



# COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

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RICHMOND, VA 23219

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*Purple Heart*  
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*Virginia Army/Air National*  
*Guard Enlisted*  
*Association*  
*Virginia National Guard*  
*Association*  
*Women Marines Association*

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## **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.