

THE COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

**JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF
VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS**

CHAIRMAN'S 2006 ANNUAL REPORT

TO

COMMISSIONER VINCENT M. BURGESS

AND

THE BOARD OF VETERANS SERVICES

VIRGINIA -- HOME OF AMERICA'S PATRIOTS

November 30, 2006

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Chairman's Message

The Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (JLC) has blossomed into a vital, effective "organization of organizations" to assist veterans and those who will become veterans. The three previous chairmen – Dan Miller, Connie O'Neill, and Frank Wickersham – each did an outstanding job of getting the JLC organized from a cold start, through an understanding of our mission, to leadership within the Department of Veterans Services for development and prioritization of legislative initiatives. The entire JLC shares in the successful, rapid execution of this process, but particularly, Frank Wickersham, our most recent past Chairman, and Sam Wilder, our Vice Chairman for 2006 and again for 2007. The JLC developed a list of seven legislative agenda items which were the major input to the overall veterans' services priority list provided by the Commissioner to the Governor.

The JLC this year began a more dedicated process to share information and work more closely with the Board of Veterans Services and the Veterans Service Foundation. Each group's chair-person attends the other groups' meetings and provides a report of achievements and planned activities. This increased coordination should improve the ability of each group to better serve the needs of veterans through harmonized communication with the Governor through the Department of Veterans Services. In addition to coordination with the BVS and the VSF, the JLC also worked with other major veterans groups to provide a harmonized message to the Governor.

This year, for the first time, major veterans groups – the JLC, the Board of Veterans Services, the Virginia Citizen-Soldier Support Council, and the Virginia Military Advisory Council – worked together to develop a joint priority list of legislative agenda items for the 2007 legislative session. The JLC played a key role in this effort by working early to develop a prioritized list of seven legislative items which became the basis for some other veterans service organizations' prioritized 2007 lists. That work follows on the heels of the JLC's successful 2006 legislative session.

The 2006 legislative session succeeded through the combined legislative actions of twenty-one Virginia Veterans Service Organizations. These organizations worked their own legislative agendas separately, and also together as members of the JLC. The result was the successful support of a host of legislation that has materially increased services, benefits and support for Virginia's veterans. Military personnel and their families serving on active duty, as well as in the National Guard and the Reserves, were also helped. Examples of the JLC success in 2006 include passage by the General Assembly of a bill to authorize a new veterans care center in the Hampton Roads area, passage of bills to construct a third state veterans cemetery in Southwestern Virginia, and passage of a bill to allow dependents of armed forces members stationed in Virginia to pay in-state tuition rates.

The JLC membership is dynamic, with some organizations leaving the council and others being added. This year, the Women Marine Association was invited by the Governor to join the JLC, after participating unofficially for a year. We anticipate continued growth of the JLC as more organizations discover the great good it does for veterans, and we look forward to a busy and productive year in 2007.

Sincerely,

Mason S. Botts
Chairman

Mission and Vision

Mission

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.*

Joint Leadership Council Overview

Members

The Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations is composed of one representative from each qualifying VSO in the Commonwealth. The qualifications for JLC representation are spelled out in the Code of Virginia.

As of November 30, 2006, twenty-one Veterans Service Organizations were represented on the JLC. Those organizations are:

- Air Force Association
- American Ex-Prisoners of War
- American Legion
- AMVETS
- AUSA
- Disabled American Veterans
- Fleet Reserve Association
- Korean War Veterans Association
- Legion of Valor of the US, Inc.
- Marine Corps League
- Military Order of the Purple Heart
- Military Officers Association of America
- NAUS
- 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
- Virginia National Guard Association
- Women Marines Association

Structure

An elected Chairman leads the Joint Leadership Council, assisted by an elected Vice Chairman. The Chairman may appoint three officers – a Secretary/Parliamentarian, a Legislative Officer, and a Chaplain – subject to ratification by the Council.

Though there are no standing committees, the Chairman may, with the consent of the Council, appoint ad hoc committees to accomplish specific tasks. Examples of such committees include the Constitution and Bylaws Review Committee.

Purpose

The JLC's purpose is to address and advocate for the needs of Virginia's veterans.

As spelled out in § 2.2-2682 of the Code of Virginia, the Council shall have the following powers and duties:

1. Advise the Department of Veterans Services regarding (i) methods of providing support for ongoing veterans services and programs, and (ii) addressing veterans issues on an ongoing basis;
2. Recommend issues that may potentially impact veterans of the armed forces of the United States and their Virginia-domiciled surviving spouses, orphans, and dependents;
3. Advise the Department of Veterans Services and the Board of Veterans Services on matters of concern to veterans and their Virginia-domiciled surviving spouses, orphans, and dependents;
4. Promote and support existing veterans services and programs;
5. Recommend and promote implementation of new efficient and effective administrative initiatives that enhance existing veterans services and programs or provide for necessary veterans services and programs not currently provided; and
6. Maintain a nonpartisan approach to maintaining and improving veterans services and programs in the Commonwealth.

Focus Areas – 2006

Discussions at Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (JLC) meetings in 2006 focused primarily on prioritizing legislative initiatives for the Council's 2007 Legislative Agenda. Legislative initiatives include: (1) Efforts to strengthen Virginia's National Guard and Reserve forces; (2) Support for the DVS Strategic Plan and Budget, including communications and outreach, the third state veterans cemetery, and the third veterans care center; and (3) Promoting in-state tuition for active duty service members stationed in Virginia.

As a result of legislation passed by the 2006 General Assembly, JLC members may now appoint alternate members to represent their Veterans Service Organization (VSO) at Council meetings. This will help to ensure that there is a quorum at each JLC meeting. Many JLC members have already designated a "permanent" alternate, while other members have reserved the right to designate an alternate only as needed.

The terms of all JLC members expired on June 30. While most VSOs nominated their current members for reappointment, some VSOs choose to nominate new members. Whether a new member or a JLC veteran, these representatives will continue the vital work of the Council. Unfortunately, three VSOs chose not to continue to be represented on the Council, but on the plus side, the Women Marines Association joined as a new member, and the Virginia National Guard Association appointed a new representative to fill a vacant seat. The JLC continues to strive for diverse representation so that the voices of all Virginia's veterans may be heard.

Finally, the JLC worked to establish a new partnership with the Veterans Services Foundation (VSF) in 2006. The JLC will assist the VSF in its efforts to play a role in helping to meet the unmet needs of Virginia's veterans.

2007 Legislative Agenda

The Joint Leadership Council's 2007 Legislative Agenda is presented on the following pages. The agenda has the full support of all 21 member organizations. This agenda was adopted by the Board of Veterans Services, and was jointly presented to the Office of the Governor for consideration. The agenda will be the cornerstone of the Joint Leadership Council's efforts during the 2007 General Assembly session.

**Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations
2007 Legislative Agenda
Adopted August 9, 2006**

Priority #	Description	Action requested	State Agency Responsible
1	Strengthen Virginia Guard and Reserve	Enhance recruiting and retention efforts and address personnel and equipment needs. Requested initiatives include: a. Construct additional military family support centers b. Provide full funding for National Guard tuition assistance c. Provide tax credits and/or exemptions for employers supporting the Guard/Reserve d. Increase funding for National Guard equipment maintenance e. Provide funding for a National Guard equipment pool for in-state emergencies	Department of Military Affairs (DMA)
2	DVS Strategic Plan and Budget	Continued funding of DVS programs to increase awareness of and access to veterans' services. Specific programs include: a. Outreach, awareness, and communications programs b. Hampton Roads Veterans Care Center c. Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery d. Benefit Services programs	Department of Veterans Services (DVS)
3	In-state tuition	Grant Virginia-resident status to Active Duty and Reserve service members stationed in Virginia for the purpose of in-state tuition at public colleges and universities	State Council on Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV)
4	Virginia War Memorial Educational Wing	Appropriate an additional \$3.5 million in General Funds to construct the Virginia War Memorial Educational Wing	Virginia War Memorial through Department of General Services (DGS)

Priority #	Description	Action requested	State Agency Responsible
5	Veterans Preference	Clarify definition of “preference” in the Code of Virginia so that real preference is given	Department of Human Resource Management (DHRM)
6	Pay Day Lending	Enact legislation to curb the practice of pay day lending to military service members	Secretary of Commerce and Trade (SCT)
7	State Tax Exemption	Provide for a state tax exemption for Virginia residents (Active Duty, Guard, and Reserve) who are serving overseas	Department of Taxation (Tax)

Plans for 2007 and Beyond

Veterans' initiatives enjoyed broad, bi-partisan support from the executive and legislative branches in 2006. Approval was given to begin the process to construct a third veterans care center and a third veterans cemetery. New funding and personnel for the Department of Veterans Services will allow for expanded benefits, care center, cemetery, and education services to our veterans. The Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (JLC), working in partnership with the Board of Veterans Services (BVS), was instrumental in bringing these initiatives to fruition. In 2007, the JLC will continue this partnership with the BVS, and will build on the recently established relationship with the Veterans Services Foundation (VSF) to better serve Virginia's veterans.

Looking ahead to the 2008 General Assembly, the JLC will begin the legislative agenda development process even earlier than in 2006. This will allow for even more in-depth analysis of veterans' issues, and will improve the Council's flexibility to respond to emerging issues both before and during the General Assembly session.

Two issues continue to be of paramount importance to Virginia's veterans – veterans care centers and veterans cemeteries. The planned construction of a third veterans care center in Hampton Roads and a third state veterans cemetery in Southwest Virginia will do much to serve veterans in those areas of the Commonwealth. In 2007, separate studies will examine the need for additional veterans care centers and cemeteries in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The results will help guide the Council's legislative agenda for 2008.

The top goal of the Department of Veterans Services (DVS) is to strengthen outreach and marketing efforts, while the JLC is charged to "Promote and support existing veterans services and programs." The Council will look for opportunities to partner with DVS in 2007 to reach not only the members of the Veterans Service Organizations represented on the JLC, but all of Virginia's veterans. Our veterans have earned their benefits through service and sacrifice. It's our job to help DVS make them aware of the benefits available at the national and state levels.

Minutes of the March 15, 2006 Meeting

A meeting of the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (JLC) was held on Wednesday, March 15, 2006, in the Main Auditorium in the Pocahontas Building – 900 East Main Street in Richmond.

Members Present

Jim Aucoin, *AMVETS*; Mason Botts, *Air Force Association*; Vince Burgess, *Commissioner, Department of Veterans Services*; David Ellis, *NAUS*; Paul R. Fink, *U. S. Navy Cruiser Sailors Association*; J. Pat Green, *Roanoke Valley Veterans Council*; Robert O. Gray, *American Ex-Prisoners of War*; John T. Jackson, *Paralyzed Veterans of America*; Norman Jasper, *Military Order of the Purple Heart*; James Jones, *Korean War Veterans Association*; Daniel Miller, *Disabled American Veterans*; Connie T. O'Neill, *American Legion*; Richard J. Rinaldo, *Legion of Valor of the U. S., Inc.*; R. Goodwin Sacra, *Navy Seabee Veterans of America*; Richard Schneider, *Non-Commissioned Officers Association*; Tom Stephen, Jr., *Reserve Officers Association*; Frank Wickersham, *MOAA*; and Sam Wilder, *Association of the United States Army*.

Members Absent

John Anderson, *Chairman, Board of Veterans Services*; John C. Bonnell, Jr., *Marine Corps League*; George Dumas, *Homeless and Disabled Veterans*; John Dunleavy, *Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge*; Thomas Snee, *Fleet Reserve Association*; and Peter Snelling, *Veterans of Foreign Wars*

Others Present

Delegate Kirk Cox
The Honorable John Marshall, *Secretary of Public Safety*
Bert Boyd, *Virginia Department of Veterans Services*
Steven Combs, *Virginia Department of Veterans Services*
Andrew Edwards, *Virginia Department of Veterans Services*
Robert Shackelford, *Virginia Department of Veterans Services*
Kenneth Smith, *Virginia National Guard Association*
Jenny Holbert, *Women Marines Association*
Marie Juliano, *Women Marines Association*

Materials Distributed

Meeting Agenda; draft Minutes of the September 14, 2005, meeting; Department of Veterans Services Fact Sheet; Virginia Department of Veterans Services Legislative and Budget Items Related to Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations' 2006 Legislative Agenda, Adopted July 13, 2006; Department of Veterans Services FY 07/08 Proposed Operating Budget; HB 1383 (enrolled); SB 359 (enrolled); HB 1465 (enrolled) HB 695 (House Substitute); SB 121 (House Substitute); SB 139 (Senate

Substitute); HB 628 (enrolled); HB 1413 (enrolled); HB 1272 (Senate Substitute); Summary sheet – House of Delegates Amendments to HB30; Summary sheet – Senate Amendments to SB30; Letter dated December 30, 2005 to Senator John S. Edwards, Senator Jay O’Brien, Delegate Mark L. Cole, Delegate Kirk Cox and Delegate Vivian Watts – RE 2006 Budget – Department of Veterans Services

Opening and Pledge of Allegiance

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m. in the Main Auditorium of the Pocahontas Building, 900 East Main Street in Richmond. The Council was led in reciting the pledge of allegiance to the American Flag and in prayer.

Commissioner Burgess introduced The Honorable John Marshall, Secretary of Public Safety. In his opening remarks, Commissioner Burgess stated that he had worked with the Secretary in his former position at the Department of Motor Vehicles. He commented that the Secretary was very committed to veterans’ issues, and the work of the Department of Veterans Services fell in line with other agencies’ services in the Public Safety Secretariat.

Opening Remarks – Secretary of Public Safety John Marshall

Secretary Marshall stated his pleasure in attending the meeting. He referenced Governor Kaine’s signing of the Executive Order during the first couple of weeks of his Administration, transferring the Department of Veterans Services from the Secretariat of Administration to the Secretariat of Public Safety. He stated that the main reason for this transfer was to include the Department with two of the agencies that the Secretariat of Public Safety has oversight: the Department of Military Affairs and the Virginia National Guard. The Secretariat of Public Safety has also been involved with the Citizen Soldiers Support Council, created under the Warner Administration by executive memorandum. An Executive Order is being drafted to continue the Council, of which the Secretary of Public Safety will serve as Chair.

Secretary Marshall stated that it was a privilege to have the Department of Veterans Services under the Secretariat of Public Safety, and looked forward to working with the Department and its Boards/Councils. He endorsed the leadership of Commissioner Burgess and his commitment to veterans issues, and pledged his support. He stated that he is very interested in learning and saw his role as working “*for*” the veterans, rather than working “*with*” the veterans.

Roll Call of VSOs and Quorum Determination

The roll was called. Seventeen of twenty-two voting members were recorded as present, and a quorum was determined. Chairman Wickersham thanked members of the JLC for turning out in such high numbers to conduct the business of the Council.

Introduction of Guests

Chairman Wickersham introduced and welcomed Kenneth Smith, Virginia National Guard Association, Jenny Holbert, Women Marines Association, and Marie Juliano, Women Marines Association, whose groups are prospective members of the Joint Leadership Council.

Review and Approval of September 15, 2005 Meeting Minutes

After review of the minutes of the September 15, 2005 meeting, Chairman Wickersham asked for any corrections, additions or deletions. There being no changes, a motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes. The motion was carried unanimously.

Commissioner's Update

Chairman Wickersham formally introduced Commissioner Vince Burgess of the Department of Veterans Services (DVS). He stated that in the short time he has known Commissioner Burgess, he has found him to be most competent and he commended him for the outstanding, professional leadership he has provided the DVS.

Commissioner Burgess thanked Chairman Wickersham for his kind remarks. He stated that this was his first meeting with the JLC and he was impressed with the membership, as well as the potential new members, of the Council. He encouraged the Council to include even more groups to represent the many veterans in the Commonwealth of Virginia. He stated that his role was to *"serve the veterans of Virginia and to do all possible to ensure that they received the benefits to which they are entitled."* He introduced the DVS staff present - Bert Boyd, Chief Operating Officer; Steven Combs, Assistant to the Commissioner; Robert Shackelford, part-time Chief Financial Officer, and Andrew Edwards, DVS Webmaster.

Commissioner Burgess gave highlights of DVS as follows:

Benefits:

- 28 Veterans Service Representatives
- 19 Field Offices across the state. DVS has been periodically sending a scheduled report listing itinerant offices around the state. DVS will continue to send updates as necessary

Care Center Services

Virginia Veterans Care Center

- Renovations underway – anticipated completion date: May/June

Sitter-Barfoot Veterans Care Center

- Groundbreaking ceremony held on November 1, 2005
- Anticipated completion date: April/May, 2007
- Anticipated opening date: July 2, 2007
- Will begin hiring in January 2007, starting with Administrator, Director of Nursing, etc. so that when July 2, 2007, staff will be there to take in patients

Hampton Roads Veterans Care Center

- Study completed indicating need for third care center
- Most likely site for the Hampton Roads Veterans Care Center will be next to the Hampton VA Medical Center. There is property that the Medical Center is willing donate for the Center.
- Proposal submitted to the USDVA for funding – project currently ranked 127 of 128 projects. However, once the Commonwealth commits its 35% share, the project will move to a higher ranking. The Commonwealth committed to its 35% share during the 2006 legislative session
- Project is 3-4 years out
- Commissioner Burgess has asked the Veterans Care Center Advisory Committee to begin thinking of strategies and locations for a fourth care center

Cemetery Services

- Virginia Veterans Cemetery (Amelia) – 181 burials in 2005
- Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery (Suffolk) – 442 burials in 2005
- In January and February of 2006, burials at two facilities were the highest ever
- Construction plans for a third cemetery in Southwest Virginia at the Radford Army Ammunition Plant are under consideration. The federal government has 90 acres of land that could be donated to the Commonwealth. Legislation has been passed to allow the Commonwealth to accept the property

Educational Services

- Two part-time positions hired July 1, 2006

DVS Administration

Financial Management System (FMS)

- Should be implemented within the next 30 days. The FMS was part of the Internal Audit performed on DVS which stated that the department needed a more comprehensive and effective management system. Robert Shackelford, DVS CFO, has identified a system which had been used at the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services. Secretary Marshall has given his approval and the system is now being reviewed by the Virginia Information Technologies Agency (VITA). DVS is hopeful to get the first phase implemented by July 1, 2006. The FMS is critically needed, particularly with the opening of the new Sitter Barfoot Veterans Care Center in 2007, to be able to effectively track finances.

DVS Communication Plan

- Presented to the Board of Veterans Services at its January 10th meeting. The Communications Plan is continually being refined for implementation.

DVS Strategic Plan

- Will be updated after General Assembly Session

Citizen Soldier Support Council

- The JLC and DVS will officially become a part of this Council per the Secretary of Public Safety

Chairman Wickersham asked the Commissioner to give a brief summary of the DVS boards/councils.

- Commissioner Burgess reiterated his high esteem for the uniqueness of the JLC in bringing together the key service organizations. He stated that this is critical to the success and mission of the organization in continuing to get the word out to the veterans and their families and to provide the services they deserve. He stated that in his 30 years in state government, he had never seen the type of bi-partisan support of veterans services as has been shown in the General Assembly. He encouraged the JLC to take advantage of this bi-partisan support and manage the opportunities and expectations.
- The Board of Veterans Services (BVS), of which he is a voting member, is a very critical component, as it is the policy-making authority as specified by code.
- The Veterans Services Foundation is a unique organization. There are very few such organizations throughout the country – one or two. Commissioner Burgess plans to talk or meet with his counterpart in Kentucky to learn more of how their organization functions and will possibly bring new ideas for implementation by the Veterans Services Foundation. The Foundation will have a one-day retreat in April to discuss its role/mission.
- The Virginia Veterans Care Center Committee is an advisory committee which works with the Commissioner on Care Center issues.

The Commissioner encouraged members to make their organizations aware of their membership term expirations on June 30, 2006. Reappointments would become effective July 1st.

Old Business

Chairman Wickersham commended JLC Vice-Chairman Sam Wilder for his leadership and hard work in promoting veterans legislation during the General Assembly session. Mr. Wilder briefed the JLC on “lessons learned” during the session. A handout was distributed.

In summary, lessons learned were:

- Start early
- Speak with one voice
- Coordinate with “allies”
- Get a patron
- Prioritize
- Need a game plan for the General Assembly

Connie O’Neill commented that there was no reference to the Board of Veterans Services (BVS) and the role they played in supporting the JLC legislative agenda. He stated that during his tenure as Chairman of the JLC, he asked if the Board would be advocates for the JLC.

Mr. Wilder stated that he was aware that Dr. Anderson, Chair of the Board of Veterans Services, had written a letter to all legislators on the Board asking for their support of DVS legislative issues. Delegate Cox initiated legislation as a result. However, to his knowledge, nothing happened with the remainder of the JLC legislative agenda. He stated that JLC members took the initiative to meet with legislators and others to gain support of the JLC legislative agenda.

Chairman Wickersham stated that he had attended the BVS meetings and distributed the JLC legislative agenda. He explained that the BVS’s focus and charter are more so geared to care centers, benefits and strategic plan. He stated that when it comes to other issues, the JLC is the power to move the JLC agenda forward. The JLC will be more effective with the BVS by educating them, and the legislative members on the board, as to the importance of the JLC legislative agenda.

Mr. Wilder stated that the JLC is most active in advocating at a time when the Departments’ budgets are confidential. During this time, he was unaware of exactly what to say regarding DVS’s budget; however, after the Governor’s budget was released, DVS issues/needs could be addressed. He suggested that a mechanism be developed to determine a way that the DVS could keep the JLC informed so that the JLC could assist in Department efforts.

Commissioner Burgess focused the JLC’s attention to the letter in the agenda packets dated December 30, 2005 from Chairman Anderson to legislative members of the BVS. He agreed that the BVS’s issues are more focused on the Department and its needs, in contrast to the broader JLC issues. He concurred with Mr. Wilder regarding confidential budget documents. However, he encouraged the JLC to review the department’s strategic plan and service area plans. He stated that the department’s mission is embedded in the plans and it is inclusive of guidance from each of the Boards/Councils. The Commissioner suggested that the plans might possibly be reduced to a more manageable document for the JLC. He stated that the strategic plan will be updated once the Governor has signed off on the budget.

Secretary Marshall concurred with the Commissioner’s assessment of the budgetary procedure. He stated that there is a disconnect during the process. However, he stated

that one of the reasons for the confidentiality is because documents are ‘works in process’ and are constantly changing. If there was no confidentiality, there would be a risk of exposing inaccurate, out-of-date information. The present process prevents this risk.

For the JLC’s information and use, the Secretary stated that he would work with Commissioner Burgess in providing the JLC with the timelines of the different budget cycles during the budget process.

Chairman Wickersham commented that he believed the JLC issues were made known to both the BVS and the Governor, and that the messages were received. In the interim between the budget submissions and the release of the Governor’s budget in December, over the coming months, the JLC will do more to have its list ahead of time, and even before. In this way, while the JLC is trying to inform the Governor, others may be informed as well. He stated that he believed that the process went very well this year. The transfer of the agency to the Public Safety secretariat is necessary to lead more effectively and make the issues/information known.

Mr. Wilder stated that this year, members of the JLC had met with the Governor and advised him of JLC legislative issues. He stated that the Chief of Staff, Bill Leighty, was most helpful in providing guidance and pointing members in the right direction.

Chairman Wickersham thanked Mr. Wilder for his report.

The Chairman then recognized Mr. Pat Green. Mr. Green discussed the cemetery in Southwest, Virginia and focused the members’ attention to HB 1430 and SB 359 – Veterans Cemetery: Department of Veterans Services authorized to accept donated property in SW Va. He expressed his pleasure over the passage of this legislation, which is now awaiting the Governor’s desk for his signature.

Mr. Green distributed information regarding the Southwest Virginia cemetery. He stated that the land for the cemetery is federal land. He has made contacts with Senator Allen and Representative Boucher, and they have appointed persons in their offices to make sure the federal legislation is written to be made part of the Department of Defense’s Appropriations Bill. This legislation will be signed in December/January of next year, and gives direction to the Department of the Army to transfer the land to the state of Virginia. This is called a quick claim deed.

Presently, the land is being surveyed. It is located in Dublin, Virginia. The land had not been surveyed for 40 years or more. The southwest Virginia cemetery will balance veterans cemeteries across each region of the state. He requested members to ask their presidents and to contact Rob Smith, (lead staffer for Congressman Boucher’ Office), and Jason Money (lead staffer with Senator Allen’s Office), and emphasize the importance to have the veterans cemetery in Southwest Virginia. They should be informed that surveys of the land will be hand-carried to their offices. He stated that the legislators are extremely busy, and the more contacts made, the more focus will be given to attending to this issue. Len Diiioia of the Radford Army Ammunition Plant is responsible for making

sure the cemetery deal transpires. His contact information is (540)659-8647; e-mail: Len.Diiioia@us.army.mil.

Daniel Miller requested that JLC members be informed when the legislation is assigned a federal bill number in order to rally support for the legislation.

Chairman Wickersham will work with Pat Green in developing a sample letter for JLC members' use.

Chairman Wickersham thanked Mr. Green for his report.

Chairman Wickersham then referred the members to page 8 of the September 14th minutes. At the September 14th meeting, a change was proposed to the JLC Constitution to allow alternate representatives to attend business meetings to ensure a quorum is met. A motion was made and seconded to accept the proposed changes to the JLC Constitution. The floor was open for discussion.

At the September 14th meeting, the proposed change stated:

The Organizational Representative will be appointed by the Governor of the State of Virginia. The Alternate will be appointed by the President of each member organization and must attend at least one JLC meeting each year with or without carrying a proxy vote of the appointed member. A written Proxy signed by the State President of the member organization must be presented at the JLC meeting for the Alternate to be able to vote at that meeting.

Questions were entertained. Chairman Wickersham stated that JLC needed to make a modification to its Constitution that stays true to the legislation, which is very broad. The JLC needed to make sure that persons sent to represent JLC members absent at meetings are bonafide and of good charge.

A motion was made to amend the 5th sentence in the proposed change to read:

A written Proxy signed by the ~~State~~ President of the member organization must be presented at the JLC meeting for the Alternate to be able to vote at that meeting.

The motion was seconded and carried unanimously.

Mr. Green mentioned that legislation had also passed the Senate and the House to provide JLC members travel reimbursement effective July 1, 2006.

The JLC meeting stood in recess for lunch.

New Business

Chairman Wickersham called the meeting back to order at 1:10 p.m.

The Chairman stated that there have been questions raised by the Merchant Marines regarding having the Merchant Marine plaques displayed at state-operated cemeteries. However, Chairman Wickersham stated that the DVS follows the federal regulations for cemeteries, which recognizes only the five services – Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force and Coast Guard.

Next, Chairman Wickersham asked for recommendations/nominations for legislative honorees that should be recognized for their support of JLC issues. Names submitted were:

- Delegate Frank Hargrove
- Senator John Edwards
- Delegate Allen Dudley
- Senator Jay O'Brien
- Delegate Kirk Cox

The proceedings were suspended due to the arrival of Delegate Kirk Cox.

Delegate Cox gave his perspective of the 2006 General Assembly session relative to veterans and military affairs issues. He stated that since his tenure with the General Assembly (since 1990), he felt it was the best year for veterans. He commended Commissioner Burgess, Governor Warner, Governor Kaine and the great support from the Republican caucus.

Key veterans issues:

Third veterans care center

- \$50,000 spent on a study last year
- Study indicated that a care center should be in Hampton and could probably justify a fourth care center in Chesapeake
- Section I bill submitted – this bill set it apart and gave priority
- Bill passed House and Senate
- Treasury Loan of \$14.6 million – state's 35% share
- Budget amendment in House; comparable amendment in Senate
- Currently, the third care center is rated 127 of 128 on the USDVA proposal priority listing. Once the funding is approved in the budget, priority ranking will move up rapidly.

Claims Officers

- Last year, tremendous progress made in field claims officers. A bill was created constituting a ratio of the number of claims officers per veteran
- Administrative support funded this year (House/Senate/Governor)
- Funds to improve field offices
- Secretary of Technology interested in helping with technology issues

Cemeteries

- Bill to approve a cemetery in Southwest Virginia

Other veteran legislation

- In-state tuition
- Fisher House: Senate – \$1 million; House – \$500,000
- Virginia War Memorial: Funding for “Into Battle” video and for the education wing

Delegate Cox stated that most of the major items pushed for were included this year’s budget. There was recognition among all the parties. He stated that he was very pleased with the outcome regarding veterans issues.

Connie O’Neil asked other than a different attitude by government toward veterans, if Virginia had more money to do nice things? Delegate Cox responded that it is always easy to do more when there is a surplus; however, there are a number of other areas that need funding as well. He stated that for the first time in years, he believed veterans got their fair share of the budget. He stated that there is a combination of reasons for this, namely: veterans/veterans organizations have lobbied hard; recognition level has increased; veterans groups are much more organized; veterans groups have prioritized much more of what they want; legislators are more aware of veterans issues.

He stated that the legislative support should be taken advantage of while it lasts. He also emphasized that veterans groups should never “let down their guard.” Generally, as soon as this is done, someone also gets ahead with other issues.

The JLC gave accolades to Delegate Cox and other legislators on the Board of Veterans Services who played key roles in helping to get legislation passed. Delegate Cox commented on the superb leadership and support of Commissioner Burgess and Steven Combs in working with him to make sure veterans issues were being addressed.

Discussion was entertained regarding Delegate Suit’s bill, HB 695: In-state tuition for dependents of activity duty military personnel. Delegate Cox stated that although he was unable to spend as much time as would have liked to on this bill, there was still a substantial victory. He stated that the focus was placed on what was “doable” this session. The big issue is whether the bill will be expanded. Sam Wilder stated that in MOAA, the bill originally included in-state tuition for active duty and reserves, the military member and dependents. However, the final bill covered in-state tuition for dependents only. He commended Delegate Suit for the approach taken in wording the legislation, such that it did not have to go to the Finance Committee, and there was no financial impact. The veterans dependents are considered part of the in-state pool, rather than the out-of-state pool. He asked Delegate Cox if the climate is such that it would be worthwhile to present legislation during the next session to include in-state tuition for active duty and reserve members. Delegate Cox responded that this would be a good approach for next year’s session.

Chairman Wickersham asked Secretary Marshall and Commissioner Burgess to join him in presenting Delegate Cox with a recognition plaque on behalf of the JLC. He commended and thanked Delegate Cox for his effective leadership in presenting veterans legislation over the years.

New Business - Resumed

Chairman Wickersham resumed the discussion of legislative honorees. He restated the names that had been submitted; namely, Delegate Hargrove, Senator Edwards, Delegate Dudley, Senator O'Brien, Delegate Cox, Delegate Suit, Delegate Lingamfelter, Delegate Janis and Delegate Cole. Delegate Watts and Delegate Crockett-Stark were added to the list.

Chairman Wickersham, along with Commissioner Burgess, will design a letter on behalf of the JLC thanking members of the House of Delegates and Senate for the support [show] exhibited for veterans issues during the 2006 General Assembly session. An update will be given at the next JLC meeting. He encouraged members to submit any other names of legislators whom they felt should be recognized. He emphasized that both the current and past governors, as well as, the current Commissioner of DVS should be recognized.

2007 Legislative Issues

Chairman Wickersham asked each member to propose legislative issues that the JLC should focus on for the 2007 General Assembly session. Suggestions were as follows:

- Waive the toll fee for DAV vans that transport veterans to/from the VA facilities
- Development of an ad-hoc Committee in the General Assembly -- Veterans Services Committee that would track veterans legislation for a period of two-years to determine the need for a permanent committee.
- Special veterans parking in state facilities
- State tax exemptions (income tax; personal property) for 100% in-service disabled veterans
- State tax credits or other incentives for employers who hire guard and reservists
- Make veterans in Virginia aware of Veterans Administration requirements for admission in the new Veterans Care Centers
- Long-term care for spinal cord injury veterans at veterans care facilities
- Long-term care for polytrauma veterans at veterans care facilities
- Better support for national guard and reserves (i.e. support for Team Virginia Family Centers to be located at places away from military installations)
- Veterans Foundation to help raise funds for Fisher House
- In-state tuition for active duty and reservist military members
- Authorize veterans care centers to be placed in a special category so veterans organizations will be allowed to operate the canteen, rather than canteens being operated by the Department of Blind and Visually Handicapped (per state regulations).
- Get local veterans groups to support Fisher House project

- Qualifications to the “CHAMP”
- Support for Fisher House project
- Pre-taxed health care benefits
- Exemption from state income taxes while out of state (active/reserve, etc.)

* Connie O’Neil noted that the American Legion Convention will meet in March. Resolutions will be shared with the JLC after that time.

*Norm Jasper noted that the Military Order of Purple Hearts – (State Convention in May; National Convention in August) Resolutions will be shared with the JLC after that time.

*Kenneth Smith, Virginia National Guard Association, stated that the State Association Conference would be held in April and resolutions would be shared with the JLC after that time. Secondly, he informed the JLC that he did not represent the Adjutant General’s Office, and he would need to discuss issues with him prior to officially proceeding with legislative agendas. He stated that he could; however, share some of the issues being reviewed:

- State tuition assistance
- Legislative offices
- Re-enlistment of offices
- Health care for soldiers
- Family Support Centers
- State retirement
- State tax exemptions
- ESGR credits to employers

*Jenny Holbert, Women Marine Association, proposed legislation to prevent military protest.

Chairman Wickersham stated that when organizations are fortunate to gain services/benefits for veterans, reservists, guard, etc., it is important that veterans are made aware, as well as, have access to the services/benefits. He instructed members to make these two issues -- “awareness and access” -- prevalent when meeting with their respective veterans organizations regarding state issues.

Chairman Wickersham reiterated the effectiveness of the JLC. As the organization progressed with its issues, he asked that members think in terms of: (1) awareness; (2) access; (3) rank ordering/prioritizing efforts in order to become even more effective “on the hill.”

Mr. Miller stated that a nominating committee for JLC upcoming officers should be appointed. Chairman Wickersham asked if he would chair this committee. Mr. Miller agreed to do so.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Determination of Date and Location of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the JLC will be on Wednesday, May 17, 2006, 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. at the American Legion Department of Virginia Building, 1708 Commonwealth Avenue in Richmond.

Secretary Marshall thanked Chairman Wickersham for the opportunity to speak before the JLC, and on behalf of the Governor, thanked him for his leadership and members of the Council for their services. Chairman Wickersham thanked Commissioner Burgess and DVS staff for hosting the meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Minutes of the May 17, 2006 Meeting

A meeting of the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (JLC) was held on Wednesday, May 17, 2006, at the American Legion Department of Virginia Headquarters Building, 1708 Commonwealth Avenue in Richmond.

Members Present

John Anderson, *Chairman, Board of Veterans Services*; Jim Aucoin, *AMVETS*; John C. Bonnell, Jr., *Marine Corps League*; Mason Botts, *Air Force Association*; Vince Burgess, *Commissioner, Department of Veterans Services*; David Ellis, *NAUS*; J. Pat Green, *Roanoke Valley Veterans Council*; Robert O. Gray, *American Ex-Prisoners of War*; John T. Jackson, *Paralyzed Veterans of America*; Norman Jasper, *Military Order of the Purple Heart*; James Jones, *Korean War Veterans Association*; Daniel Miller, *Disabled American Veterans*; Connie T. O'Neill, *American Legion*; Richard J. Rinaldo, *Legion of Valor of the U. S., Inc.*; R. Goodwin Sacra, *Navy Seabee Veterans of America*; Richard Schneider, *Non-Commissioned Officers Association*; Tom Stephen, Jr., *Reserve Officers Association*; Frank Wickersham, *MOAA*; and Sam Wilder, *Association of the United States Army*.

Members Absent

George Dumas, *Homeless and Disabled Veterans*; John Dunleavy, *Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge*; Paul R. Fink, *U. S. Navy Cruiser Sailors Association*; Thomas Snee, *Fleet Reserve Association*; and Peter Snelling, *Veterans of Foreign Wars*

Others Present

The Honorable John Marshall, *Secretary of Public Safety*
Judson Stanley, *Member, Board of Veterans Services/Virginia War Memorial Board of Trustees*
Ms. Barbara Tyler, *AMVETS*
John Hatfield, *Virginia War Memorial*
Harry Warner, *Virginia War Memorial*
Freddie Jones, *Virginia Department of Transportation*
Mike Duke, *Virginia Department of Transportation*
Bert Boyd, *Virginia Department of Veterans Services*
Steven Combs, *Virginia Department of Veterans Services*
Roz Trent, *Virginia Department of Veterans Services*

Materials Distributed

Meeting Agenda; draft Minutes of the March 15, 2006, meeting; Virginia Department of Veterans Services Legislative and Budget Items Related to Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations' 2006 Legislative Agenda, Adopted July 13, 2006; § 2.2-2681. Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Organizations; membership; terms; chairman; quorum; compensation; Upcoming Events at the Virginia War Memorial;

VDOT presentation, “Transitional Internship for Returning Veterans” and Job Description – Program Administration Specialist I; May 5, 2006 memorandum to DVS employees regarding organizational changes; DVS calendar; Geographic Distribution of VA Expenditures for FY 2005 Report from JLC Nominating Committee; Point Paper – Virginia Veterans Legislative Issues for 2007

Opening and Pledge of Allegiance

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 10:15 a.m. at the American Legion Department of Virginia Headquarters Building, 1708 Commonwealth Avenue in Richmond. Vice-Chair Sam Wilder led the Council in reciting the pledge of allegiance to the American Flag and Chaplain Norman Jasper led the Council in prayer.

Roll Call of VSOs and Quorum Determination

The roll was called. Fifteen of twenty-two voting members were recorded as present, and a quorum was determined. John Bonnell and Daniel Miller arrived after the roll was called.

Introduction of Guests

Chairman Wickersham introduced and welcomed the guests present: Barbara Tyler, AMVETS Post 35; John Hatfield and Harry Warner, Virginia War Memorial; Freddie Jones and Mike Duke, Virginia Department of Transportation; and Judson Stanley, Board of Veterans Services/Virginia War Memorial Board of Trustees. Chairman Wickersham acknowledged the presence of Dr. John Anderson, Chairman of the Board of Veteran Services (BVS) and Commissioner Vince Burgess, DVS. The Chairman also stated that he anticipated the arrival of the Secretary of Public Safety, John Marshall.

Review and Approval of March 15, 2006 Meeting Minutes

The minutes of the March 15, 2006 meeting were reviewed. There being no amendments, a motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes. The motion was carried unanimously.

Guests’ Presentations:

John Hatfield, Director, Virginia War Memorial,

Mr. Hatfield stated that because of the increased volume of visitors to the War Memorial over the past ten years (approximately 1000% increase), to include school groups, participants to patriotic events, Memorial and Veterans Day events, seminars, etc., the War Memorial has become too small to adequately house the increased volume of guests. To address the increased space needs, Delegate Hargrove introduced legislation during the 2006 General Assembly that would provide \$4 million for the War Memorial Educational Wing. However, at the end of the session, only \$500,000 was appropriated. Amendments for \$3.5 million were proposed on both the House and Senate; however, neither amendment was passed.

Mr. Hatfield solicited the support of the JLC to include in its 2007 legislative agenda a request for full funding for the Virginia War Memorial Educational Wing. He acknowledged that the War Memorial Education Wing was included on the JLC 2006 legislative agenda and asked for the JLC's continued support in this effort.

Mr. Harry Warner distributed an executive briefing entitled "Education *Center Wing for the Virginia War Memorial*," which stated the purpose of the Education Center Wing and explained what the additional space will be used for. The cost of the new wing is estimated at \$5.6 million. The Virginia War Memorial Board of Trustees will raise \$1.6 million towards this goal. The General Assembly is being requested to fund \$4 million.

Questions were entertained and discussion followed. Mr. Hatfield distributed a flyer of upcoming events and invited JLC members to attend the Memorial Day Celebration at the War Memorial.

Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) – Freddie Jones/ Mike Duke

Freddie Jones, Division Administrator, Civil Rights Division of VDOT, made a presentation to the JLC entitled "*Transitional Internship for Returning Veterans.*" He stated that VDOT's purpose is to establish a two-year nontraditional transitional internship program for 6-10 returning wounded and disabled veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan who are VA residents. Mr. Jones stated that the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) had granted funding in the amount of \$500,000, and VDOT will contribute \$100,000 as "in kind" contributions (i.e., VDOT employees donating time, money) to help promote the program. Presently, the FHWA has provided \$250,000 of the \$500,000 grant, but there is a clear commitment to contribute an additional \$250,000 before the end of the federal fiscal year.

To initiate the program, VDOT has developed a job description for the position of Program Administration Specialist I (Wounded Veteran Program Coordinator). The position is a part-time position and will be advertised by the end of the week (May 19th). Once hired, the chosen candidate will help further define internships and administer the "*Transitional Internship for Returning Veterans.*" program. VDOT feels that it would be advantageous to have a veteran in this position to help identify and bring in additional interns. **JLC members were requested to refer the names of any individuals that may qualify for this position. In addition, any suggestions for where advertisements might be placed for better exposure were welcomed.**

Mike Duke, VDOT Recruiting and Retention Coordinator, distributed copies of the presentation handout and the job description for the Program Administration Specialist I (Wounded Veteran Program Coordinator) job description.

VDOT has categorized several groups within the Internship Program wherein participation is solicited. Groups are as follows:

- The Advisory Group – responsible for assisting in identifying, developing criteria, in conjunction with VDOT, and screening and getting referrals to the program.
- The Internship Group – responsible for developing the program and placement activities; coordinates and collaborates with the Coordinating and Advisory groups; and address the potential and/or actual human challenges/barriers.
- The Monitoring Group – responsible for determining the needs of veterans; monitoring the progress of the placed veterans; and working with VDOT (mentors/coaches) to ensure the needs of the veterans are met and the program is on-course.
- The Public Relations Group – responsible for providing outreach/marketing programs; disseminating information about the program; and garner support for the program

The ultimate goal of VDOT is to develop the “*Transitional Internship for Returning Veterans*” as a pilot project and to challenge other state departments of transportation to do the same.

Mr. Jones solicited the support and involvement of the JLC to help implement the “*Transitional Internship for Returning Veterans*” program in the following ways:

- **Assistance in helping to gain exposure of the program;**
- **Participation in working groups of Committees that will be able to:**
 1. **take on the primary responsibility for developing criteria;**
 2. **help identify where potential participants might be located; and**
 3. **interact with individuals in promoting the program and be involved in the screening/referral process**

Pat Green expressed his support of the program and recommended that VDOT coordinate with the Employer Support for Guard and Reserve (ESGR) in Washington, DC, as there are specific laws in ESGR that veterans must follow in getting a job. He expressed concern that if a veteran were to be referred for one of the part-time positions in the “*Transitional Internship for Returning Veterans*” program, the ESGR benefits might be affected. He also suggested that VDOT visit the ESGR website at www.esgr.gov to review the guidelines of the program. Mr. Jones emphasized that this type of expertise and knowledge from JLC members is needed in working groups to assist in program development.

Daniel Miller also applauded VDOT for its efforts in letting disabled veterans know that there is an agency/organization that will help them re-enter into society. He commented that the Veterans Outreach Program at the Virginia Employment Commission has Disabled Veterans Specialists whose sole responsibility is to work with disabled veterans in finding employment, and could assist in recruiting for the Program Administration Specialist I position. He recommended that VDOT contact Ms. Dee Esser,

Commissioner of the Virginia Employment Commission, or Jerry Lindsey, VEC Veterans Services Coordinator. Mr. Jones stated that Mr. Lindsey is presently on VDOT's contact list, but also asked that Mr. Miller provide assistance.

Jim Aucoin stated that the AMVETS counselors might also be able to provide assistance in making referrals to the program, as well as referrals from the TAP Program.

Additional questions were entertained and further discussion ensued.

Mr. Jones asked if it would be appropriate to request a mailing list of JLC members so that up-to-date information could be disseminated regarding the status of the program/dates of meetings, agendas, etc. In addition, he extended the invitation to any organization or representative from the VSOs to participate on any of the established committees for this program. Chairman Wickersham assured that this information would be provided.

Veterans Services Foundation

In the absence of Lydia Dudley, Vice-Chair of the Veterans Services Foundation (VSF), Commissioner Burgess gave a brief overview of the VSF and discussed outcome results of the VSF Retreat held on April 13, 2006. He emphasized that all members of the VSF were present, and most critically, the chairs of both the BVS and JLC were in attendance.

Commissioner Burgess stated that at the Retreat, the VSF had developed a brief analysis of current and potential activities; established goals; and prioritized nine action strategies based on the established goals. He stressed that paramount to the VSF success, one of the goals established was to foster an internal working relationship and better communications across the Department of Veterans Services Boards (BVS; JLC).

The VSF targeted the following short-term goals:

- Identify working committees within the VSF to prepare specific plans of action for priority strategies;
- Conduct a needs assessment and identify service gaps with a list of specific prioritized funding needs and amounts by the end of July; and
- Complete a list of potential donors or corporations with links to the veteran population.

Commissioner Burgess stated that Foundation was established to receive funding, do fund raising, and develop a resource pool that can be used to help support veterans in Virginia with monies that cannot be provided through state government. A critical issue in assuring that the Foundation is able to further develop strategies and accomplish its goals is to have resources dedicated solely to this effort. He advised that Roz Trent, who currently provides DVS marketing and communications efforts, along with supporting the JLC and the Veterans Care Center Advisory Committee, will be assuming this role.

The Commissioner stated that a VSF status report will be given at each JLC meeting to keep the JLC informed of VSF activities. A copy of the nine VSF prioritized strategies will be sent to each JLC member.

Dr. Anderson stated that over the past three years, each entity – the BVS, the JLC and the VSF - has grown and established itself for the purpose in which each was created. He commented that unlike the BVS and the JLC, it was much more difficult to define exactly how the Foundation worked, but he believed that the VSF is moving forward in a very positive, effective way. He commended the DVS staff for the support that has been given to the BVS, JLC and the VSF.

Chairman Wickersham concurred and expressed his excitement that the Foundation will become more of a leading partner with the BVS and the JLC and will function as they are chartered to do. He commented that if all three entities functioned in the full order, this will be a powerful mechanism for veterans in the State of Virginia.

Comments from BVS Chairman

Dr. Anderson acknowledged the presence of BVS member, Judson Stanley. He reported that the BVS was making significant progress, in conjunction with its JLC and VSF partners. He stated that one of his responsibilities as Chairman, in consultation with the BVS, is to write a letter to the legislature and to the Governor advocating on behalf of the veterans issues and specific programs. Much of this information is obtained from the JLC.

He stated that both the BVS and JLC have distinct uniqueness. Five members of the BVS are legislators. This allows the BVS direct access to legislative issues. The JLC is an organization in the government, yet is able to advocate to the government. It is an educational interest that brings the thoughts of the veterans community directly to the decision-makers.

Dr. Anderson informed the JLC that the BVS is closing out its third year, and sub-committees are very active and are also making significant progress. The BVS will hold its election of officers at the July 10th Board meeting.

Commissioner's Update

Commissioner Burgess reported as follows:

DVS Activities

- Organizational changes within the Department have been made. A copy of a May 5th memorandum sent to DVS employees and revised organizational charts which showed some of the major changes in reporting authority were distributed. The Commissioner explained that the financial and administration functions have been separated from the operations function of the Department. He stated that the change was critical in order to put more focus on financial operations, and would

free up the Chief of Operations, Bert Boyd, to place more emphasis on benefits and other operations of the Department.

- The Commissioner advised that during the week of May 1-4, the Operations Program held a statewide training effort in Roanoke, Virginia for veterans services representatives (VSRs) from all field offices. He highlighted that the number of VSRs had increased significantly within the year, and this the first time that all VSRs had met together to discuss issues. Representatives from the USDVA, DVS seasoned VSRs, and representatives from other states were present to discuss, train, and assist VSRs in understanding best practices and improving services provided to veterans.
- The Commissioner distributed a copy of the most recent listing of “Geographic Distribution of VA Expenditures for FY 2005,” which covered all the states in the country. He noted that Virginia ranked #11 for population of veterans in the United States; Virginia ranked #10 for Total Expenditures, for Compensation and Pension, Virginia ranked #8; for Education and Vocational Rehabilitation, Virginia ranked #6; and for Insurances and Indemnities, Virginia ranked #9.

Two areas not shown on the chart wherein Virginia did not rank #11 or above are in Construction/Medical and General Operating Expenses. Commissioner Burgess stated that the chart covered July 1, 2004 – July 1, 2005; however, since then, aggressive efforts have been made in looking at construction funding to support care center operations. Presently, a proposal is being developed to research information across the state of Virginia to determine where areas facilities may be needed and/or the type of facility that may be needed, whether it is an existing facility, renovating, or new construction of a facility on state property. This is critical so that Virginia can continue to be on the Federal Priority Listing for funding in the areas of construction/medical and general operating expenses for care centers, cemeteries, etc.

Richard Rinaldo stated that there is room to grow in advising the state of new things that can be done for veterans. Commissioner Burgess stated that judging from legislation passed in the 2005 General Assembly Session, and what will be seen when the budget is passed, he believed that there will be a tremendous increase in resources provided to the DVS, which will transcend into services to the veterans.

- The DVS is still waiting for a budget to be passed. The Caboose Bill was approved by the House and Senate. The Caboose Bill is a 2-year budget (2004-06) with tweaks made between the time it is signed and the passage of the next budget. Still waiting for action on the 2007-08 budget.
- Commissioner Burgess distributed the most recent DVS Calendar and asked members to review it for corrections and provide additional information. He stressed the importance of having one document that list of all activities taking

place in the Commonwealth of Virginia and/or national events that may be taking place in the Commonwealth. Comments should be directed to Doris Sullivan at doris.sullivan@dvs.virginia.gov or (540) 857-7104.

- DVS will be involved in the following Memorial Day Events:
 - Friday, May 26, 2006**
 - 9:00 a.m. - Hunter Holmes McGuire VA Hospital
 - *Attorney General Robert McDonnell will be speaking
 - Monday, May 29, 2006**
 - 10:00 a.m. - Amelia Cemetery
 - 2:00 p.m. - Albert G. Horton Cemetery (Suffolk)
 - * Secretary John Marshall and Commissioner Burgess will be speaking
 - 10:00 a.m. – The Virginia War Memorial
 - *Dignitaries from the American Legion and AMVETS will be guests speakers

New State Cemetery

- Commissioner Burgess acknowledged a front-page article printed in the Roanoke Times Newspaper announcing that the House of Representatives had passed language that would allow the Radford Ammunition Plant to transfer up to 80 acres of land to the State of Virginia for the purposes of a state veterans cemetery. He recognized Pat Green, who had been a key player in this effort. Mr. Green commented on the leadership of U. S. Congressmen, Senator George Allen and Representative Rick Boucher, state legislators, Senator John Edwards and Delegate Allan Dudley, who sanctioned legislation to make this happen. He asked JLC members to express their appreciation when meeting with the congressmen/legislators. He also thanked the JLC for support given in this effort. Mason Botts suggested JLC members include this as an “item of interest” when speaking with Congressmen and/or Virginia legislators on behalf of their respective associations.

JLC Reappointments

- Steven Combs stated that all current JLC members’ terms will expire on June 30, 2006. All members are eligible for nominations of reappointments by respective organizations to serve another three year term to commence on July 1, 2006 and end on 6/30/2009. He stated that all members should have received an e-mail from the Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth regarding interest in being considered for reappointments. In addition, all organizations should have also been contacted via e-mail advising them of the upcoming expired terms of current representatives and asking that they submit a letter of nominations for reappointment. Members who have not been contacted should advise Steven Combs. Both a letters are necessary for reappointment. Chairman Wickersham advised the members that this agenda item would fall under “New Business” and would be further discussed at that time.

Chairman Wickersham recognized the arrival of The Honorable John Marshall, Secretary of Public Safety. Secretary Marshall informed the JLC that May 15-19 is National Police Week, and that he was involved in state police memorial services. He stated that he had great interest in the JLC and the progress that had made since the last meeting. He emphasized that follow-through is very important on issues that are raised at JLC meetings and that both he and the Commissioner were committed to continue to follow through on issues that are raised. The Secretary JLC for the work that it performs one and recommitted the Administration's commitment to veterans and to continue to keep Virginia's status as the best managed state in the country.

Old Business

Update on JLC Officer Nominations for 2006-2007

Dan Miller distributed copies of the JLC Nomination Report. He acknowledged other member of the Nominating Committee: Connie O'Neil, and John Jackson. Nominations for JLC officers for 2006-2007 were as follows:

- Chairman – J. Pat Green,
Roanoke Valley Veterans Council
- Vice-Chairman – Mason S. Botts
Air Force Association

There were no further nominations from the floor. A motion was made and seconded to close the nominations on the two said names. Chairman Wickersham explained that a vote would be taken on the slate of candidates, and not specifically on the candidates, since all members are awaiting reappointments. A motion was made and seconded to accept the slate of officers as proposed. A finalized vote will be taken at the next JLC meeting.

The JLC stood in recess for 10 minutes.

Chairman Wickersham called the meeting back to order at 12:15 p.m.

Old Business (resumed)....

Review of Proposed JLC Legislative Issues for 2006-2007

Chairman Wickersham asked each member to turn to page 11 of the March 15, 2006 minutes for discussion reference. He distributed a "Point Paper of Virginia Veterans Legislative Issues for 2007" which he had developed. He stated that the JLC faired extremely well during the 2006 legislative session, and now the focus was on "how to follow-up with the successes of 2006." He asked that each member discuss/recommend key legislative issues that the JLC should focus on for the 2007 General Assembly session.

Sam Wilder emphasized that the JLC would have to wrestle with the prioritization of legislative issues. He stated that the Council needed to consider how long of a list of issues should be; show specific should it be, and the exact process of the prioritization effort. He commented that as JLC legislative issues are coordinated with other entities, the priority listing may alter.

Each member expressed key legislative issues for their organizations. A consolidated listing of 2007 Legislative issues for the JLC is as follows:

- Better support for national guard and reserves (i.e. support for Team Virginia Family Centers to be located at places away from military installations)
- Support the Department of Veterans Services goals and strategic plan (i.e. support for training for DVS Veterans Service Representatives, state cemeteries, care centers, etc.)
- In-state tuition assistance for active duty and reservist military members and dependents
- Better support for national guard and reserves (with equal emphasis on the reserves)
- Waive the toll fee for all DAV, VFW vans, that transport veterans to/from the VA facilities, military organizations and/or veterans care centers
- Authorize veterans care centers to be placed in a special category so veterans organizations will be allowed to operate the canteen, rather than canteens being operated by the Department of Blind and Visually Handicapped (per state regulations).
- Veterans Foundation to help raise funds for Fisher House
- A Resolution that Congress allow the VA to pay full costs of state veterans home nursing patients (this will be captured in the strategic plan of DVS)
- Support for Fisher House project - someone to send a letter to Fisher House Foundation acknowledging how much the state will contribute
- State tax exemptions (income tax; personal property) for 100% in-service disabled veterans
- Support for the Virginia War Memorial Educational Wing (whatever was unfunded in the 2006 General Assembly session)
- Exemption from state income taxes while out of state (active/reserve, etc.) – (full or partial)
- Special veterans parking in state facilities
- Drivers' license renewal
- Free transportation (public transportation) for wounded veterans and their accompanists
- In-state income tax exemptions (if out of the state of Virginia, there would be no taxes; if in-state for 30 days, taxes to be paid)
- State tax credits or other incentives for employers who hire guard and reservists
- A tax credit to waive any income of a DIC recipient
- A Resolution from the State to the House and Senate supporting legislation that would exempt the special kickers that guard and reservists receive for education by virtue of their service in Afghanistan and/or Iraq. Should be able to retain this benefit if they leave reserve/guard.
- Preferential/guaranteed employment to veterans after discharge
- Make veterans in Virginia aware of U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs requirements for admission in the new Veterans Care Centers

- Long-term care for spinal cord injury and polytrauma veterans at veterans care facilities
- Support for a 4th Veterans Care Center

Mr. Wilder asked if the Fisher House project was an appropriate project to put before the Veterans Services Foundation. Chairman Wickersham stated that the Foundation may not be ready to take the lead in undertaking this task at this time.

Chairman Wickersham stated that the JLC will prioritize the 2007 legislative issues.

New Business

JLC Alternates

Chairman Wickersham asked for a discussion of the law that pertains to “alternates” attending/voting at JLC meetings. Steven Combs referred the members to the one-page sheet included in the agenda packets regarding § 2.2-2681 – Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations; membership; terms, chairman; quorum; compensation. The last sentence in italics read:

Each veterans service organization representative may designate an alternate to attend meetings of the Council in the absence of such representative.

Chairman Wickersham sought legal guidance. He asked counsel that if the Governor appoints the members to the JLC, but the language states that members can appoint the alternate, would the alternate be allowed to vote.

Don Ferguson, Counsel to the JLC, responded that since the JLC is an advisory board, and not a policy board, it is permissible for an alternate to sit on a committee and make a vote on behalf of the person that designated him/her as alternate.

Mason Botts stated that he was in favor of the language, as it was much less restrictive.

Chairman Wickersham reiterated that as the law is written, it is the JLC member’s choice in designating an alternate. Mr. Ferguson pointed out that each member of the JLC was nominated by a veterans service organization, and organizations set their own guidelines for alternates. Per counsel, as the law is written, no official letter is needed; rather e-mail or phone call will suffice. He stated that the JLC by-laws may be amended to address this issue.

Sam Wilder stated that the JLC by-laws states that the alternate would have had to attend one meeting before he/she could vote. Pat Green explained that this is in the JLC by-laws, but that legislation has provided more flexibility regarding the alternate’s ability to vote. The JLC Constitution, Article VII (2) states:

By-Laws may be amended, repealed or altered, in whole or in part, at any Regular Meeting, or at any Special Meeting called for that purpose, by the vote of two-thirds of the total authorized votes cast by the organizational representatives present and

voting at that particular meeting, provided that the proposed changes shall have been furnished, in writing, to each organizational representative at least fifteen days in advance of the meeting at which the proposed changes will be voted upon.

Chairman Wickersham asked the Council to review this issue and action will be taken at the next JLC meeting. Mason Botts stated that he would amend the language in the By-Laws to delete the requirement that an alternate must attend one meeting before he/she is allowed to vote. Mr. Botts will e-mail to members the amended language so that the issue can be voted on at the next JLC meeting.

JLC Nominations

Pat Green asked that if only one name is submitted by the veterans service organization, would this present a problem for the Governor's Office. Chairman Wickersham stated that originally organizations submitted only one name for consideration as an appointment to the JLC. He stated that the Secretary of the Commonwealth's goal is to ensure diversity, and it was requested that three names be submitted. He asked counsel if there was a law that required the Secretary of the Commonwealth to request three names.

Don Ferguson stated that if the Governor's Office requested three names, they would have three choices in the selection process. However, he suggested that if an organization has trouble with submitting three names to the Secretary of the Commonwealth, a letter be submitted, along with the organization's nominee/nominations, stating that a good faith effort was made, but because of size of the organization, etc. only one or two names could be submitted. He suggested that the JLC let the Governor act accordingly on the names submitted for appointments.

More discussion ensued. **A motion was made and seconded that Chairman Wickersham discuss with Chief of Staff Bill Leighty to have the process be clarified to only have one nomination from the organization for reappointments to the JLC.**

JLC Mileage Reimbursements

Pat Green inquired about mileage reimbursement for JLC members. Steven Combs stated that HB 1413, patroned by Delegate Hargrove, provided that JLC members would be reimbursed for travel expenditures. The bill was approved by both houses and signed by the Governor with an effective date of July 1, 2006. Staff would provide travel vouchers showing mileage from the home of record to the meeting site and return. If tolls are incurred, the member is responsible to provide this information. Travel expense vouchers will be distributed for signature at the next JLC meeting.

JLC Swearing-in Ceremony

Chairman Wickersham stated that he will work with Commissioner Burgess regarding the swearing-in ceremony, and will provide information to JLC members prior to that time.

Pat Green stated that he had been informed by the Secretary of the Commonwealth that once a member is sworn in, it is not necessary to attend a second swearing-in ceremony.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Determination of Date and Location of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the JLC will be on Wednesday, August 9, 2006, 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. at the American Legion Department of Virginia Building, 1708 Commonwealth Avenue in Richmond.

Mr. Wilder encouraged the Council to meet as soon as possible after the Governor's budget is released to solidify the JLC legislative agenda so that all other national organizations can align JLC issues within their legislative agendas. A tentative date was proposed for this meeting to be held on Wednesday, December 20th. A final determination will be made at the August 9th meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:10 p.m.

Minutes of the August 9, 2006 Meeting

A meeting of the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (JLC) was held on Wednesday, August 9, 2006, at the American Legion Department of Virginia Headquarters Building, 1708 Commonwealth Avenue in Richmond.

Members Present

Jim Aucoin, *AMVETS*; John C. Bonnell, Jr., *Marine Corps League*; Mason Botts, *Air Force Association*; Vince Burgess, *Commissioner, Department of Veterans Services (ex-officio/non-voting)*; David Ellis, *NAUS*; Paul Galanti, *Chairman, Board of Veterans Services (ex-officio/non-voting)*; J. Pat Green, *Roanoke Valley Veterans Council*; Robert O. Gray, *American Ex-Prisoners of War*; John T. Jackson, *Paralyzed Veterans of America*; Norman Jasper, *Military Order of the Purple Heart*; James Jones, *Korean War Veterans Association*; Daniel Miller, *Disabled American Veterans*; Connie T. O'Neill, *American Legion*; Richard J. Rinaldo, *Legion of Valor of the U. S., Inc.*; R. Goodwin Sacra, *Navy Seabee Veterans of America*; Kenneth Smith, *Virginia National Guard Association*; Thomas Snee, *Fleet Reserve Association*; Tom Stephen, Jr., *Reserve Officers Association*; Frank Wickersham, *MOAA*; and Sam Wilder, *Association of the United States Army*.

Members Absent

George Dumas, *Homeless and Disabled Veterans*; John Dunleavy, *Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge*; Paul R. Fink, *U. S. Navy Cruiser Sailors Association*; Richard Schneider, *Non-Commissioned Officers Association*; and Peter Snelling, *Veterans of Foreign Wars*

Others Present

S. Judson Stanley, Vice-Chair, Board of Veterans Services/Virginia War Memorial Board of Trustees
Jack Hilgers, Legislative Assistant to Delegate Leo Wardrup
Dan Karnes, President, Roanoke Valley Veterans Council
Willie Ransom, American Legion
Juanita Farrow, President & CEO, Farrow and Associates
Alvene P. Conyers, Program Manager, Farrow and Associates
Josie Pearson, Human Resource Director, Farrow and Associates
Harry Warner, Executive Director, Virginia War Memorial Education Foundation
Ronald Hudson, Citizen
Paul Hinkhouse, U.S. Department of Labor, Veterans Employment and Training Service
Sara Stein, ALSA DC/MD/VA
Anne Atkins, Virginia Department of Veterans Services
Lew Deal, Virginia Department of Veterans Services
Steven Combs, Virginia Department of Veterans Services
Roz Trent, Virginia Department of Veterans Services
Andrew Edwards, Virginia Department of Veterans Services
Don Ferguson, Office of the Attorney General
Jenny Holbert, Women Marine Association
Dassa Carvey, WAVES National

Agenda Packet:

Meeting Agenda; draft Minutes of the May 17, 2006, meeting; Virginia Department of Veterans Services News Release “*Spouses of Military Service Members Killed and Disabled Now Eligible for Education Benefits;*” Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program FAQs and attached Application; Executive Order Number 19 (06) and attached August 3, 2006 Memorandum to Executive Branch Agency Heads; Virginia Department of Veterans Services Legislative and Budget Items Related to Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations’ 2006 Legislative Agenda, V3 and attached August 8, 2006 e-mails re: JLC Legislative Agenda Input

Opening and Pledge of Allegiance

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 10:07 a.m. at the American Legion Department of Virginia Headquarters Building, 1708 Commonwealth Avenue in Richmond. Vice-Chair Sam Wilder led the Council in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag and Chaplain Norman Jasper led the Council in prayer.

Roll Call of VSOs and Quorum Determination

The roll was called. Seventeen of the twenty-three voting members were recorded as present, and a quorum was determined. Mason Botts arrived after the roll was called.

Review and Approval of May 17, 2006 Meeting Minutes

The minutes of the May 17, 2006 meeting were reviewed. There being no amendments, a motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes. The motion was carried unanimously.

First Public Comment Period:

Presentations were made on veterans family services; veterans preference; the Virginia War Memorial Foundation Educational Wing, and veterans employment training services as follows:

Veterans Family Services:

Juanita Farrow, Alvene Conyers, and Josie Pearson of Farrow and Associates presented information regarding Farrow and Associates Family Service Centers (FSC). Ms. Farrow, President and CEO, read the mission of FSC -- “*to prevent and/or resolve problems before they impact personal, family and unit readiness.*” The Center offers a variety of resources and opportunities which support and enhance quality of life for service members, family members and retirees; promotes both personal and family stability; and facilitates personal self-sufficiency and command readiness at various bases around the state of Virginia and throughout the country. Additional information regarding FSC can be found at www.farrowassociates.com. Discussion followed.

Commissioner Burgess added that DVS is engaged in outreach and awareness programs that are similar to the services provided by FSC. He suggested that possibly a partnership could be formed in providing these services. He asked DVS Communications Director, Anne Atkins, to further engage in this effort.

Sam Wilder also suggested that the Virginia Citizens Soldiers Support Council would be able to assist in promoting the awareness of the services provided by Farrow and Associates. Chairman Wickersham would provide the contact information.

Veterans Preference

Ron Hudson, an employee of the Commonwealth of Virginia, distributed a handout detailing his presentation regarding “preference for veterans” in regards to employment with the Commonwealth. Specifically, his concern was the Commonwealth’s “intent” to afford veterans preference. He stated that *veterans preference* should be clearly defined in the Code of Virginia so that people will clearly know what they should expect or should not expect from their government if they are employees. He strongly urged the JLC consider the following in its legislative agenda:

- adopt a resolution calling for an amendment to the Code of Virginia to clearly define the terms “merit,” “consideration,” and “preference;”
- amend the code to be definitive as is the Code of the State of Texas; and
- if a definitive code is not adopted, a means of review be established which requires a detailed and quantified measure of qualifications for any veterans denied a promotion or appointment, and that JLARC be tasked to quantify those results and report them to the General Assembly.

Mr. Hudson asked that JLC members read the Department of Employment Dispute Resolution’s Administrative Hearing Case #8076 which was attached, and measure for themselves if “*preference*” really meant “*preference.*” In addition, he requested the JLC to consider a proposal that resources be made available (board/panel) to persons in the appeal process who can clearly explain why decisions are made and can clearly define processes.

Commissioner Burgess offered his personal opinion regarding hiring practices in the Commonwealth. He stated that when there are two candidates who are both equally qualified for a position, “veterans preference” should be exercised as part of the hiring decision-making process. He stated that the Department of Human Resource Management (DHRM) would be the state agency to address this issue.

Virginia War Memorial Educational Wing

Harry Warner, Executive Director, Virginia War Memorial Educational Foundation, urged and solicited the support of the JLC to include the Virginia War Memorial and its Educational Wing as a priority in its 2007 legislative agenda. He stated that because of the increased volume of visitors to the War Memorial over the past ten years (approximately 100% increase), including school groups, participants to patriotic events, Memorial and Veterans Day events, seminars, etc., the War Memorial has become too small to adequately house the increased volume of guests. To address the increased

space needs, Delegate Hargrove introduced legislation during the 2006 General Assembly to provide \$4 million in General Funds for the War Memorial Educational Wing. However, only \$500,000 in General Funds and \$2 million in Non-General Funds were appropriated. Amendments for an additional \$3.5 million in General Funds were proposed on both the House and Senate; however, neither amendment was passed. The cost of the new wing is estimated at \$5.6 million. The Virginia War Memorial Board of Trustees will raise \$1.6 million towards this goal. The General Assembly is being requested to fund \$4 million (\$3.5 million requested in 2007).

Discussion followed. Mr. Warner distributed a flyer of upcoming events and invited JLC members to attend.

S. Judson Stanley, Vice-Chair of the Board of Veterans Services and a member of the Virginia War Memorial Board of Trustees, concurred with Mr. Warner's comments. He encouraged JLC members to attend the House Appropriations Committee meeting on September 18th to have a "show of force" from the veterans' population.

Veterans Employment and Training Service

Paul Hinkhouse, State Director of the U.S. Department of Labor's Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS) gave a brief summation of VETS programs:

- Transition Assistance Program (TAP) - In Virginia, there are nine (9) active military sites wherein TAP workshops are conducted for separating military members. Sites include: Quantico Marine Corps Base, Henderson Hall, Fort Myer, Fort Belvoir, Fort Lee, Fort Eustis, Langley Air Force Base, the Naval Surface Warfare Center – Dahlgren Division, and Norfolk Naval Station. The Norfolk TAP program is the largest, with 2 workshops per week facilitated by Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVERs) and Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) staff. Approximately 16,000 servicemen go through TAP briefings over the course of a year. Active duty military take priority in these workshops, with an average of 84 service members in each workshop. There is an initiative to expand the TAP to National Guard & Reserve units. This has become difficult due to the 90-day period from the time when the guardsmen come back from deployment and when they return for reserve drill. Most problems occur during the 90-day period as family members and servicemen are getting readjusted to civilian life. VETS would like to become more involved in TAP workshops on a weekend bases, when most reserve drills take place. However, additional resources are needed, as the bases do not have adequate training facilities or the ability to conduct workshops. Mr. Hinkhouse asked the JLC for support in this effort.
- Jobs for Veterans Act, Public Law 107288 - Virginia will receive the largest amount in grant ever received – over \$4 million

- Priority of Service – The U.S. Department of Labor is responsible for veterans preference within federal law. There is a federal law and a state directive that encourages public agencies, especially in the employment training area, to provide priority service to service members. This, unfortunately, is not occurring. Mr. Hinkhouse urged the JLC to do all it could to promote awareness of the law. In addition, he encouraged the JLC to do all it could to promote clarity in veterans preference at the state level.

Commissioner's Update

Commissioner Burgess informed the JLC that he would need to depart early as he would be joining U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) Secretary Nicholson to speak at the Jewish War Veterans National Convention luncheon being held at the Omni Hotel at 12:00 noon.

Commissioner Burgess introduced the following:

- New Veterans Service Organization representatives expected to join the JLC:
Jenny Holbert, Women Marine Association; Dassa Carvey, WAVES National.
- New DVS staff: Anne Atkins and Lew Deal
Anne Atkins, Director of Communications - Ms. Atkins is an on-loan executive from the Department of Motor Vehicles with 30 years of experience with state government in public relations and communications.
- *Lew Deal, DVS Deputy Director for Outreach & Special Projects* - Mr. Deal is a retired Marine Corps Lieutenant. Colonel who is working for DVS on a part-time basis. He has been charged to network with the VSOs and other civic organizations at the community, regional and state level to make veterans aware of the services of the Department. Mr. Deal will also be playing an integral role in the Department's efforts to raise the awareness of the Department's services with the Virginia National Guard and the Reserve.

Ms. Atkins informed the JLC of the following upcoming events:

Post Deployment Health Activities - Saturday, August 12 – Sunday, August 13, 2006

The DVS would be participating in three post deployment health reassessment activities. They will be held at the Omni Hotel in Richmond, in Blackstone and at the armory in Cedar Bluff. Benefits representatives will be present at all three locations. State Approving Agency for Veterans Education and Training (SAA) representatives will be present in Richmond and in Blackstone.

Veterans Expo - Saturday, September 16, 2006

The DVS will sponsor a Veterans Expo, inviting between 20-30 agencies that would provide information and services of interest to veterans and their families.

This will be held at the Community Center in downtown Wytheville. Free parking will be available.

Fort Eustis Retiree Appreciation Day – Saturday, September 16, 2006

DVS Benefits Services, Cemetery, and Care Center representatives will be present at the Fort Eustis Retiree Appreciation Day activities.

Fort Lee Retiree Appreciation Day - Saturday, October 7, 2006

DVS Benefits Services, Cemetery, and Care Center representatives will be present at the Fort Lee Retiree Appreciation Day activities.

DVS is working with American Legion to have presence at the American Legion meeting in late October.

Commissioner Burgess urged members to advise Ms. Atkins of any events taking place in their organizations so that events can be included on the DVS Calendar of Events. (DVS Calendar of Events attached).

JLC Membership/Alternates

The Commissioner stated that until members were officially notified otherwise, they remained as representatives of their respective organizations on the JLC. The Secretary of the Commonwealth has received information from all organizations, and will soon be announcing appointments to the JLC. It was clarified that *alternates* were appointed JLC representatives. The representatives should submit the name of the alternate to the Department. The Commissioner will then send letters of confirmation to alternates.

DVS Organizational Update:

- The DVS is continuing to have the administrative functions of the agency relocated to Richmond. This is a primary long-term goal of the Department.
- Two positions (with similar operations) in the Finance and Administration office have been abolished and functions have been combined. The procurement function has been outsourced. The Educational Service Specialist position will be advertised shortly. JLC members will receive notification of all vacant positions so that they can communicate to persons who may have interest in working for DVS.
- The Financial Management System is still being developed. Targeted completion: fall of 2006.
- DVS hired one VSR at McGuire; second position closing date: August 10, 2006

DVS Legislative Update:

- The 2006 was one of the more successful budget years for DVS. Many initiatives were passed due to the support of Governors Warner and Kaine, strong bi-partisan support from the General Assembly, and support from DVS boards. New positions include:

- Care Centers
 - 30 positions, including 25 certified nursing assistants, approved for the Virginia Veterans Care Center for FY07
 - 50 positions approved for the Sitter-Barfoot Veterans Care Center in FY07; 183 additional positions in FY08
- Benefits Services
 - 3 veterans services representative positions approved for FY07 (1 at the Hampton VA Medical Center; 1 at the Salem VA Medical Center, and 1 in Northern Virginia)
 - 2 full-time administrative positions and 8 part-time administrative positions approved for FY07, with the 8 part-time positions to be converted to full time in FY08)
- Cemetery Services:
 - 5 positions approved for FY07 (2 groundskeepers; 1 mechanic; 2 administrative) to be distributed between the cemeteries in Suffolk and Amelia
 - Moving forward with securing property for a third cemetery in southwest Virginia
- Educational Services (SAA):
 - 2 Educational Service Specialists – part-time (1 in Roanoke; 1 in Tidewater)
- Capital Budget
 - \$3.6 million in additional construction for the 160-bed phase of the Sitter-Barfoot Veterans Care Center
 - DVS is authorized to accept donation of land from the Radford Army Ammunition Plant for construction of a cemetery in Southwest Virginia
 - \$14.6 million, representing the Commonwealth's 35% share of constructions costs, for the Hampton Roads Veterans Care Center

The Commissioner advised that he would be speaking before the House Appropriations Committee on September 18th and welcomed JLC members to attend.

Executive Order Number Nineteen (2006) (EO 19)

The Commissioner focused on Executive Order Number Nineteen and the August 3rd memorandum to agency heads, which was included in the agenda packet. He stated that EO 19, signed by Governor Kaine (effective June 16, 2006), outlined steps that the Commonwealth of Virginia government will take to reinvigorate and improve services for Virginia's veterans. The Governor has directed that all state agencies identify ways to partner with DVS in offering new, expanded, or customized services for veterans. DVS will establish a comprehensive baseline measurement of current services provided by state agencies and identify opportunities for improvement. An example of the partnership intended by EO 19 is the fact that DVS has placed five VSRs at Virginia Employment Commission offices across the Commonwealth and will continue to work with the VEC in outreach efforts. An interim report is due to the Governor by October

15th; final report due by April 30, 2007. These issues will come before the 2008 General Assembly session when the next biennial budget is adopted.

The Commissioner stated that the effects of EO 19 may lead to additional legislative initiatives for 2008. He stressed the importance of the JLC finalizing its legislative agenda. The Chairs of both the BVS and the JLC will present the JLC 2007 legislative agenda at the next BVS meeting (September 18, 2006). This information will be submitted to the Governor as part of the legislative package for the 2007 General Assembly session.

Chairman Wickersham emphasized that the JLC should be in support of DVS strategies and initiatives.

Comments from Chairs:

Chairman Wickersham acknowledged Paul Galanti, newly elected Chair of the BVS. Mr. Galanti emphasized that the JLC represents 750,000 veterans in the Commonwealth and plays an integral role in support of veterans throughout the state.

The Chair also recognized S. Judson Stanley, Vice-Chair of the BVS. Mr. Stanley commented that the "State Exemption for Personal Property Taxes for 100% Disabled Veterans" JLC legislative initiative is already written into the law. Mr. Stanley will send the exact code section and language to Chairman Wickersham.

The JLC stood in recess for 15 minutes. (11:40 a.m.)

Chairman Wickersham called the meeting back to order at 11:55 a.m.

Old Business

Discussion, Ranking, and Vote of Proposed Legislative Issues for 2006-2007

Each JLC representative stated its organization's legislative priorities. After discussion, the JLC ranked its top 2007 legislative initiatives as follows:

1. Strengthen Virginia Guard and Reserve (includes family service centers; tax exemptions)
2. Support for DVS Strategic Plan and Budget (includes third cemetery and care center; spinal cord injury, etc.)
3. In-state tuition for Active Duty service members stationed in Virginia
4. Funding for the Virginia War Memorial Educational Wing (also add language to facilitate the construction of the Fredericksburg Area War Memorial)
5. Veterans Preference
6. Pay Day Lending
7. State Tax Exemption for Virginia Resident Active/Guard/Reserve while serving on active duty OCONUS

Don Ferguson stated that the scope of DVS regarding whether the national guard and active military members are subject to the Department's oversight is a recurring issue. He stated that in a 1973 opinion of the Office of the Attorney General (OAG), concerning "what is a veteran" for purposes of a tax exemption of vehicles for disabled veterans, it was concluded that since the term "veteran" is not clearly defined in the Code of Virginia, the Virginia law would look to the Federal definition of a "veteran." The federal law determined that a veteran is a person who is already discharged from the armed service. The 1973 OAG opinion read that the veterans exemption would not apply to people existing in serving on active duty. He suggested that the JLC eliminate some issues because they relate directly to active duty service/national guard service, but not specifically related to veterans services, and advised that the JLC focus on issues that are clearly veterans issues.

Discussion followed concerning "who" is included in the definition of a veteran. Attorney Ferguson advised that he would address this issue in a memorandum to the Commissioner. Chairman Wickersham stated that the JLC will include the "support for Virginia Guard and Reserve" in its 2007 legislative initiatives, and if a decision negates this inclusion, the JLC will address this as an "issue of concern."

Jack Hilgers concurred with Attorney Ferguson in that only veterans issues fall under the purview of the Department of Veterans Services. He urged JLC members to meet with legislators to pursue this issue.

JLC Officer Nominations for 2006-2007

Dan Miller stated that because Pat Green had been appointed to the Board of Veterans Services, the slate of officers presented at the May 17th meeting was revised. Therefore, the JLC Nominating Committee submitted for consideration the following slate of officers for 2006-2007:

Chairman – Mason Botts
Air Force Association

Vice-Chairman – Sam Wilder
Association of the U.S. Army

Chairman Wickersham asked for nominations from the floor. There being none, a motion was made and seconded to approve the slate of officers by acclamation. The motion was carried unanimously. On behalf of the JLC, Mr. Miller thanked Mr. Wickersham for his outstanding leadership for 2005-2006. Members acknowledged with applause.

Connie O'Neal submitted for the record a vocal e-mail of appreciation which read:

" ...Dear Frank ...

On behalf of all the members of the JLC ... I hereby congratulate you ... and offer a sincere, well done ... for your most successful year as Chairman, JLC ... In a word,

your superb term as Chairman JLC was ... okey dokey!"

Mr. Wickersham expressed his appreciation to the JLC for his tenure as Chair. He acknowledged the growth and professionalism of the Council, and recognized the prior leadership of Mr. Miller and Mr. O'Neill as past Chairmen. He thanked the JLC for their cooperation and support.

JLC Alternates

Steven Combs clarified that the JLC representatives should submit a letter to the Commissioner nominating his/her alternate. The Commissioner, in turn, will send a letter acknowledging receipt of the nomination as an alternate to the JLC. The DVS will obtain copies of all nomination of alternate letters sent to the Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth. It was noted that when the designated alternate cannot attend a meeting, if needed, a "third" alternate would attend bringing a letter/e-mail from the representative giving this alternate the authorization to vote on the representative's behalf.

Mr. Green stated that the Code of Virginia allowed members to only serve two terms. He stressed the importance of choosing an alternate that will/can transition as a JLC member. The alternate should attend meetings with the JLC member to make the transition as easy as possible in understanding JLC issues.

In addition, Mr. Green noted that during the 2006 General Assembly session, legislation for travel reimbursement for JLC members was passed; however, funding was not included. Mr. Combs clarified that since legislation had been passed into law, the DVS will absorb the cost. Travel reimbursement vouchers will be sent to each JLC member for signature and return to DVS for travel reimbursement payment processing.

New Business

Newly elected Vice-Chair, Sam Wilder proceeded in chairing the meeting until the arrival of Mason Botts.

Citizen's Support Council Representative

Frank Wickersham briefly commented on the Virginia Citizens Solders Support Council (VCSSC). He stated that members of the VCSSC are appointed by the Governor, and that the Secretary of Public Safety serves as Chairman. The VCSSC bridges the gap between the military bases, the service members, and citizens councils such as the JLC. Its primary focus is the Guard and Reserve, as opposed to the active duty bases.

Mr. Wilder further stated that the JLC is now an official member of the VCSSC, and stressed the importance of having JLC representation on the VCSSC.

Mr. Miller made a motion, seconded by David Ellis and Mr. O'Neill, that Vice-Chairman Wilder represent the JLC on the VCSSC, given that he had expressed an interest to do so. Vice-Chairman Wilder asked that an alternate be named, should he be unable to attend meetings. The motion was amended that Vice-Chairman Wilder would be the JLC

primary representative and Chairman Botts be the alternate representative on the VCSSC. There being no discussion, the motion was carried unanimously.

JLC 2006-2007 Meeting Schedule

To assist in planning meeting schedules, Mr. Hilgers briefed the members on the 2006-2007 Legislative Schedule, as follows:

- July 17 – December 11, 2006 - Legislators profile bills. This is the time for organizations to meet with legislators and pursue legislative agendas. There are no restrictions to the number of bills that can be filed during this time. After December 11th, Delegates are limited to five bills; Senators are limited to 8 bills. The Governor has no restrictions on the number of bills he can submit.
- December 15, 2006 - Governor submits budget to the legislature
- January 10, 2007 - 2007 General Assembly convenes (2nd in January)
- February 24, 2007 - 2007 General Assembly adjourns
- April 4, 2007 - Reconvened Session. General Assembly considers the Governor's amendments and vetoes.

He stressed that if the JLC or veterans service organizations wanted the definition of veterans to be addressed or modified by legislation, now would be the time to do so. He advised that if modified legislation is passed, it would not take effect until July 1, 2007.

Based on a prior discussion with Commissioner Burgess, Mr. Green proposed that meetings be set for the remainder of 2006 and for 2007. After discussion, the following meeting schedule was adopted:

- October 11, 2006
- December 20, 2006
- January 17, 2007
- March 14, 2007
- May 16, 2007
- August 8, 2007
- October 10, 2007
- December 20, 2007

With the arrival of newly elected Chairman Botts, further discussion ensued. Mr. Green informed the JLC that it was suggested that the January 17th meeting be a breakfast with the legislators to emphasize the JLC issues. This will give an opportunity for legislators to see the JLC as an organization. Commissioner Burgess has agreed that the DVS will manage the logistics.

Proponents for Issues

Vice-Chairman Wilder suggested that the Chair assign a JLC member or members to be subject matter experts (proponents) in conducting research/background on specific JLC legislative initiatives. Those assigned would take ownership and be knowledgeable, effective advocates for the particular legislative issue(s) on behalf of the JLC. He also suggested that the subject matter experts might prepare point papers (talking points) for use when meeting with legislators. He distributed a “draft” talking paper as an example for the JLC’s consideration. He further suggested that assignments be made prior to the October meeting.

Chairman Botts asked any interested member to contact him via e-mail if they had a desire to assume this responsibility. The Chair will also advise members, of the need for a representative to attend meetings on his behalf, if necessary and/or appropriate (i.e. Veterans Services Foundation meetings; Board of Veterans Services meetings; DVS meetings, etc.)

Mr. Green requested suggested that a new JLC member listing be developed adding the contact information for alternates.

Second Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Determination of Date and Location of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the JLC will be on Wednesday, October 11, 2006, 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. at the American Legion Department of Virginia Building, 1708 Commonwealth Avenue in Richmond.

In the absence of Commissioner Burgess, on behalf of the DVS, Mr. Combs presented plaques of appreciation to past chairs and vice-chairs of the JLC for outstanding leadership. Plaques were presented to the following:

Frank Wickersham, Chair, 2005-2006

Sam Wilder, Vice Chair, 2005-2006

Connie O’Neill, Chair, 2004-2005
2004-2005

Frank Wickersham, Vice-Chair,

Dan Miller, Chair, 2003-2004

Jim Aucoin, Vice-Chair, 2003-2004

Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

Draft Minutes of the October 11, 2006 Meeting

DRAFT

A meeting of the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (JLC) was held on Wednesday, October 11, 2006, at the American Legion Department of Virginia Headquarters Building, 1708 Commonwealth Avenue in Richmond.

Members Present

Jim Aucoin, *AMVETS*; John C. Bonnell, Jr., *Marine Corps League*; Mason Botts, *Air Force Association*; Daniel D. Boyer, *Veterans of Foreign Wars*; Vince Burgess, *Commissioner, Department of Veterans Services (ex-officio/non-voting)*; John T. Edwards, *Korean War Veterans Association*; David Ellis, *NAUS*; Robert O. Gray, *American Ex-Prisoners of War*; Jenny M. Holbert, *Women Marine Association*; John T. Jackson, *Paralyzed Veterans of America*; Norman Jasper, *Military Order of the Purple Heart*; Cornelius T. O'Neill, *American Legion*; Frank Sherman, *Roanoke Valley Veterans Council*; Kenneth Smith, *Virginia National Guard Association*; Tom Stephen, Jr., *Reserve Officers Association*; Frank Wickersham, *MOAA*; and Sam Wilder, *Association of the United States Army*.

Members Absent

Daniel Miller, *Disabled American Veterans*; Richard J. Rinaldo, *Legion of Valor of the U. S., Inc.*; R. Goodwin Sacra, *Navy Seabee Veterans of America*; Thomas Snee, *Fleet Reserve Association*; and Richard Schneider, *Non-Commissioned Officers Association*

Alternates Present

Jack Hilgers, *Legion of Valor of the U. S., Inc.*
David Martinez, *Disabled American Veterans*

Others Present

Russell Fenn, *Marine Corps League*
Paul Hamaker, *NAUS*
Dan Karnes, *Roanoke Valley Veterans Council*
Don Kaiserman, *Association of the U.S. Army*
John Velleca, *Virginia National Guard Association*
Jon Hatfield, Director, Virginia War Memorial
Louis Bromley, VDOT
Roz Trent, Virginia Department of Veterans Services
Steven Combs, Virginia Department of Veterans Services
Andrew Edwards, Virginia Department of Veterans Services
Anne Atkins, Virginia Department of Veterans Services
Lew Deal, Virginia Department of Veterans Services
Cindy Norwood, Office of the Attorney General

Agenda Packet

Meeting Agenda; draft Minutes of the August 9, 2006, meeting; Guide through the Virginia General Assembly Homepage; JLC Membership Listing; Legislative Objectives – 2006-07; JLC 2007 Legislative Agenda; Talking Papers: Military Family Support Programs; DVS Strategic Plan and Budget; In-State Tuition for Service Members; Construct an Education Center at the Virginia War Memorial; Pay Day Lending; October 11, 2006 Memo from JLC Chair re: “Alternate Members” and attached JLC Alternate Designation Form, Point Paper: Sitter-Barfoot Veterans Care Center; Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program Clarification of Commonwealth of Virginia Policy ; Fisher House Update

Opening and Pledge of Allegiance

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m. at the American Legion Department of Virginia Headquarters Building, 1708 Commonwealth Avenue in Richmond. John Jackson led the Council in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

Roll Call of VSOs and Quorum Determination

Roz Trent called the roll. Seventeen of the twenty-one member Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) were recorded as being represented (16 by a primary member, 1 by an alternate member), and a quorum was determined.

Introduction of New VSO Representatives and Guests

The newly elected Chairman, Mason Botts welcomed members and guests to the October meeting of the JLC. He acknowledged the following:

- New VSO representatives to the JLC: John T. Edwards (*Korean War Veterans Association*); Frank Sherman (*Roanoke Valley Veterans Council*); and Daniel Boyer (*Veterans of Foreign Wars*).
- JLC Alternates present: Jack Hilgers, *Legion of Valor of the U. S.*; Don Kaiserman, *AUSA*; Russell Fenn, *Marine Corps League*; John Velleca, *Virginia National Guard Association*; Paul Hamaker, *NAUS*; and Dan Karnes, *Roanoke Valley Veterans Council*.
- New VSO represented on the JLC: Jenny Holbert, *Women Marine Association*
- VSOs no longer represented on the JLC: *Homeless and Disabled Veterans*; *Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge*; and *U. S. Navy Cruiser Sailors Association*.
- DVS and OAG staff: Anne Atkins, DVS Director of Communications; Lew Deal, DVS Deputy Director of Communications; and Cindy Norwood, Office of the Attorney General.

Chairman Botts focused attention to the updated JLC Membership Roster, which was included in the agenda packets. He asked each member to review the contact information and submit any changes to Mrs. Trent.

Review and Approval of August 9, 2006 Meeting Minutes

The minutes of the August 9, 2006 meeting were reviewed. A **motion** was made by Norman Jasper, seconded by Kenneth Smith and passed unanimously, to approve the minutes of the August 9, 2006 meeting, with the following amendment:

P. 4, 1st ¶, line 9 – change “The General Assembly is being requested to fund \$4 million” to “The General Assembly is being requested to fund \$3.5 million in 2007.”

First Public Comment Period

There was no public comment.

Update from Chairs

Paul Galanti, Chairman of the Board of Veterans Services, had been called to attend another meeting and could not be present.

Lydia Dudley, Chairperson, Veterans Services Foundation (VSF), gave a brief overview of the role of the VSF. Ms. Dudley has been a member of the VSF since its inception in 2003, but had recently been voted as Chairperson in July 2006. She stated that part of her plan as Chairperson was to establish more collaboration between the VSF, the BVS and the JLC. She stated that the VSF consisted of eight (8) members appointed by the Governor and the Commissioner of Veterans Services and the Chairman of the Board of Veteran Services, who serve as ex-officio members. Ray Smoot of the VSF serves as Vice-Chair.

Ms. Dudley stated that the VSF’s responsibility focused primarily on (1) administering the Veterans Service Fund and make expenditures from the Fund to the Department of Veterans Services to provide supplemental funding for the DVS’s services and programs, and (2) to receive and seek funds as appropriate for veterans’ needs. It is not a competing factor with the BVS or the JLC. She emphasized the importance of focusing more attention on how the VSF might play a role in meeting the unmet needs of veterans in the Commonwealth. She solicited and welcomed any input/suggestions from the JLC to assist in this effort. A formal letter to the Chairs of the BVS and JLC would be forthcoming asking for input regarding VSF future activities and detailing VSF goals, objectives and strategies.

Discussions regarding the VSF mission/purpose followed. Sam Wilder asked if the Fisher House would be a project that the VSF could sponsor. Steven Combs presented

and distributed updated information regarding the Fisher House initiative, which was a part of the JLC legislative agenda. Updated information, received from Jim Weiskopf, Vice President of Communications for the Fisher House Foundation, is as follows:

- The USDVA has accepted a proffer from the Fisher House Foundation to build a Fisher House on the grounds of the Hunter Holmes McGuire VA Medical Center in Richmond.
- Initial estimates for the McGuire Fisher House
 - 21 rooms
 - 16,000 square feet
 - 12 living suites on the first floor and 9 suites on the second floor
 - Will have a floor plan similar to 21-room houses under construction in Tampa and San Antonio
- Next Steps
 - The Fisher House Foundation will send a team – including an architect – to discuss site selection and other issues with the McGuire VAMC staff. This will probably be scheduled sometime within the next month
 - Sometime after this meeting, a site on the McGuire VAMC campus will be selected
 - The Fisher House Foundation architect(s) will then prepare architectural plans
 - The Fisher House Foundation construction manager will draw up specifications for the project, and will send out construction bids to firms in the Richmond area
- The Fisher House Foundation anticipates beginning construction of the McGuire Fisher House in early/mid 2007, with completion in late 2007

Chairman Botts asked Commissioner Burgess to further clarification regarding the relationship between the BVS, JLC and VSF. Commissioner Burgess stated that the Board of Veteran Services (BVS) is a 19-member policy board, which consists of citizen members and legislators. The DVS advises the Board on operational issues and seeks advice on broad scale issues (i.e. EO 19). The Chairman of the JLC and VSF serve as ex-officio members. He stated that the JLC legislative agenda was reviewed and accepted by the BVS. Legislative members of the Board serve as advocates and/or patrons of legislation. He stated that there is connectivity between the three entities (JLC, BVS and VSF). It is critical that the Chair of the VSF attend JLC meetings to be advised of its operations, as well as to share and gain input as how the VSF can assist in JLC efforts.

Department of Transportation (VDOT), Disabled Veterans Program

Louis Bromley, Coordinator of the Wounded Veterans Program, stated that a presentation had been given at the May 17, 2006 JLC meeting on VDOT's new initiative, "*Transitional Internship for Returning Veterans.*" The purpose of this initiative was to establish a two-year non-traditional transitional internship program for 6-10 returning

wounded and disabled veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan who are Virginia residents. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) had granted funding in the amount of \$500,000, and VDOT contributed \$100,000 as “in kind” contributions (i.e., VDOT employees donating time, money) to help promote the program.

Mr. Bromley stated the two-year internship program helps develop job skills and/or improves current job skills. Jobs will not be created, but rather candidates will be placed in open jobs and the environment will be tailored to meet their needs. VDOT is partnering with private enterprise in this effort to help veterans return to the job market.

He stated that the primary focus of the program is on current wounded veterans. However, he stated that the program is also open to any veteran who is identified with a disability or is able to provide documentation of military service. In addition, the program is open to those veterans without disability or wounds, as well.

Mr. Bromley distributed information and asked the JLC for its assistance in referring interested veterans to the program.

Chairman Botts stated that this program might tie-in with the JLC legislative initiative - Veterans Preference.

Commissioner’s Update

Commissioner Burgess welcomed the new members to the JLC. He gave a summary of the following national legislation which DVS is tracking:

- *S.2694 - removes certain limitations on attorney representation of claimants for veterans benefits in administrative proceedings before the Department of Veterans Affairs, to make certain improvements in the area of memorial affairs, and for other purposes.*

Commissioner Burgess stated that there is concern regarding this piece of legislation as there are claims officers already providing this service. At a meeting of the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs, a resolution was passed opposing this legislation. It would open it up for attorneys to take on the representation of veterans in the appeal process and many Veterans Service Organizations feel there is no need for this legislation.

There is strong indication that this bill is on its way to passage.

- *S.2762/H.R. 5671 ensures appropriate payment for cost of long term care payments to state Veterans Care Center as at the same rate as a private nursing home.*

Bill Van Thiel, Virginia Veterans Care Center Administrator, stated that presently, the USDVA can contract with private nursing homes for a veterans care

contract at an all-inclusive rate (pays for room, medication, doctor's visits, lab work, etc.) for a certain period of time. The Virginia Veterans Care Center (VVCC), however, gets a per diem from the USDVA, which pays for about 1/3 of care. The VVCC is ineligible for a contract. These contracts are awarded based on service-connected disability percentage; however, for the VVCC, this does not matter. It will only get the per diem. This legislation addresses this issue and allows the VVCC and other state care centers to participate in the contractual arrangement.

It is anticipated that the legislation will pass.

Chairman Botts stated that the JLC had previously addressed this issue (about two years ago) in its 2004 legislative agenda. He asked Steven Combs research this issue and provide information to him.

- *S.2766 transfers property at the Radford Army Ammunition Plant from the DoD to the Commonwealth of Virginia for the purposes of a state veterans cemetery.*

Commissioner Burgess stated that this legislation is on its way to the President for signature.

Commissioner Burgess stated that DVS will keep the JLC abreast of the status of all national legislation.

House Appropriations Committee Presentation

A copy of the September 18, 2006 presentation given by Commissioner Burgess to the House Appropriations Committee (HAC) was included in the agenda packet. The presentation was given at the suggestion of Delegate Kirk Cox for the purpose of providing the HAC with a status of how the Department was using the funding and positions that had been appropriated. The presentation was very well received by the HAC members and staff.

A Report from the Auditor of Public Accounts was addressed in the presentation. Commissioner Burgess stated that DVS is addressing the specific findings of the APA Report by implementing a new Financial Management System and developing proper procedures/policy and ensuring they are implemented throughout the agency. DVS will be providing the Department of Accounts with a status report every three months. The BVS Budget and Strategic Planning Sub-Committee will review the status report and a full report and a full report will be presented to the BVS. The JLC will receive a copy of the status report as well.

The Financial Management System (FMS), an automated financial system, is critical to the Department's success in keeping track of and monitoring expenditures and funds that have been allocated to the agency in an effective manner. The FMS will be finalized by the end of the year and used in presenting the operational budget to the BVS.

Executive Order Nineteen (EO19) Status and Legislative Process for 2007 General Assembly Session

Mr. Combs is developing the interim report, which is due to the Governor in mid-October. (The JLC will receive a copy of this report).

As a result of EO19, a meeting was held on October 5th with the Chair of the BVS (Vice-Chairman, Judson Stanley attended); JLC Chairman and Vice Chairman, Mason Botts and Sam Wilder; representatives from the Virginia Military Advisory Council (VMAC); and representatives from the Virginia Citizen Solder Support Council (VCSSC). Also present were representatives of the Virginia National Guard, the Office of the Secretary of Public Safety, and the Department of Veterans Services. The purpose of the meeting was to develop a proposed joint list of legislative initiatives, which was embraced by all organizations. A full listing of legislative initiatives will be presented to the Governor and the Governor's Policy Office. It is envisioned that the Governor's Office will support some of these initiatives during the next session of the General Assembly. EO19 provided a mechanism for state agencies to work together on improving services to Virginia's veterans. A result of EO19 will be a roadmap for how Virginia can rank as one of the top five states in the country for providing benefits and services for veterans.

The final report of EO19 is due April 2007.

Request for Proposals (RFPs) – DVS will put out an RFP for a statewide study for care centers in Virginia, to include the northern Virginia area. Goal: (1) have a vision of where the needs are and (2) how to approach and address the need. The RFP should be out by the end of the month.

In addition, as required by the budget, DVS will put out a RFP to assist the department in understanding the need and location for additional veterans cemetery. There will be a cemetery in southwest Virginia, but requests have been received to study the need for veterans cemeteries in other parts of the state.

Marketing and Outreach – Anne Atkins and Lew Deal have been very aggressive in spreading the word out about the services of DVS. A Veterans Expo was held in Wytheville, Virginia, with 250 veterans in attendance.

John Bonnell commended Lew Deal on his presentation to the Marine Corps League staff meeting.

Commissioner Burgess requested that Anne Atkins, DVS Director of Communications, give a presentation on the DVS Communication Plan at the next meeting of the JLC.

Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP) – (formerly the Virginia War Orphans Education Program). This program has gotten additional interest and involvement of family members, spouses and children who qualify. The eligibility for this program has been expanded to include spouses, and the upper age of qualifying children was raised from 25 to 29.

Issue: The Code of Virginia requires colleges and universities to waive tuition and required fees. In addition, the law provides for the waiver of room, board, books and supplies, but makes these waivers contingent on funds being appropriated or donated funds being received. There are issues with how the language is written (*i.e. ...from such funds as may be appropriated...*) Because no funds have been specifically appropriated to support VMSDEP, the colleges and universities do not waive room, board, books, and supplies. DVS is working with Delegate Janis, sponsor of HB1272 during the 2006 General Assembly, and the Governor's Office on this issue.

The JLC recessed for 5 minutes.

Old Business

JLC Legislative Agenda Updates

Chairman Botts reiterated Commissioner Burgess' comments regarding the meeting held on October 5, 2006. He stated that the JLC legislative agenda was well represented. He commended Vice-Chairman Sam Wilder in his effort in taking the lead on JLC legislative issues. A JLC Legislative Sub-Committee was formed to include the following:

Sam Wilder, Chair
Connie O'Neill, Vice-Chair
Jack Hilgers
Ken Smith
John Jackson

Chairman Botts revisited the issue of the JLC focusing on active duty military. Per legislative code, the JLC's primary charter is on **veterans** services, not active military. In discussions at the October 5th meeting, it was decided as a group, that focus would be placed on active duty military as well as veterans issues, as long as the veterans' issues was the primary focus.

Chairman Botts focused attention to the 2007 Legislative Agenda, which was included in the agenda packets. Vice Chairman Wilder stated that based on information submitted, the JLC collectively represented over 250,000 veterans, and urged members to communicate this with legislators when speaking on JLC legislative issues. Copies of the JLC representation in Virginia was distributed.

JLC 2007 Legislative Objectives

Vice Chairman Wilder distributed **amended** copies of the JLC 2007 Legislative Objectives. He explained that the package included a one-page statement of the seven legislative objectives voted on and approved at the June 14th JLC meeting:

Priority #1 - Support for the Virginia National Guard and Reserves (Broken into
2
categories: (a) Preparedness and (b) Family Support Programs

Priority #2 – Fully fund the Department of Veterans Services Budget and Strategic Plan

Priority #3 – In-State Tuition for Service Members

Priority #4 – Funding for the Virginia War Memorial Foundation Wing

Priority #5 – Clarify Veterans “Preference” in Hiring Practices

Priority #6 – Pay Day Lending

Priority #7 – State Tax Exemption for Virginia Residents of the Armed Forces while
deployed overseas

Vice Chairman Wilder elaborated on each issue. Fact Sheets/Position Papers were attached for Priority #1, #2, #3, #4, and #6.

Discussion ensued on Priority #1 – Support for Virginia National Guard and Reserves – Family Support Programs. Frank Wickersham questioned the \$1.2 million provided to the Virginia Citizen Soldier Support Council (VCSSC) rather than the Adjutant General (TAG) in overseeing a combined approach to support families of the Guard and Reserve. Cindy Norwood stated that Guard is much better at family support than reserve; the TAG is over the Guard and someone needed to look out for the Reserve. Dan Boyer advised the JLC that the VFW operates a military assistance program that supports the family of reservists, guardsmen and active duty military in Virginia and every other state. Chairman Botts stated that in discussions at the October 5th Legislative Priorities meeting, it was noted that there are other organizations other than the Guard and Reserve that attention should be focused on. Vice-Chairman Wilder added that it was discussed that the various entities that provide family support fall under the umbrella of the VCSSC. He suggested that the VFW be represented under the VCSSC.

Chairman Botts requested an e-mail be sent to Mr. Combs that discusses the kinds of programs for families that each organization is involved in. This information will be given to the VCSSC.

Further discussion ensued.

Chairman Botts emphasized that the discussion centered around the JLC legislative agenda **only**; If VSOs have specific agendas, they should lobby for such.

Dave Ellis stated that the VMSDEP had not been funded. He asked if this item fell under “support for family support programs.” Chairman Botts stated that this was a different item and does not fall under “support for family programs.” Commissioner Burgess and Sam Wilder stated that the VMSDEP became an issue at the October 5th Legislative Priorities meeting and became a priority for the Governor.

Sam Wilder asked members to attend the House Commerce and Labor Committee meeting on Pay Day Lending on December 5th. Commissioner Burgess stated that this is carry-over bill. The Point of Contact will send reminder notices regarding this meeting.

JLC Points of Contact

Chairman Botts selected the following persons to serve as JLC Points of Contact for questions on legislative priorities listed below:

- Priority # 1 – Sam Wilder (primary)
- Priority # 2 – Dan Karnes (primary), Frank Sherman, Steven Combs
(subject matter expert)
- Priority # 3 – Jack Hilgers (primary), Don Kaiserman
- Priority # 4 - Dave Ellis (primary), Connie O’Neill, Jon Hatfield (subject
matter expert)
- Priority # 5 – Dan Boyer (primary to develop a point paper)
- Priority # 6 - Frank Wickersham (primary), Jack Hilgers, John Cooper,
Richard Rinaldo
- Priority # 7 - Frank Wickersham (primary), Jenny Holbert

Commissioner Burgess stated that DVS will develop a consistent format for the point papers with assigned bill numbers to be used during the General Assembly session.

The JLC unanimously accepted the 2007 Legislative Objectives distributed by Mr. Wilder.

The JLC recessed for 10 minutes.

Old Business (continued)

Sam Wilder made a motion that JLC accept the amended 2007 Legislative Objectives distributed at the October 11th meeting. Dan Boyer seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

The Chairman focused the members’ attention to the “Guide to Walking Through the Virginia General Assembly Homepage” which was included in the agenda packets for members’ use in tracking legislation.

JLC Alternates

Chairman Botts stated that the Code of Virginia states that the JLC member would be responsible for determining his/her alternate. Alternates may be temporary or permanent. He stated that there should be no organization that is not represented at JLC meetings. Included in the agenda packet was a memorandum from the Chair explaining the guidelines to ensure that all matters related to alternate JLC members are conducted in an effective, open, and timely manner. Also attached was an “Alternate Designation Form.” If JLC members had already selected an alternate, members were requested to fill out the form and return it to Roz Trent. If not, members were requested to send the form to Mrs. Trent by mail. Faxes would also be accepted.

Chairman Botts reminded members that if he/she could not attend a meeting, members should contact the alternate so designated with the Alternate Designation Form. This can

be done on a short term basis (if alternate is temporary) or have a form on file (if alternate is permanent).

Chairman Botts also emphasized that alternates were welcome to attend meetings and participate with JLC members; however, there would be only one reimbursement made for mileage per organization.

Jack Hilgers gave further clarification on S.2694. He stated that S.2694 is a bill designed to put money in trial lawyers' pockets and will not help veterans or speed the process. He stated that even though the bill is moving swiftly through the process, VSOs should contact senators and representatives and let them know of their opposition to the bill.

Mr. Hilgers made a motion that each JLC representative take this issue to his/her individual organization to support opposing this legislation. Dave Martinez seconded.

Discussion ensued.

Commissioner Burgess stated that he would send a copy of S.2694 and provide background information.

Further discussion ensued.

Mr. Hilgers amended the motion to read that JLC members take the issue back to member organizations and propose that if desired, organizations take an active role in fighting S. 2694 through contacting Senators and Congressmen, in addition to providing educational training on the services DVS.

No further discussion. Motion unanimously carried.

New Business:

October 5th Legislative Priorities Meeting Update

Chairman Botts stated that this issue had already been discussed. Actual documentation had not been received. Steven Combs had developed a listing of the different items that were pulled together to discuss prioritizing. Sam Wilder drafted the document that put things into groups that provided 4-5 items to propose to the Governor. He stated that because this is being handled by multiple groups, the papers are marked "*Governor's Confidential Working Papers*" and at this time, cannot be shared. As soon as he receives this information and is privileged to release the information, he will forward information to the JLC.

Sitter Barfoot Veterans Care Center Project Update

Chairman Botts focused attention to the handout included in the agenda packets entitled "Point Paper on the Sitter-Barfoot Veterans Care Center." Commissioner Burgess gave background information on the construction of the Care Center and informed the JLC of

concerns expressed by some organizations of changes in the reduction of the number of beds (not rooms) for the domiciliary care addition planned at the Sitter-Barfoot Veterans Care Center (SBVCC). Currently there is a 160-bed, single-occupancy room facility under construction. A 40-bed/40-room domiciliary care wing will be added. This is a change from the 80-bed/40-room facility originally planned. Bill Van Thiel, VVCC Administrator, gave an overview of the current status:

- 160-bed facility currently under construction
 - 120 skilled care (nursing) beds
 - 40 Alzheimer's beds
 - Projected completion – Spring 2007
 - Projected opening – July 2007
 - Total project costs: \$26.3 million
 - \$14.7 million – federal grant
 - \$11.6 million – Commonwealth of Virginia

- 40-bed addition
 - Domiciliary (assisted living) care
 - Construction expected to begin in 2009 or later
 - Project is ranked #88 of 160 on U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs “Priority List of Pending State Home Construction Grant Applications for FY 2007”
 - Total project costs: up to \$8 million
 - \$5.2 million – federal grant
 - \$2.8 million – Commonwealth of Virginia

Mr. Van Thiel stated that early in the planning stages, double-occupancy rooms for the skilled care and domiciliary care wings was originally discussed. However, due to recent health studies, infectious diseases and privacy issues, the health care industry has moved more toward private rooms. In addition, females presently comprise up to 15% of the military. The use of double occupancy rooms with one bathroom would not be feasible. A decision was made that the best and safest environment that can be provided for veterans is private rooms and private bathrooms.

Mr. Van Thiel further stated that construction of the facility will be as “home-like” as possible -- not like an “institutionalized” setting. He stated that many soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan are younger. They, too, may need the use of the facility, but do not want to be in a “nursing home” setting. The building is built long and wide. It is a one-floor facility and provides many entrances to the courtyard for security and safety purposes.

Additionally, Mr. Van Thiel stated that of the 160-bed facility, 40 beds will be for the Alzheimer's unit. He explained that the additional wing was cut from 60 beds to 40 beds. He explained that the Alzheimer's Unit needs to be smaller, as patients do not need excessive external stimulation. There are two (2) twenty-bed wings, each having a twenty-seat dining area and a day-room that connects to the dining area.

Mr. Van Thiel stated that DVS moved toward quality rather than quantity for veterans, and reduction of the beds provided a safer and more feasible environment.

Mr. Van Thiel stated that the DVS will submit a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a Long Term Care Center Feasibility Study to assist the department in understanding the market potential for long term care facilities for Virginia's Veteran population. The RFP will be submitted next week.

Discussion ensued.

Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP) Update
Members were directed to the point sheet included in the agenda packets. John Bonnell gave a brief background presentation regarding an issue encountered by Mr. Todd Golding of Winchester, a disabled veteran and his wife, an eligible student applicant, encountered at Lord Fairfax Community College. Mr. Golding takes issue with the interpretation of the Code of Virginia, Article 13-7.4:1.A.(v), which allows for the waiver of books and supplies. Mr. Golding believes that this section is not properly interpreted to allow for the reimbursement of software required for courses at Lord Fairfax CC.. Mr. Golding has asked that the JLC intercede to gain allowance for software to be reimbursable.

Discussion ensued.

Commissioner Burgess suggested that since no funds are currently available in college/university budgets to cover required supplies, the JLC will need to wait the see what occurs in the legislative process and the Governor's Office. Steven Combs suggested that a more immediate interpretation regarding software could be requested from the Office of the Attorney General and report at the next JLC meeting.

Cindy Norwood, Office of the Attorney General, stated that it may depend on what the software is used for. If required by professor of the course, she is unaware why "software" would not be considered supplies. She will do additional research.

Mr. Bonnell made a motion that the JLC recommends that, within the funds available, the Commonwealth of Virginia interpret that "supplies" includes required computer software as a waived expense under the Code. Dave Ellis seconded. The motion carried with one opposition (David Martinez).

Mr. Bonnell stated that Mr. Golding has expressed his appreciation to the staff at DVS for their helpfulness with this issue and his pleasure with the direction of proceeding that the DVS has taken in this issue.

JLC Legislative Campaign Plan

Sam Wilder distributed a “draft” JLC Legislative Campaign Plan. He explained that in addition to contacting individual delegates/senators, the draft “Campaign Plan” lists state delegates/senators who should be contacted on key issues/sponsors.

Key members of the JLC Legislative Sub-Committee are: Sam Wilder (Chair), Connie O’Neill, (Vice-Chair), Jack Hilgers, Ken Smith, and John Jackson.

Don Kaiserman informed the JLC that the MOAA Richmond Area Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America kicked off a program to welcome home the 80th Division, headquartered in Richmond at the Defense Supply Center. The objective of this event is three-fold:

- To show respect and appreciate to troops and families
- Recognize an opportunity for recruiting
- Retention

Mr. Kaiserman met with 80th Division and asked that the event in Richmond be held at the Virginia War Memorial on October 22, 2006 at 2:00 p.m. He thanked Anne Atkins for providing communication on this event. Delegate Kirk Cox will present resolutions to the 80th Division. Senator Ed Houck and Delegate Robert Orrock will also attend. Mr. Kaiserman encouraged JLC members to attend.

Mr. Kaiserman stated that Senator Allen commented on the national issues that MOAA is addressing.

JLC Legislative Breakfast

Chairman Botts discussed the feasibility of having a JLC legislative breakfast. It was suggested that this can be done in conjunction with the JLC January 17th meeting. Plans are to have the breakfast from 7:30 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. The JLC meeting will be held at 10:00 a.m. Jack Hilgers has offered his assistance in speaking with Delegate Wardrup to sponsor a room at the General Assembly Building for this event. Dave Ellis suggested that state chairs of organizations be invited.

Commissioner Burgess suggested the following options for parking:

- Park at the American Legion Building and car pool/shuttle van members to the General Assembly Building
- Park at the Virginia War Memorial and car pool/shuttle van members to the General Assembly Building

DVS is seeking financial donations from VSOs to support this event. It was decided that DVS staff will explore parking options and advise JLC members prior to the January 17th breakfast.

Schedule Next Meeting (date/location)

The next meeting of the JLC will be on Thursday, December 21, 2006, 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. at the American Legion Department of Virginia Building, 1708 Commonwealth Avenue in Richmond.

Chairman Botts stated that although it is not required, it has been suggested that meetings be held across the state. After discussion, it was decided that meeting in Richmond was the consensus of the group. Commissioner Burgess suggested that the JLC tour the new Sitter-Barfoot Veterans Care Center in the spring of the year.

Norman Jasper stated that the Military Order of the Purple Heart, Department of Virginia will sponsor a program in Arlington on November 11, 2006 at 10:00 am. Mr. Jasper's daughter will sing the National Anthem at this ceremony. Also, at 3:00 p.m., the Military of World Wars will have its ceremony at General Pershing's grave, Section 34.

Commissioner Burgess stated that the JLC had been recognized by Senate Joint Resolution 53 and House Joint Resolution 171 for its contributions to supporting the National Guard and Reserve during the two previous sessions of the General Assembly. The Resolutions will be mounted and framed by the next JLC meeting.

John Bonnell suggested that the JLC recognize the American Legion with a certificate or plaque for allowing the use of their facility for JLC meetings.

Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.