support services, and addresses a myriad of health and wellness issues such as housing, financial assistance, employment, primary healthcare, justice system outreach, and other community services.
 - c. Virginia is home to over 840,000 veterans and is expected to grow to 850,000 in 2017. Included in this population are over 300,000 who served since September 11, 2001. The Virginia National Guard and Reserve components have been called upon as never before to deploy to combat zones.
 - d. The challenges of the current conflicts are enormous. Data indicate that 38% of Soldiers and 31% of Marines report psychological symptoms. Among members of the National Guard, the figure rises to 49%. Psychological symptoms are significantly higher among those with repeated deployments.

3. **DISCUSSION:**
 - a. Virginia should do everything in its power to serve those who have defended our liberties and who may need services and community support because of stress related injuries and/or traumatic brain injuries resulting from military service.
 - b. The VWWP's vision for the future is "*Enhancing the quality of life for Virginia's veterans, service members and their families.*" This simple yet powerful statement provides guidance for the continued success and expansion of the VWWP, ensuring that the focus is always Virginia's service members, veterans and families who have sacrificed their personal safety and needs to ensure freedom and liberty for all.
 - c. The number of veterans and family members served by VWWP increased by 220% from FY2010 to FY2012 (from 1,650 to 5,283). The success of the program ensures that demand for services will continue to rise, especially as the population of service members from Iraq and Afghanistan and their families return from deployment and renew their daily lives, employment, activities and community participation.
 - d. It is expected that the impact of the wars will continue to be felt for decades, just as previous wars have affected the health and well-being of service members and their families. It is critical that Virginia continue to recognize and address these concerns.

4. **RECOMMENDATION:** That the Governor and General Assembly support the delivery of mental health and rehabilitative services for Virginia veterans, Guardsmen, Reservists, and family members through continued and increased funding for the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program in the FY16 budget.

Position Paper 2015-03: Virginia War Memorial

1. **OBJECTIVE:** To ensure that the Virginia War Memorial (the Memorial) has the personnel and financial resources necessary to operate the premier state-level memorial in the nation and accomplish its Code-mandated mission.

2. **BACKGROUND:**
 - a. Per § 2.2-2001.3(B) of the Code of Virginia: “*The mission of the Virginia War Memorial shall be to honor patriotic Virginians who rendered faithful service and sacrifice in the cause of freedom and liberty for the Commonwealth and the nation in time of war, honor all of Virginia’s veterans, preserve their history, educate the public, and inspire patriotism in all Virginians.*”
 - b. The Memorial has developed and implemented new and/or expanded programs and services to accomplish this mission.
 - c. The number of visitors increased from 19,000 in 2010 to over 60,000 in 2013, is expected to top 70,000 in 2014, and could grow to over 100,000 per year.
 - d. The Governor and General Assembly have approved the construction of a 19,500 square foot expansion of the Memorial, expected to be complete in Fall 2016, to house the expanded programs and services and to accommodate the increasing number of visitors.
 - e. At its September 20, 2013 meeting, the Virginia War Memorial Board adopted a resolution outlining the five new positions needed in Fiscal Years 2015 and 2016 to support Memorial operations, programs, and services. The positions are: Assistant Director, Facilities Manager, Assistant Curator, Administrative Assistant, and Video Tele-training Studio/Classroom (VTT) Instructor.

3. **DISCUSSION:**
 - a. The Virginia War Memorial is the premier state-level memorial in the nation.
 - b. The Memorial has developed and implemented new and/or expanded programs and services to accomplish its Code-mandated mission. As a result, the numbers of visitors to the Memorial has grown and will continue to grow.
 - c. A 19,500 square foot addition will be built.
 - d. Additional personnel and the associated funding are required to deliver effective programs and services and to accommodate the growth in the number of visitors.

4. **RECOMMENDATION:** That the Governor and General Assembly authorize five additional positions for the Virginia War Memorial in FY16 and appropriate the necessary funding for these positions.

Position Paper 2015-04: Virginia Homeless Veterans Programs

1. **OBJECTIVE:** To sustain an effective program to eliminate homelessness within our Virginia Veterans population.
2. **BACKGROUND:**
 - a. Homelessness within the Virginia Veterans population has been a long-term issue predating the War in Vietnam. JLARC completed a significant study in June 2010 documenting a baseline size and nature of issue. That study also stated that significant long-term funding and a dedicated program would be required to solve the problem.
 - b. The General Assembly previously approved two positions within the Department of Veterans Services (DVS) Virginia Wounded Warrior Program (VWWP) to plan and coordinate an intensive program to dramatically reduce homelessness among veterans and their families. Staff in these positions has been active in coordinating solutions.
 - c. Since 2011, veteran homelessness has dropped 34 percent. From 2013-2014, veteran homelessness in Virginia has dropped 14 percent. Overall homelessness in Virginia has decreased during this same period as a result of coordinated actions within the Commonwealth. Agencies involved include the Departments of Veterans Services, Housing and Community Development, and Health and Human Resources.
3. **DISCUSSION:**
 - a. The state-level Homeless Outcomes Coordinating Council (HOCC) approved action steps to improve targeting of resources, coordination of services, and increased sharing of data towards the goal of ending veteran homelessness. A veteran sub-committee is responsible for implementation and monitoring the progress of these action steps.
 - b. In June 2014, Governor McAuliffe became the 4th Governor to sign the National Mayors Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness, sending a clear message that ending veteran homelessness is a priority for the Commonwealth.
 - c. VWWP Housing Resource Specialists (HRS) provide outreach and care coordination to homeless veterans in Hampton Roads and Richmond. These positions have been successful in reaching high barrier, chronically homeless veterans and connecting them to both VA and mainstream housing and supportive services.
 - d. As noted in the JLARC study, barriers of housing and income need to be addressed for ex-offenders who are veterans, particularly those exiting correctional institutions. Access and coordination of resources for this population need to be improved.
4. **RECOMMENDATIONS:** That the Governor and the General Assembly support the further reduction of veteran homelessness by approving additional funding in FY16 for:
 - a. Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to support increases in general statewide homeless prevention, rapid re-housing, and permanent supportive housing funding to help veterans living in rural areas and/or ineligible for VA services.
 - b. DHCD for development of a statewide homeless data warehouse system to permit a better understanding of the needs of veterans accessing mainstream homeless services.
 - c. DVS/VWWP to add three new HRS positions in order to expand coverage to Roanoke and Northern Virginia, and to add a second HRS position in Hampton Roads.
 - d. DVS to add one position to work with the criminal justice system to facilitate statewide coordination of federal, state, and community resources.

Position Paper 2015-05: Alternate Revenue Sources for Veterans Programs and Services

1. **OBJECTIVE:** Provide some of the resources required to implement the Compact with Virginia's Veterans by creating alternate revenue sources for veterans programs.

2. **BACKGROUND:**
 - a. The cost of taking care of our veterans has increased significantly in the past decade. In times of austere budgets an alternate source of funding may be needed to ensure that the many important Veterans programs receive adequate funding.
 - b. Over the foreseeable future the cost of veterans programs (e.g. Virginia Wounded Warrior Program needs, cemetery maintenance, care center operations, Virginia War Memorial operations, and benefits services) will continue to increase.
 - c. The Governor and the General Assembly have and continue to identify important veterans' programs that are supported by the General Fund. However, during the austere budget challenges currently faced by the Commonwealth, additional actions may be needed to ensure adequate funding for programs and services.
 - d. These include funding for: hiring and retention of DVS claims agents, the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program, Virginia War Memorial operations and programs, and reducing homelessness among Virginia veterans.
 - e. Legislation enacted in 2010 established a Compact with Virginia's Veterans, with a goal of making Virginia the most veteran-friendly state in the nation. New or expanded programs and services implemented under the Compact (e.g. homeless assistance, employment, education, etc.) require additional resources. While much progress has been made, more remains to be done.

3. **DISCUSSION:** Veterans' programs and services need a major, non-general fund "funding stream." It must be large enough to have a significant impact on needed veterans' programs that would otherwise require general fund monies or go unfunded.
 - a. Lotteries have been proven to provide a suitable and sustainable source of revenue.
 - b. Seven states have a dedicated revenue stream for veterans programs through the state lottery, while two additional states are working to create a veteran's lottery:
 - Four states have each raised between \$10 million and \$33 million for veterans and programs. These states have been successful in designing a lottery that does not detract from funds dedicated to education or other purposes.
 - Rather than cut into a share of the "pie", they have been able to "grow the pie."
 - c. The proceeds from the Virginia lottery are dedicated to education and so protected by the state constitution. However, some proceeds can go to other uses if approved by 4/5 of the members of the General Assembly.
 - d. No other group in America has been called on to bear the burdens and to make the sacrifices that our veterans have. Therefore, the benefits that Veterans have earned through sacrifice and service deserve to be adequately funded.

4. **RECOMMENDATION:** That the General Assembly and the Governor approve the establishment of a veterans' lottery as part of the Compact with Virginia's Veterans to supplement the General Fund's support of approved veteran's requirements, with any residual lottery funding reverting back to Education.

Position Paper 2015-06: Veterans Care Centers

1. **OBJECTIVE:** to ensure the continued commitment of the Commonwealth of Virginia to the construction of veterans care centers in Hampton Roads and Northern Virginia.
2. **BACKGROUND:**
 - a. Virginia's veterans care centers deliver skilled nursing, domiciliary, and Alzheimer's/dementia care, and short-term rehabilitation, to Virginia veterans. Virginia currently has 400 beds at veterans care centers in Richmond and Roanoke. A 40-bed addition to the Richmond center is under construction and is expected to open in early 2015.
 - b. The U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) will fund up to 65% of construction projects for state veterans care centers.
 - c. States must fund at least 35%.
 - d. The Virginia Department of Veteran Services (VDVS) submitted grant applications to the VA in 2005 and 2009 for the construction of new veterans care centers in Hampton Roads and Northern Virginia, each with up to 240 beds.
 - e. Since 2005 (Hampton Roads) and 2009 (Northern Virginia), the Governor of Virginia and the Virginia General Assembly have continued Virginia's 35% state funding commitment to these projects.
 - f. Both projects are listed in the 2014 VA Priority List Group 1 (projects with 35% state matching funds). Ranking within the priority group is established in 38 C.F.R. §59.50.
 - g. VDVS was notified by VA that the Hampton Roads and Northern Virginia projects would not receive federal funds in FY14. An estimated \$85 million in VA funds was available for all projects nationwide in FY14; only projects that address life/safety issues were funded by VA in FY14.
 - h. The two Virginia projects will re-complete for VA funding in 2015.
3. **DISCUSSION:** Continued state commitment (35% of construction costs) is critical to the future receipt of federal grant funding for the Hampton Roads and Northern Virginia veterans care center projects.
4. **RECOMMENDATION:** That the Governor and General Assembly continue state support for the Hampton Roads and Northern Virginia veterans care center construction projects and continue certification of the availability of 35% state funding to match the federal grant funds, thereby maintaining both projects on the VA Priority List Group 1.