

Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations
Meeting Minutes
October 10, 2007

A meeting of the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (JLC) was held on Wednesday, October 10, 2007, at the American Legion Department of Virginia Headquarters Building, 1708 Commonwealth Avenue, Richmond.

Members Present

Connie O'Neill, *American Legion*

Jim Aucoin, *AMVETS*

Sam Wilder, *AUSA*

Daniel Miller, *Disabled American Veterans*

John Dozier, *Korean War Veterans Association*

John C. Bonnell, Jr., *Marine Corps League*

Norman Jasper, *Military Order of the Purple Heart*

Richard Schneider, *Non-Commissioned Officers Association*

David Ellis, *NAUS*

Thomas Stephen, *Reserve Officers Association*

Frank Sherman, *Roanoke Valley Veterans Council*

Daniel Boyer, *Veterans of Foreign Wars*

Kenneth Smith, *Virginia National Guard Association*

Jenny Holbert, *Women Marine Association*

Paul Galanti, *Chairman, Board of Veterans Services*

Vince Burgess, *Commissioner of Veterans Services*

Members Absent

Mason Botts, *Air Force Association*

Robert Gray, *American Ex-POWs*

Thomas Snee, *Fleet Reserve Association*

Henry Doctor, *Homeless & Disabled Veterans*

Richard Rinaldo, *Legion of Valor*

Frank Wickersham, *MOAA*

Goodwin Sacra, *Navy Seabee Veterans of America*

John T. Jackson, *Paralyzed Veterans of America*

Michala Smith, *WAVES*

Alternates Present (representing their Veterans Service Organization)

Jeff Platte, *Air Force Association*

Jack Hilgers, *Legion of Valor*

Wes Edwards, *MOAA*

Alternates Present (not representing their VSO)

Dale Chapman, *American Legion*

Don Kaiserman, *AUSA*

Carmen Gentile, *Reserve Officers Association*

Commonwealth of Virginia Officials Present

Dawn Smith, *Assistant Secretary of Public Safety*

Elizabeth Peay, *Office of the Attorney General*

David McGinnis, *Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation, and Substance Abuse Services*

Anne Atkins, *Virginia Department of Veterans Services*

Tasmyn Childress, *Virginia Department of Veterans Services*

Steven Combs, *Virginia Department of Veterans Services*

Martha Mead, *Virginia Department of Veterans Services*

Judy Reid, *Virginia Department of Veterans Services*

Others Present

Harry Warner, *Virginia War Memorial Education Foundation*

Reverend Rocky Angone, *Wreaths Across America*

Bill Townsley, *Military Order of the World Wars*

Agenda Packet

- Meeting Agenda
- Draft Minutes of the August 8, 2007 Meeting
- JLC 2008 Legislative Objectives
 - Fully Fund the Department of Veterans Services Budget and Strategic Plan as outlined in Executive Order 19
 - Support the Virginia National Guard
 - Wounded Warrior Mental Health Care
 - Virginia War Memorial Education Wing
 - Tax Relief for 100% Disabled Veterans
 - Provide Tax Relief for Virginia Citizen Soldiers called to Active Duty
 - Permit Virginia Resident Service Members to place a “Freeze: on their Credit Files”
- Proposed Future JLC Meeting Dates
- Departments of Mental Health Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services and Veterans Services Proposal for Veterans Behavioral Healthcare
- New JLC Letterhead
- Letter to Governor Kaine re SB1145
- Governor’s 2008 Budget Reduction Plan Detailed Report

JLC Legislative Packet

- JLC 2008 Legislative Objectives
 - Fully Fund the Department of Veterans Services Budget and Strategic Plan as outlined in Executive Order 19

- Support the Virginia National Guard
- Wounded Warrior Mental Health Care
- Virginia War Memorial Education Wing
- Tax Relief for 100% Disabled Veterans
- Provide Tax Relief for Virginia Citizen Soldiers called to Active Duty
- Permit Virginia Resident Service Members to place a “Freeze” on their Credit Files
- Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center information sheet
- Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP) information sheet
- Virginia’s Veterans Cemeteries brochure
- “Do You Know your Veterans Benefits” wallet brochure

Additional Handouts

- Wreaths Across America, Reverend Rocky Angone
- Purple Heart Book Covers, The Military Order of the Purple Heart
- IRA Charitable Rollover, Virginia War Memorial Education Foundation

Opening and Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Sam Wilder called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. Vice Chairman Dan Boyer led the Council in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call of VSOs, Quorum Determination, and Introduction of Guests

Seventeen members of the twenty-three member Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) were recorded as being represented (fourteen by a primary member; three by an alternate member), and a quorum was determined.

Chairman Wilder introduced Mr. Bill Townsley, a member of the Military Order of the World Wars (MOWW). Chairman Wilder explained that MOWW is working with the Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth to be represented on the JLC, and that Mr. Townsley would serve as the MOWW representative.

Review and Approval of August 8, 2007 Meeting Minutes

The draft minutes of the August 8, 2007 meeting were reviewed. A **motion** was made by John Dozier, seconded by Jack Hilgers, and passed unanimously, to adopt the minutes as written.

Public Comment Period

Reverend Rocky Angone of Pointman Ministries introduced himself, and explained that he is working with Wreaths Across America to place 2,500 wreaths on graves at the Richmond National Cemetery on December 15, 2007. He said the wreath laying was part of a national effort to lay wreaths at national and state veterans cemeteries. Reverend Angone asked for assistance from local Veterans Service Organizations in placing the wreaths. He distributed an article about the upcoming event, which has his contact information.

Board of Veterans Services: Chairman's Report

Lead by Paul Galanti

Chairman Wilder told the Council that a ceremony was held at the Virginia War Memorial on October 4, 2007, at which time it was announced that the Virginia War Memorial Education Center would be named after Paul and Phyllis Galanti. On behalf of the Council, Chairman Wilder thanked Mr. Galanti on his services and all that he has done for this country.

Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center

Mr. Galanti praised Anne Atkins for her contribution to the Sitter & Barfoot Veteran Care Center dedication ceremony that was held on September 26, 2007.

JLC

Mr. Galanti said he believes that the JLC is the most worthwhile, powerful board in state government, and stated that an organization which represents 250,000 members commands the attention of state government officials and legislators.

TurboVet

Mr. Galanti explained that TurboVet is computer system for developing and filing disability claims. He said that Senators John Warner and Jim Webb had been briefed on TurboVet and were both enthusiastic about its future. This new system will easily link DoD and VA systems, and that personal records will be stored on a secure server and not transported on laptops.

Chairman Wilder commented on a statement made by Bill Leighty at the last Board of Veterans Services meeting. Mr. Leighty said that, at present, fewer than 5% of claims that are submitted to the VA's Roanoke Regional Office are at a "ready to rate" stage. Mr. Leighty said that TurboVet has the potential to increase the percentage of "ready to rate claims" to 95%. Mr. Galanti added that TurboVet will tell you what you need before you file your claim, so you know you have the correct paper work. He said that with its concise and sequential question and answer format, TurboVet will not allow a claim to be submitted until it is completely finished. It will make medical staff understand their patient's needs by their background.

Commissioner Burgess explained that TurboVet Phase 1 is almost complete, and that Phase 2 was still in the funding stage. To date, DVS has spent just under \$100,000 on the project. He said that a separate proposal has been submitted to the Commonwealth of Virginia Enterprise Fund for \$250,000, which will get Phase 2 started, but not complete it. Government and private funding sources are being sought. He reported that last week a meeting was held with the Congressional staff to get federal funding for TurboVet, and that other states are interested in the project.

Commissioner Burgess reported that TurboVet has the potential to increase the annual disability payments to Virginia veterans by as much as \$200 million per year. He suggested that a demonstration at the next meeting might help the Council members better understand the TurboVet system. Chairman Wilder agreed this was a good idea.

Mr. Galanti concluded by saying that he believes that when TurboVet is a mature system, it will

reduce the claims process from six months to less than 30 days.

Chairman's Report: Veterans Service Foundation

Lead by Commissioner Burgess, Paul Galanti, Sam Wilder and Jack Hilgers

Chairman Wilder announced that Frank Wickersham had been appointed to the Veteran Service Foundation (VSF) and was elected VSF Chairman. In Mr. Wickersham's absence, Chairman Wilder stated that he, Commissioner Burgess, and Jack Hilgers would cover recent VSF activities.

Chairman Wilder said that Mr. Wickersham was in the process of resigning from the JLC, and that he expected that Mr. Wes Edwards, current MOAA alternate, would take Mr. Wickersham's place as MOAA representative to the JLC. Commissioner Burgess added that Mr. Wickersham was one of three new members were sworn into the VSF at the September 13, 2007 meeting of the VSF, and Mr. Wickersham's leadership and experience would prove invaluable to the VSF.

Commissioner Burgess stated that the last meeting was the most productive meeting for the VSF to date, and that Mr. Hilgers was instrumental in making this happen. Commissioner Burgess noted that Mr. Hilgers had been involved in the legislative process that created the VSF.

Mr. Hilgers said that over the past four years, the VSF has been able to generate enough money to replenish funds that has been used. However, he said that the Foundation does not actively pursue fundraise, and that this was a bone of contention for some in the veterans community and the General Assembly. He explained that the Foundation does not have any staff members to fundraise or market, but that the VSF is currently working on hiring a staff member to over see the fundraising efforts.

Mr. Hilgers told the Council that the Foundation approved an action plan at the 9/13/07 meeting, and that the action plan covers the following areas:

- VSF Legislative Initiatives- What should the committee be doing
- VSF Fund Raising- What are the implications of fundraising
- VSF Board Governance- Board Development, organization and how it is functioning.

Chairman Wilder stated that he represented the JLC at the 9/13/07 VSF meeting. He said he made two recommendations to the VSF. The first, based on the VSF Action Plan, was that the JLC Chairman should be an *ex officio* member of the VSF. The second recommendation was for the VSF to raise funds to support state Wounded Warrior Mental Health Care initiatives.

Department of Veterans Services Initiatives

Lead by Commissioner Vince Burgess

Commissioner Burgess and Steven Combs introduced Tasmyn Childress, a new member of the Commissioner's staff.

Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center (SBVCC) Dedication Ceremony

The Commissioner thanked Anne Atkins and the planning committee for the excellent job they did to make the dedication ceremony a success. He said that the SBVCC is scheduled to be open in four to six weeks. Licensure and certification is needed from the Virginia Department of Health, the VA, and the Department of Social Services. The SBVCC new patient management system, which will handle patient, financial and administrative processing, has been installed. SBVCC employees are currently being trained on the software.

Care Center Study

Commissioner Burgess said that the Care Center Study, being conducted by the College of William & Mary's Schroeder Center for Healthcare Policy, is expected to be released by the end of the month. He noted that the study has identified new locations in the Commonwealth of Virginia where veterans care centers are needed. These include Northern Virginia, the Danville area, and the far southwest part of the state. He noted that the study will support requests for state funding (35% of project costs) to support future care center construction projects. He noted that the Hampton Roads Veterans Care Center is expected to cost approximately \$80 million. Finally, he noted that the three Virginia care center projects (Roanoke renovation, Richmond addition, Hampton construction) had all dropped two places on the priority list for federal construction grant funding (65% of project costs) because of the number of new life/safety projects that had been placed on the funding priority list.

Cemetery Study

Commissioner Burgess explained that DVS had been directed to perform a study on future veterans cemetery needs, which will identify locations in the Commonwealth where new veterans cemeteries might be needed. He noted that the study is expected to be complete by December 1.

Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery

Commissioner Burgess said that he expects the land transfer process to be complete in March or April. Depending on when the federal construction grant is awarded and when construction begins, the cemetery could open as early as May 2010.

TurboVet

Commissioner Burgess said that several other states had expressed interest in the TurboVet system, and that the new system would help the Department save money through cost avoidance.

Benefits Training Conference

The Commissioner gave a brief overview of the recent Benefits Training Conference, calling it a success.

Virginia is for Heroes Conference

The Commissioner briefed the Council on the upcoming Virginia is for Heroes Conference, a partnership between Virginia Commonwealth University's Mid-Atlantic Addiction Technology Transfer Center and the Department of Veteran Services. He said the conference is scheduled for October 17, 2007 at Lewis-Ginter Botanical Garden in Richmond. This conference will focus on polytrauma and combat stress in returning military personnel from Iraq and Afghanistan

and the impact it has on the individual and the family. The Virginia is for Heroes Conference will bring together public and private service providers in an attempt to improve and understand issues to better serve Virginia veterans and their families.

Governor's Budget Reduction Plan

Commissioner Burgess reported that Governor Kaine requested that state agencies submit proposals to reduce General Fund expenditures by 5%. The Commissioner said that there would be no cuts in direct service; rather, the Department would make cuts by not filling administrative positions.

Commissioner Burgess noted that the Department of Veteran Services has an overall operating budget of approximately \$34 million, of which \$5.7 million is from the General Fund. The DVS budget reduction will total 5% of the \$5.7 million General Fund budget, or approximately \$288,000.

State Agency Budget Development Calendar

Commissioner Burgess asked Mr. Combs to discuss the State Agency Budget Development Calendar. Mr. Combs reiterated the importance of the JLC submitting its legislative objectives early, so that they can be acted on during the budget cycle. He noted that DVS has to submit decision packages to request additional funding or positions, in order to expand current services or offer new services. He said that after budget submissions are sent to the Governor's office for consideration, they are stamped as Governor's Confidential Working Papers so that the Governor's office can privately deliberate all agency budget submissions. This is done because there are usually more requests from state agencies than there are resources available. Mr. Combs said that the Governor's budget would be presented to the General Assembly on December 17, after which the General Assembly makes changes to the Governor's budget. He said that the General Assembly will pass its budget in March, and that it then goes back to the Governor for review. Finally, the budget goes back one last time to the General Assembly for final approval.

Don Kaiserman told of his recent meeting with Major General Newman, Adjutant General, and asked for an update on the National Guard budget. Mr. Combs noted that the Guard budget was submitted through the Department of Military Affairs, and Commissioner Burgess added that it was possible that the Guard would not be subject to the budget reduction faced by other agencies.

Dick Schneider asked if there would be an opportunity to modify the FY09/10 budget. Mr. Combs explained that the 2009 General Assembly would consider modifications to the FY09 budget (which would then be the current budget) and to the FY10 budget.

Vietnam Veterans Memorial Education Center

Commissioner Burgess brought to the members attention the construction of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Education Center. The Center is expected to cost between \$75 million and \$100 million. He said that he had spoken with officials from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Education Center fundraising committee, and that the committee was looking to Virginia, Maryland, and other states to be early supporters of the fundraising effort. He noted that

Governor Kaine had sent a letter to state Senator Toddy Puller stating his commitment for the Commonwealth to provide \$500,000 for the Center. Commissioner Burgess said that an official from the fundraising committee could come to the next JLC meeting to discuss fundraising efforts, and Chairman Wilder agreed this was a good idea. Dan Boyer added that the VFW had committed to raising \$1 million.

Old Business - JLC 2008 Legislative Objectives

Virginia War Memorial Education Center

Lead By Harry Warner

Mr. Warner opened by saying that the 17,000 sq. foot addition is budgeted at \$8.1 million. The Commonwealth has committed \$4 million (\$500,000 in FY07, \$3.5 million in FY08). He thanked the JLC and the Veterans Service Organizations for their support. He said that while the budget language referred to a loan (which would imply the War Memorial has to repay the \$3.5 million) the loan actually refers to an internal loan from the Treasury to the General Fund, and that it will not have to be repaid.

Mr. Warner noted that the \$4 million from the General Fund is contingent on \$2 million in private funding being raised. He said that \$430,000 had been committed to date, including major commitments from the American Legion, MOAA, and the VFW. He also noted that individuals can contribute through an IRA rollover.

Mr. Warner thanked Don Kaiserman, Connie O'Neill, Sam Wilder, and the many veterans who have helped with fundraising efforts.

Mr. Warner said that the Virginia War Memorial Education Foundation has set a goal of raising the \$2 million by the 2008 General Assembly session. In addition to the \$430,000 already committed, an additional \$800,000 is being considered. After that, efforts would focus on raising an additional \$2 million in 2008, to bring total project funds up to \$8.1 million.

He said that if the current project timeline holds, ground would be broken in June 2008, and the center would be completed in December 2008.

Mr. Warner noted that the Virginia War Memorial Education Foundation feels that the \$2 million match is critical, because even if the \$3.5 million were released immediately, at least 75% of the project funds (\$6 million) would be needed before the state would commit to beginning the project. The \$2 million is also critical to "protecting" the \$4 million in General Funds, so that the money is not diverted to other state projects.

Chairman Wilder asked for clarification regarding the early release of the \$3.5 million, noting that at the August 8 meeting the JLC focused on the early release of the \$3.5 million. Mr. Warner responded that he believed that it was the position of the War Memorial that the early release of the \$3.5 million would not be useful. Chairman Wilder suggested that the JLC should consider changing the wording of this legislative objective at the next meeting, and, in the

meantime, when Council members speak with legislators, the focus should be on the state commitment of an additional \$2 million in General Fund support, so that the project will be fully funded. Mr. Warner responded that a budget request had been submitted for the additional \$2 million in General Fund support. Chairman Wilder summarized that the JLC should downplay the early release, but that the commitment of the additional \$2 million would meet the JLC objective of completion of the Virginia War Memorial Education Wing.

Mr. O'Neill asked for specific information as to the construction of the center. Mr. Warner responded that the plans called for groundbreaking in June 2008 and an opening in December 2008.

Mr. Kaiserman stated that the Virginia War Memorial Education Center was a legacy of the service of all Virginians, and that he hoped that Virginia's veterans and Veterans Service Organizations would contribute to make the Center a reality. He asked that the Council members seek the support of their organizations, and that they ask their members to make individual contributions.

Chairman Wilder returned to the subject of the \$400,000 in committed funds, and the \$800,000 in funds that was being considered for donation. Mr. Warner reiterated that the goal of the War Memorial Education Foundation was to raise the \$2 million by the time the General Assembly convenes.

Chairman Wilder turned to the question of when would be the best time to seek legislative support. Mr. Hilgers explained that December 5, 2007 is the deadline for pre filing bills. Mr. Hilgers later clarified that budget bills have a mid-January submission deadline.

Chairman Wilder asked Connie O'Neill and Dale Chapman to review American Legion fundraising efforts. Mr. Chapman stated that the American Legion has been a supporter of the War Memorial from the start, and that the Legion will launch an effort to raise at least \$100,000 from American Legion posts statewide. The Legion will reach out to Legionnaires through a variety of means. Mr. Chapman stressed that the Legion would stress that the War Memorial honors all Virginians. He closed by saying that fundraising efforts would kick off at the Legion Fall Conference in two weeks.

Chairman Wilder reminded the group of his meeting with Delegate Kirk Cox, where the Delegate had offered to speak to local American Legion or VFW posts to stimulate fundraising. Mr. Chapman said that while the suggestion was worth considering, he had supreme confidence that the Legion would meet its target.

Norman Jasper updated the Council of fundraising efforts in the Roanoke area for the Vinton War Memorial.

Chairman Wilder then asked Mr. Boyer to give an update on VFW fundraising support for the War Memorial.

Mr. Boyer reported that the VFW Department of Virginia has challenged all post to make a donation of \$2 per member, and that the VFW Department of Virginia would match all October donations dollar for dollar, up to \$25,000. He said the VFW faced the same challenge as the Legion in convincing members in some parts of the state to donate to a memorial in Richmond.

Mr. Kaiserman said he would speak with Senator Stosch on this issue, and that he would also speak with MOAA leaders on this subject. Mr. Kaiserman emphasized that while the Virginia War Memorial is located in Richmond, it honors all Virginians, and therefore the construction of the Education Center should not be viewed as a Richmond-only project.

Legislative Objectives – Progress to Date

Lead by Chairman Wilder

Chairman Wilder briefed the Council members on his meetings with legislators. He explained that he had met or spoken with:

- Delegate Kirk Cox regarding the Virginia War Memorial Education Wing (JLC Objective 4). Chairman Wilder said that Delegate Cox stated that providing tax relief for Virginia Citizen-Soldiers called to Active Duty (Objective 6) is worth putting in, but may not get passed
- Delegate Bill Janis regarding support of the Virginia National Guard (JLC Objective 2). Chairman Wilder said that Delegate Janis would support budget or legislative initiatives
- Delegate Scott Lingamfelter's office on Tax relief for 100% disabled Veterans (JLC Objective 5). Chairman Wilder said the Delegate's office had contacted him seeking support, and that the Delegate planned to introduce legislation on this subject
- Delegate Harvey Morgan regarding a law to allow Virginia resident service members to place a freeze on their credit files (JLC Objective 7). Chairman Wilder said that Delegate Morgan would introduce credit freeze legislation

Chairman Wilder said the JLC needs to speak with:

- Senator Edd Houck regarding the Wounded Warrior Mental Health Care initiative (JLC Objective 3). This was at the suggestion of Delegate Cox

Update on other boards

Chairman Wilder reported that the Virginia Citizen-Soldier Support Council (VCSSC) has adopted JLC Objective 3 (Wounded Warrior Mental Health Care) as its top legislative objective. He also reported on the combined meeting of the VCSSC and the Virginia Military Advisory Council (VMAC), at which he briefly reviewed JLC legislative objectives. He said that he hopes that in the future, the JLC, Board of Veterans Services, VCSSC, and VMAC will develop and share their legislative priorities earlier than happened this year.

Chairman Wilder then updated the Council on the September 10 meeting of the Board of Veterans Services (BVS). He said he sat next to Bill Leighty, BVS member and former Chief of Staff to Governors Warner and Kaine. The Chairman reported that Mr. Leighty said that the JLC position papers were the best he has seen. Chairman Wilder complimented the Council members on their efforts in developing such a quality product.

Chairman Wilder said that at the same BVS meeting, Delegate Vivian Watts indicated strong interest in the Wounded Warrior Mental Health Care, and that Delegate Mark Cole said he is willing to sponsor budget and/or legislation in support of the JLC legislative objectives.

Other meetings

The Chairman remarked that he attended an event held by former Governor Mark Warner, at which he spoke with several state legislators and with Governor Warner. He reminded the Governor of a meeting held 3-4 years ago, when the Governor said that if the veterans groups would band together, they would be one of the most powerful political forces in the state.

Chairman Wilder said that Governor was impressed with the progress made by the JLC to date, and asked for a briefing on JLC objectives.

Chairman Wilder reported that he gave a copy of the JLC legislative objectives to Representative Randy Forbes. He also met with Senator Webb, who indicated that he will look at financial support for the Wounded Warrior initiative. Chairman Wilder also reported that he sent copies of the objectives to Representatives Goodlatte, Goode, and Boucher.

The Council took a break for lunch between 12:00pm and 12:35pm.

After the meeting reconvened, Chairman Wilder introduced Assistant Attorney General Elizabeth Peay, who is filling in for Senior Assistant Attorney General Don Ferguson.

Chairman Wilder distributed a proposed schedule of JLC meetings for 2008, and asked that members review it in advance of the next meeting.

Mr. Combs passed out folders that Council members can put in the hands of legislators when they meet to discuss the JLC Legislative Objectives. The folders contain the 2008 Legislative Objectives and information about DVS services.

Mr. Jasper announced that he had brought 400 Military Order of the Purple Heart book covers for members to take with them. The book covers are intended for distribution to school children.

Legislative Objectives – Progress to Date

Chairman Wilder returned to the reports from Council members on their meetings to date with members of the General Assembly.

VFW; Daniel Boyer: Mr. Boyer reported that he has set up a meeting with Delegate Bill Carrico. Has said he had also given a copy of the JLC Legislative Objectives to Congressman Rick Boucher. Finally, Mr. Boyer said he will deliver a copy of the Objectives to Senator Roscoe Reynolds.

NAUS; David Ellis: Mr. Ellis reported that NAUS has been active with Delegates Mark Cole and Robert Orrock, and with Senator Edd Houck. Mr. Ellis suggested that the JLC should position itself as “agents of influence” with the legislators and be available to answer any questions regarding veterans’ issues. Mr. Ellis said that NAUS has been pushing the JLC Legislative Objectives. Chairman Wilder asked if NAUS would approach Senator Houck to

patron legislation regarding the Wounded Warrior Mental Health Care initiative (JLC Objective 3), to which Mr. Ellis agreed. Chairman Wilder added that Senator John Edwards would be a key legislator to approach to co-patron this legislation.

Women Marines Association; Jenny Holbert: Ms. Holbert said that she is not specifically working on JLC legislative items with members of the General Assembly, but that she was very involved with the Virginia is for Heroes conference, which supported JLC Objective 3.

Marine Corps League; John Bonnell: Mr. Bonnell reported that he had sent the JLC Legislative Objectives to Senator Frederick Quayle and Delegate Johnny Joannou. Mr. Bonnell reported that Senator Quayle indicated that he would speak with Mr. Bonnell after the election (if he wins reelection). Mr. Bonnell said he has not heard from Delegate Joannou, but that he would follow up with the Delegate.

Legion of Valor; Jack Hilgers: Mr. Hilgers said his focus has been on Delegate Terrie Suit, Delegate John Cosgrove, Mr. Chris Stolle (running for Delegate in the 83rd District), and Mr. John Welch III (running for Delegate in the 21st District). He has distributed copies of the JLC Legislative Objectives, but has not had any personal discussions to date. Chairman Wilder asked for Mr. Hilgers' advice regarding Senate patrons for the JLC objectives. Mr. Hilgers suggested Senators John Edwards, Jay O'Brien, Richard Saslaw, and Frank Wagner.

AUSA; Don Kaiserman: Mr. Kaiserman said he was trying to arrange meetings with Senator Walter Stosch and with Delegates John O'Bannon, William Janis, and Samuel Nixon. Mr. Kaiserman discussed his involvement with Senator Stosch's Executive Leadership Committee, which Mr. Kaiserman described as a non-political group of subject matter experts. He said he had joined the Committee to represent military and veterans' issues.

MOAA; Wes Edwards: Mr. Edwards reported that the Virginia Council of Chapters (VCOC) of MOAA has arranged for a MOAA member to contact each Delegates and Senators. He is expecting a report on these contacts. He said that MOAA will contact both incumbents and challengers (or all challengers if there is an open election). He reported that in some cases, MOAA arranged to meet both candidates simultaneously to enlist their support.

Mr. Bonnell added that he on October 13 he would attend the staff meeting of the Marine Corps League (MCL) Department of Virginia, at which he would present the JLC Legislative Objectives. He said he expected full support from the MCL members, and that he would encourage each of them to get out and meet with their Senator and Delegate.

Chairman Wilder emphasized that when these meetings take place, it is important that the Senators and Delegates be told that the MCL member is not representing just the MCL, but is also representing the JLC, with its 23 member organizations (with 250,000 members). Chairman Wilder said that this should apply to all meetings held by Council members or by members of their VSO. He also added that these meetings go best when the Senator or Delegate is contacted by a constituent, rather than by a member of a VSO who is not a constituent.

Non-Commissioned Officers Association (NCOA); Richard Schneider: Mr. Schneider reported that the NCOA focus has been on national veterans' issues rather than state issues. He gave a brief overview of recent veterans' legislative actions in the Congress.

Disabled American Veterans (DAV); Dan Miller: Mr. Miller reported that he has sent the JLC Legislative Objectives to his Senator and Delegate. He also sent the Objectives to the DAV Adjutant for distribution to DAV members statewide. He said that DAV members will be encouraged to present the Objectives to their Senators and Delegates.

AMVETS; Jim Aucoin: Mr. Aucoin reported that he attended the meeting of the Executive Committee of the AMVETS Department of Virginia the weekend of October 6-7. He said that at the meeting, he presented the JLC Legislative Objectives and encouraged AMVETS members to contact their Senators and Delegates. He said he would follow up with the AMVETS Adjutant to distribute the Objectives to AMVETS members.

Air Force Association; Jeff Platte: Mr. Platte reported that he had spoken with Mason Botts, who reported that he would contact his Senator and Delegate. Chairman Wilder asked Mr. Platte to speak with Mr. Botts regarding contact with Senator Jay O'Brien on JLC Legislative Objectives. Chairman Wilder also informed the group that he had been in contact with Delegate Scott Lingamfelter's office regarding Tax relief for 100% disabled Veterans (JLC Objective 5). Chairman Wilder said he thought Senator O'Brien would be a good patron for this initiative, and that Mr. Botts would be the best person on the JLC to contact Senator O'Brien. Mr. Platte added that he would also contact Senator Tommy Norment on this issue.

American Legion; Connie O'Neill: Mr. O'Neill stated that he would present the JLC Legislative Objectives to his fellow Legionnaires at the American Legion Department of Virginia Fall Conference, October 26-28. He said that he will encourage the District Commanders to visit their Senators and Delegates at the legislators' home offices. He advised the Council that the American Legion would also give strong emphasis to legislation to give veterans the same Payday Lending protection provided to active duty service members (i.e. interest rates equal to 36% annually). Mr. O'Neill closed by saying that the American Legion will hold its "Day on the Hill" on January 16, 2008.

Korean War Veterans Association; John Dozier: Mr. Dozier reported that he has not had the opportunity to promote the JLC Legislative Objectives because of family medical issues.

Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH); Norm Jasper: Mr. Jasper reported that he plans to share the JLC Legislative Objectives with Senator John Edwards. Mr. Jasper also reported that the MOPH Service Foundation plans to distribute \$24,000 this year to the VA Medical Centers in Hampton, Richmond, Salem, and Washington, D.C., and to the Virginia Veterans Care Center (VVCC). He said that in the future, money would also be donated to the Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center. He said that, to date, \$3,000 has been donated to the Salem VA Medical Center and \$3,000 to the VVCC.

Reserve Officers Association (ROA) Tom Stephen: Mr. Carmen Gentile introduced himself as the new alternate for the ROA. Mr. Stephen reported that the ROA State Board of Directors

meeting was held on September 22. He said that he presented the JLC Legislative Objectives to the board members, and asked that each meet with his/her Senator and Delegate. He indicated that PayDay Lending was still an important issue for ROA, and that ROA would support initiatives that curb PayDay Lending.

Roanoke Valley Veterans Council (RVVC); Frank Sherman: Mr. Sherman reported that he has sent the JLC Legislative Objectives to legislators in the Roanoke area, but that he doesn't expect to meet face to face with Senator John Edwards until after the election. He said the RVVC hopes to charter bus to bring members to the JLC "Storming the Hill" event. Mr. Sherman also said that he had been in contact with Mr. Mac McCadden, candidate for Delegate in the 11th District.

Virginia National Guard Association (VNGA); Kenneth Smith: Mr. Smith reported that Congressman Tom Davis had been awarded the National Guard's Harry S. Truman Award, and that he is in contact with Congressman Davis' office on National Guard issues. Mr. Smith said that he will meet with Delegate Christopher Peace after the election.

Wounded Warrior Mental Health Care

Led by Martha Mead, DVS Executive Order 19 (EO19) Project Manager; and Dave McGinnis, Decision Support Manager of the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation, and Substance Abuse Services (DMHMRSAS)

Ms. Mead explained she and Mr. McGinnis are working to forge a relationship between DVS, DMHMRSAS, and the Community Service Boards (CSBs) to improve mental health care for Virginia's veterans.

She directed the members attention to the Concept Paper distributed as part of the Agenda Packet, which expands on JLC Objective 3 regarding Wounded Warrior Mental Health Care. She said the upcoming Virginia is for Heroes conference would also begin to address these issues.

Ms. Mead reported that recent studies show that at least 1/3 of men and women who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan are in need of some form of behavioral health services, and that other reports indicate that this number may be much higher. She said that the two signature injuries of the war are mental health issues such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and substance abuse, and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). She highlighted an article in the 10/10/07 Richmond Times-Dispatch, which indicated that state mental health resources are already stretched thin. She said that the capacity of Virginia's mental health system would need to be increased if Virginia's veterans are to be best served at the local level. She noted that families need to be a part of the service network, as the existing system does not provide for mental health care for family members.

Ms. Mead directed the members to Page 3 of the Concept Paper, and outlined the three components of the proposed system: State-level Coordination, Community coordination, and behavioral health and rehabilitation services. She said that the integration of these three components would bring together providers at the federal, state, and local level to coordinate and deliver services. Ms. Mead said that other states have set up a state-level coordinating office to

accomplish these tasks, and said that the Concept Paper recommends the establishment of such an office in Virginia. She noted that the responsibilities of this office are set out in the Concept Paper.

Using the Concept Paper as a guide, Ms. Mead outlined how the coordination would take place, and went into detail regarding the role of DVS, DMHMRSAS, and the CSBs.

Chairman Wilder summed up the funding requirements by saying that the funds requested for Fiscal Year 2009 would be used to get the program started, and that the need (and required funding) is expected to grow.

JLC Storming the Hill

Led by Jack Hilgers

Mr. Hilgers reported that the Storming the Hill event is on track. He said that the JLC has permission to use meeting space in the General Assembly Building, but at this point, some of the speakers are unconfirmed, given the fact the some members are facing competition. He said that event sponsors are also uncertain for the same reason. Chairman Wilder added that this would be a great opportunity for the smaller VSOs represented on the JLC to turn out members to participate.

Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Businesses

Led by Jack Hilgers

Mr. Hilgers reported that at the March 14, 2007 meeting, Senator Frank Wagner's bill during the 2007 General Assembly on Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Businesses (SDVOSB) – Senate Bill 1145 (SB1145) – was discussed. Mr. Hilgers pointed out that when this bill was introduced, it would apply to veteran small business owners with all disability levels (i.e. 0% to 100% disabled), but that the bill was modified by the House of Delegates such that only veterans with a service-disabled rating of 50% or greater (10% or greater if combat related) could participate. Mr. Hilgers reminded the members that it was the decision of the Council to ask Governor Kaine to change SB1145 such that all disabled veterans could participate (bringing it in line with the federal program). Chairman Botts sent a letter to Governor Kaine with this request, but the bill was not changed. Mr. Hilgers said that he expected Senator Wagner to introduce a bill in the 2008 General Assembly to make the state SDVOSB program open to all disabled veterans, and asked that the Council support Senator Wagner's efforts.

New Business

Chairman Wilder asked that the Council members continue to educate the public, their organizations, and state government officials about the JLC. He pointed out the new letterhead developed for the JLC, and noted that DVS is working on a one page summary of the JLC.

Chairman Wilder also asked Council members to “keep the troops informed” by making sure that the members of their VSOs are kept informed on Council activities, especially the Legislative Objectives. He emphasized that Council members need to push information down to their VSO members, and must take the lead on educating their members on legislative issues.

Mr. Miller asked for an update on Veterans Hiring Preference in state government. Chairman Wilder said that an update could be provided at the next JLC meeting.

Preparation for next meeting

Chairman Wilder stated that the next JLC meeting was scheduled for Thursday, December 20, 2007. Discussion followed whether it was best to hold the meeting on the 20th, on Wednesday, December 19th, or on another date. A **motion** was made by Mr. Bonnell and seconded by Ms. Holbert to reschedule the meeting to December 19, 2007. The motion was approved unanimously.

Public Comment Period

There was no public comment.

Mr. Ellis added that a memorial service for Congresswoman Jo Ann Davis will be held October 10 in Newport News. On October 11, her funeral will be held in Hayes.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Chairman Wilder called for a motion to adjourn. A motion was made by many members, and a unanimous decision was made to close the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 2:10 p.m.