

Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations
Meeting Minutes
December 19, 2007

A meeting of the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (JLC) was held on Wednesday, December 19, 2007, at the American Legion Department of Virginia Headquarters Building, 1708 Commonwealth Avenue, Richmond.

Members Present

Robert Gray, *American Ex-POWs*
Jim Aucoin, *AMVETS*
Sam Wilder, *AUSA*
Richard Rinaldo, *Legion of Valor*
John C. Bonnell, Jr., *Marine Corps League*
Norman Jasper, *Military Order of the Purple Heart*
Goodwin Sacra, *Navy Seabee Veterans of America*
David Ellis, *NAUS*
Richard Schneider, *Non-Commissioned Officers Association*
John T. Jackson, *Paralyzed Veterans of America*
Thomas Stephen, *Reserve Officers Association*
Daniel Boyer, *Veterans of Foreign Wars*
Jenny Holbert, *Women Marines Association*
Vince Burgess, *Commissioner of Veterans Services*
Paul Galanti, *Chairman of Board of Veterans Services*

Members Absent

Mason Botts, *Air Force Association*
Connie O'Neill, *American Legion*
Daniel Miller, *Disabled American Veterans*
Thomas Snee, *Fleet Reserve Association*
John Dozier, *Korean War Veterans Association*
Frank Sherman, *Roanoke Valley Veterans Council*
Michala Smith, *WAVES*

Alternates Present (representing their Veterans Service Organization)

Jeff Platte, *Air Force Association*
Dale Chapman, *American Legion*
David Martinez, *Disabled American Veterans*
James Jones, *Korean War Veterans Association*
Wes Edwards, *MOAA*
Dan Karnes, *Roanoke Valley Veterans Council*
Mary Freeman, *WAVES*

Alternates Present (not representing their VSO)

John Cooper, *AMVETS*
Philip Stoneman, *AUSA*
Jack Hilgers, *Legion of Valor*
Russell Fenn, Jr., *Marine Corps League*

Commonwealth of Virginia Officials Present

Don Ferguson, *Office of the Attorney General*
David McGinnis, *Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation, and Substance Abuse Services*
Tasmyn Childress, *Department of Veterans Services*
Steven Combs, *Department of Veterans Services*
Martha Mead, *Department of Veterans Services*
Judy Reid, *Department of Veterans Services*

Others Present

Harry Warner, *Virginia War Memorial Education Foundation*
Bill Townsley, *Military Order of the World Wars*
Don Kaiserman, *AUSA*
Bill Leighty, *Stratizon Corp*
Lisa Meunier, *Stratizon Corp*
Charles Gudis, *American Legion*
Zane Clan, *Virginia Veterans Coalition*
James Davis, *Virginia Veterans Coalition*
James Hancock, *Virginia Veterans Coalition*
Others from the Virginia Veterans Coalition

Agenda Packet

- Agenda
- Draft Minutes of the October 10, 2007 Meeting
- Overview: TurboVet System
- JLC 2008 Legislative Objectives: Summary
- JLC 2008 Legislative Objectives – Position Papers:
 - 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
- Virginia’s Wounded Warrior Project – Estimate of Annual State Funding
- JLC – Notional General Assembly Meeting 14 January 2008
- Comments From the Chairman of VSF

- Summary of DVS Meeting of 28 November 2007
- DVS Proposal to Hold Town Hall Meetings
- Virginia VSO Membership, as represented on the JLC
- Vital Mission – Ending Homelessness Among Veterans
- Interrelationships between the DVS, BVS, JLC and the VSF (Draft)
- Commonwealth of Virginia – excerpts from Executive Biennial Budget 2008-2010
- JLC Members and Alternates Contact List
- Proposed 2008 Meeting Schedule
- Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Packet

Additional Handouts

- Ride Finders Public Parking Spaces Rates
- Pocket Glossary of the General Assembly
- How A Bill Becomes A Law

Opening and Pledge of Allegiance

Sam Wilder called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. Paul Galanti led the Council in the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

Bill Leighty and Lisa Meunier from Stratizon were introduced by Chairman Wilder. Stratizon is the corporation providing the software for TurboVet system. Members of the public introduced themselves to the Council.

Twenty of the twenty-two Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) represented on the JLC were recorded as being represented (thirteen by a primary member; seven by an alternate member), the Commissioner of Veterans Services and the Chairman of the Board of Veterans Services were recorded as present, and a quorum was determined.

Review and Approval of August 8, 2007 Meeting Minutes

Chairman Wilder asked the Council to review the draft minutes of the October 8, 2007 meeting.

Correction 1: On page two under the agenda packet in the JLC 2008 Legislative Objectives, The draft reads: “Virginia Was Memorial Education Wing.” It will be changed to read: “Virginia War Memorial Education Wing.”

Correction 2: On page eleven under Legislative Objectives – Progress to Date, the last paragraph, second line reads: “Mr. Ellis said that NAUS had positioned itself as ‘agents of influence’ with the legislators and were available to answer any questions regarding veterans’ issues.” This sentence will be changed to read: “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.”

A **motion** was made by Daniel Boyer, seconded by Jeff Platte, and passed unanimously, to adopt the amended minutes.

JLC 2008 Legislative Objectives

Review of Governors Kaine's Proposed Budget and of Legislation Introduced to Date Led by Steve Combs

Excerpts from Governor Kaine's budget proposal for 2008-2010 biennial and amendments to the 2007 Appropriations Act were presented to the Council. Mr. Combs compiled pages from the Governor's budget document to give the JLC as an overview of the budget process and a guide to the budget document.

Objective 1: Fully Fund the DVS Budget and Strategic Plan as Outlined in Executive Order 19
The JLC request was to provide DVS with the resources to accomplish specific recommended objectives.

Item #	Proposed Budget
C-148	\$385,000 for maintenance and renovation projects at Virginia Veterans Care Center
C-149	Authorization to apply for \$11.2 million in federal construction grant funding for the Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery (up from \$6.9 million)
C-150	Increased state support for construction of the Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center Addition (from \$2.8 million to \$5.2 million – 35% of estimated project costs)
C-151	Increased state support for the Hampton Roads Veterans Care Center (from \$14.6 million to \$28.5 million – 35% of estimated project costs)
C-152	Commitment of \$28.5 million in state support for construction of a veterans care center in Northern Virginia (35% of estimated project costs)
C-153	Authorization to apply for federal grant funding to pre-install vault liners at state veterans cemeteries

Objective 2: Support the Virginia National Guard

Mr. Combs reported that the Governors proposed budget for the Department of Military Affairs did not include any budget amendments that supported JLC initiatives.

Objective 3: Wounded Warrior Mental Health Care

Mr. Combs reported that the Governors proposed budget did not include funding for the Wounded Warrior Mental Health Care initiative.

Objective 4: Virginia War Memorial Education Wing

Mr. Combs reported that the Governor proposed funding for the Virginia War Memorial Education Wing in the Caboose Bill (which deals with appropriations for the current fiscal year). The Governor's budget proposes an additional \$2.22 million in state funding (for a total of \$5.72 million) contingent on the War Memorial Educational Foundation raising an additional \$250,000 in private funds (for a total of \$2.25 million).

Objective 5: Tax relief for 100% disabled veterans

Mr. Combs told the Council that getting tax relief for 100% disabled veterans it is not a budget item, but a legislative item. Mr. Combs added that three resolutions have been introduced to date by Delegate Scott Lingamfelter, Senator Toddy Puller, and Senator Roscoe Reynolds. Senator Puller's and Senator Reynold's resolutions would grant the exception for a veteran with a "service-connected, permanent, and one hundred percent total disability." Delegate Lingamfelter's resolution would grant the exception only if the 100% disability was combat related.

Objective 6: Provide Tax Relief for Virginia Citizen Soldiers called to Active Duty

Mr. Combs stated that no budget or legislative initiative had been proposed to provide tax relief to citizen-soldiers called to active duty.

Objective 7: Permit Virginia Resident Service Member to place a "Freeze" on their Credit Files

Mr. Combs told the Council that there have been three bills introduced to date that would allow individuals to put a freeze on their credit files. The bills apply to all consumers and not just service members.

Mr. Rinaldo asked Mr. Combs to what degree the veterans care centers would be involved with the Wounded Warrior program.

Mr. Combs replied that the veterans care centers are long-term care facilities, not mental health treatment facilities. The care centers provide a mix of skilled nursing care, Alzheimer's care, and assisted living care to its residents. The Sitter & Barfoot facility will open with nursing care and Alzheimer's care units. An assisted living wing will be added to the facility at a later date.

TurboVet Presentation

Led by Bill Leighty and Lisa Meunier

Mr. Leighty from Stratizon introduced himself to the Council. Mr. Leighty stated that he had previously served on the Board of Veteran Services, but had resigned because he thought he could serve veterans better by working with Stratizon on the TurboVet project. Mr. Leighty explained that the genesis of the TurboVet initiative came from Mr. Galanti, who proposed a "TurboTaxTM for veterans."

Mr. Leighty said that Stratizon had received a \$50,000 grant from the Governor's Productivity Improvement Fund, which was matched by \$50,000 from the Department of Veterans Services. With this funding, Stratizon developed a proof of concept for the TurboVet system, which showed how the logic of the system works.

Mr. Leighty stated that instead of users entering data on a Form 526, Form 10EZ, or other VA form, veterans service officers or representatives will assist veterans with answering a series of questions on the TurboVet system. TurboVet looks at the critical data elements that are needed to file a claim, and finds the right forms rather than filling out forms that are not needed or incorrect. He said that at present, only 5% of the applications submitted to the VA Roanoke Regional Office are "ready to rate" the first time they are submitted. TurboVet will allow the first time "ready to rate" percentage to be closer to 100%. By using the technology of TurboVet,

he estimates that 100 days will be taken off of the average time it takes a veteran to get his or her benefits. He said that taking 100 days off the time needed to process a claim, combined with other improvements such as an increased award per claim, would translate to an additional \$200 million a year for Virginia's veterans.

Mr. Leighty said he hopes that once the system is up and running, it will be adopted by other states and by veterans service organizations. He emphasized that TurboVet will not replace the Department's veterans service representatives, but rather will allow them to concentrate on difficult cases and on preparing appeals.

Mr. Leighty said he has been working with the Federal Government and has had a number of meetings on Capital Hill with the Veteran Affairs sub-committees. Sub-committee staff members have been briefed and are supportive of the project. He said that Senator John Warner thought that TurboVet was a great initiative and wanted to know if Stratizon was working with the VA. Mr. Leighty said he told the Senator that Stratizon was working with the VA, but that they would need help with getting the VA to work with them.

He said that the TurboVet system takes the intelligence of senior claims officers like Sam Brown and Roger Sullivan, and puts it into an intelligent user interface. This will give every veteran the same service they would get from the most experienced service officers.

He went on to say that the system was being developed in phases. Phase I – Proof of Concept – is complete. Phase II will get the system up and running with basic benefits, and will be funded with an expected \$300,000 from the Governor's Productivity Improvement Fund. Phase III will add additional capability, and will cost \$898,000. In Phase III, veterans benefits offered by all state agencies, such as those identified in EO19, will be integrated into one system.

Mr. Boyer asked Mr. Leighty if funds were available to complete Phase II. Mr. Leighty replied that the determination on whether \$300,000 will be awarded from the Governor's Productivity Improvement Fund will be made on December 20.

Mr. Rinaldo asked if there are any tax credits for businesses that can be used to offset the costs of developing the TurboVet system. Mr. Leighty replied that all of the firms that Stratizon has partnered with have been very generous to offer relatively free licenses. He said that everyone at Stratizon is a veteran, that he is not getting paid, and for that matter no one at Stratizon is getting paid right now. He said that eventually Stratizon would have to pay for the licenses.

Mr. Aucoin asked how much TurboVet would cost the veterans that will use the system. Mr. Leighty explained that by law neither the Department nor Stratizon can charge veterans to assist them in applying for their benefits. He said that if the system is put on a government server then paid advertising wouldn't be allowed. Mr. Leighty said that since Virginia is taking the initial risk to develop TurboVet, he believes that Virginia and the Governor of Virginia should get credit for getting this project started.

Chairman Wilder said that he was under the impression that the system would allow veterans to use the system without the assistance of a Department service representative. Mr. Leighty

replied that while veterans could use the system by themselves, he believed the priority should be to help the Department and the VSOs do a better job in assisting veterans. He said that the idea of letting veterans access the system on their own raised concerns at the Virginia Information Technology Agency (VITA), which said that allowing such access would require additional security and management, which would entail additional costs.

Mr. Townsley asked Mr. Leighty if there would be a security system to keep people from accessing other people files. Mr. Leighty explained that the system will be hosted on a larger state system that has all the mandatory security requirements of FERPA, HIPAA, and other laws.

Ms. Holbert asked if TurboVet is only for veterans who are separated or discharged, or is it also open to veterans who are on drill status or active duty. Mr. Leighty explained that the system was being built for veterans who are separated. He said that he thought the most pressing issue was getting benefits to veterans who had left the service and who are owed veterans benefits.

Mr. Galanti asked for an update on the meetings held with committee staff and others in Washington. Mr. Leighty said that he, Mr. Galanti, and Commissioner Burgess briefed staff members in both the House and the Senate. He said that the goal was to have the chairman and ranking member of each committee write a letter to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs about the TurboVet initiative. The letter would focus on what is happening in Virginia and on the support the project should receive at the Federal level. Mr. Leighty said that the committee staff is anxiously waiting on a draft letter.

Ms. Meunier told the Council that the VA Regional Office in Roanoke is eager for the TurboVet initiative to succeed, as they are facing a 240-day backlog in processing claims. She said that from the VA's perspective, the longer it takes to process a claim, the greater the likelihood a veteran will come back and add things to the claim. She said that having a claim that is complete from the start is to the benefit of all.

Mr. Leighty closed by saying that the initiative is funded through Phase II. He asked that the JLC make the TurboVet initiative a top priority, and ask the General Assembly to fund Phase III.

JLC 2008 Legislative Objectives

Led by Chairman Sam Wilder

Objective 1: Fully fund the Department of Veterans Services Budget and Strategic Plan as outlined in Executive Order 19

Chairman Wilder said that given the information provided in the TurboVet presentation, he thought that Objective 1 should be modified to specifically request funding to implement TurboVet Phase III. A **motion** was made by Mr. Ellis and seconded by Mr. Schneider to discuss the modification of Objective 1.

Chairman Wilder asked Mr. Leighty to work with DVS on a one page position paper so that the JLC can "sell" it to legislators. Mr. Leighty agreed to do so.

As an aside, Chairman Wilder stated that the position papers have been “critical, and very worthwhile.” He said that they have been well received by elected officials. He said he thought that it was important to modify Objective 1 so that the position papers maintained their relevance and importance.

Mr. Platte asked if the JLC was now putting TurboVet at the top of the priority list. Mr. Wilder explained that the JLC is no longer asking for additional personnel or other resources for DVS, but rather is now asking for funding for TurboVet Phase III. He said that Objective 1 should be modified to focus on this specific item.

Mr. Boyer pointed out that it was critical to make these changes expeditiously and to get the information out to the JLC members and VSOs, so that lobbying efforts could commence.

Mr. Rinaldo wanted to know if everything else the JLC wanted for the Department was a done deal. Mr. Wilder said that DVS is short eight personnel, but that he thought the priority should be on TurboVet and not on other DVS issues.

Chairman Wilder called for a vote to modify Objective 1 as discussed above. All agreed. Chairman Wilder said he would present this and other objectives at the next meeting of the Board of Veterans Services.

Objective 2: Support the Virginia National Guard

Chairman Wilder said that Objective 2 contained many proposals, and pointed the members to the summary sheet.

He said this objective arose from a meeting he had with General Newman and his staff to find out what the needs of the Guard were. He said he also talked to Colonel Bob Simpson, Director of the Guard’s joint staff, who said that the 5% budget reduction ordered by the Governor has not significantly impacted the Guard. He said he also talked to Colonel Steve Huxtable of the Guard, who told him that there was adequate funding in the Guard budget to support such things as recruiting efforts and tuition reimbursement. Chairman Wilder said that based on these discussions, he thought that supporting the National Guard was no longer critical. He said that significant cuts to the Guard budget, which had been feared in the fall, had not materialized.

Chairman Wilder said that the only remaining item on the JLC’s list for Objective 2 was supporting the custodial rights of mobilized service members. He said that he had spoken with the Guard Judge Advocate General (JAG), LtC Rusty Woodlief, who said that the Guard has lined up a Senator to submit the necessary legislation to support the custodial rights issue.

Chairman Wilder proposed eliminating Objective 2 as a top JLC priority. He said that the JLC would still support the National Guard, but would not do so as a top priority. He called for a motion on the issue. A **motion** was made by Mr. Rinaldo and seconded by Mr. Platte to drop Objective 2 from the JLC priority list, and the Chairman opened the floor for discussion.

Ms. Holbert asked if the JLC could simply lower the priority of Objective 2, rather than dropping it altogether. In this way, the JLC would still show support for the Guard. Chairman Wilder replied that he thought a shorter list was better, and that he believed that Objective 2 was no longer needed.

Mr. Boyer said he was concerned about the message that would be sent if the JLC lowered the priority of Objective 2, stating that this could be counterproductive.

Mr. Kaiserman asked if the JLC could simply issue a statement of support for the Guard.

Chairman Wilder called for a vote to eliminate Objective 2, which was agreed to unanimously.

Mr. Cooper asked for clarification as to whether the JLC was dropping the objective altogether. The Chairman stated that the objective was being dropped, and that the prior vote still held.

The Council adjourned for five minutes while the tape was being changed.

Chairman Wilder called the meeting back to order, and stated that there seemed to be some discussion regarding support for the Guard. He said that yes, of course, the JLC supported the Guard, but that it was important for the JLC to properly identify its priorities. He said that in August, it was thought that the Guard would need more support, especially with budget issues, but that it now appears the Guard is okay from a budget standpoint and the only small issue still unresolved is the custodial rights issue. He said that this one small issue was a much lower priority than Wounded Warrior and other priorities.

Commissioner Burgess explained that the JLC has already distributed a set of prioritized objectives, and that if a new set of prioritized objectives and supporting documentation is produced, it will be critical for JLC members to explain to legislators how and why the JLC legislative priorities/objectives have changed.

Objective 3: Wounded Warrior Mental Health Care Led by Martha Mead and David McGinnis

Chairman Wilder told the Council that a bill is being prepared by Delegate Kirk Cox, but has not been submitted yet. He said that Senator Edd Houck promised Mr. Ellis that he would patron a similar bill in the Senate.

Ms. Mead told the Council that the Virginia is for Heroes conference held in October was well attended and has helped to develop a road map for the services that are need to treat combat stress and troops returning from service in Iraq and Afghanistan. The report on the conference will be out in early January. The proceedings of the conference is on the Virginia is for Heroes web site.

Ms. Mead said she met with Delegate Cox on November 8, 2007. He told her that he would like to also include individuals who have brain injuries in the Wounded Warrior program.

Ms. Mead said that the previous concept paper was revised extensively after having been reviewed by Delegate Cox and his legislative assistant, employees of the brain injury center, and the Department of Mental Health. She pointed out that the revised budget estimates are in the agenda packets.

Ms. Mead said that major changes in the revised position paper include:

- Services for members of the National Guard and Reserve as well as active duty service members
- Support for families, based on studies that show mental health effects of deployment are stronger on the National Guard and their families than on other soldiers
- The partnership with the Department of Rehabilitative Services
- How the \$2 million in community services money would be distributed, if such funds are provided by the General Assembly
- The fact that the \$2 million is one-time funding specifically for services for veterans with mental health issues
- That local agencies would access the funds through a request for proposal process
- That DVS would ask the seven mental health regions in Virginia to partner with other agencies to deliver services
- That the \$2 million would give each region approximately \$275,000, which would fund two or three case manager positions and provide some clinical services

Ms. Mead then turned to the budget proposal, explaining that DVS proposed to hire an executive-level director to coordinate services and assist service providers. That person would have an administrative assistant. There would also be three regional coordinators who would work at the community level to identify individuals who need services. Funding is also provided for outreach and public education efforts. There would be some funding for training community providers. Finally, funding is included for a data system to help keep track of individuals in need of services, the services that have been provided, and if the services have been effective.

Mr. Rinaldo asked if the communities will be expected to fund the salaries of the case workers after the one-time funding was expended. Ms. Mead explained that DVS is monitoring a number of bills in Congress that would provide federal funding for mental health care reimbursement. She said that the state funds would be used to build initial capacity, and that the recipients of the state funds would then apply for federal funds to continue services. As part of the requests for funds, DVS will expect local agencies to explain how they will continue services.

Mr. Kaiserman asked if returning service members or their family members were becoming more open in sharing their mental health or family problems. Ms. Mead said that there seems to be increased willingness among service members and family members to share their stories. She said she thought it is making a difference in raising awareness of these issues, but that she doesn't know if it's a significant difference. Mr. McGinnis added that he believes that awareness of these issues is coming from military commanders.

Mr. Kaiserman asked Ms. Holbert what she has noticed on the Marine Corps side of things dealing with the stigma and Marines not getting help. Ms. Holbert believes that the Marines Corps active duty commander have taken an active stance on the issue of stigma in pre- and post-

deployment briefings and are letting Marines know that it is alright to get help. She said she believes improvements have been made.

Mr. Cooper asked if the tracking of services would create HIPAA issues. Ms. Mead explained that there would not be a HIPAA issue if data were exchanged between treating professionals. DVS will do everything to stay HIPAA-compliant. Mr. McGinnis added that HIPAA is not a barrier but a set of rules.

Mr. Cooper expressed concern that only \$200,000 was proposed for outreach, but that three times that amount was proposed for administrative expenses. Ms. Mead responded that a main focus of the program director and regional directors will be to focus on awareness. She said that Mr. Cooper raised a good point, and that she will look at the budget again.

Mr. McGinnis added that the \$42 million proposed by the Governor to address mental health issues will also benefit veterans. He said that the focus of the Governor's proposal is on emergency services and case management, and expressed his opinion that the money proposed addressed "today's and yesterday's problem." He said that the Wounded Warrior initiative will address the problems of tomorrow. He believes 25,000 veterans and 50,000 family members will need services over the next 20 years.

Ms. Mead said that the Wounded Warrior program will ensure veterans are a priority for treatment, something that they are not in the current mental health system.

Mr. Schneider said that he believes suicide prevention should also be a vital component of the Wounded Warrior program.

Discussion followed on the subject of media support for the program once it is up and running.

Ms. Mead added that Dr. Harold Cuttler of the VA has been a key advisor on the program, and that he has offered to be an expert witness during the General Assembly session. Ms. Mead said that Ms. Holbert has also volunteered to testify.

Commissioner Burgess recognized Ms. Mead for doing an excellent job to bring the program to where it is today. He said that the program was a work in process, and that what comes out of the General Assembly may not be what was presented today.

Chairman Wilder said he hoped that Delegate Cox and Senator Houck would work together so that the language of their bills was the same. He said that he had heard that Senator Puller may also be interested in sponsoring legislation.

Chairman Wilder stated that each year the JLC Chairman is required to prepare a report to the Board of Veterans Services and the Department of Veterans Services on JLC activities. He said that this year's report describes the JLC and its purpose, and outlines the JLC legislative objectives. The report was sent to every legislator.

Chairman Wilder brought the members' attention to the need to update the position paper for Objective 3. He suggested the position paper be changed to reflect the new funding levels. Mr. Schneider added that suicide prevention should be added. Mr. Rinaldo said that the position paper needs to address the notion of the "specialness" of the Wounded Warrior program and that it is different from the \$42 million proposed for broader mental health issues.

A **motion** was made by Mr. Boyer and seconded by Mr. Karnes to make the amendments to the position paper as discussed above. The motion passed unanimously.

Objective 4: Virginia War Memorial Education Center

Led By Harry Warner

Mr. Warner reported that there were 20,000 visitors to the Virginia War Memorial in 2007. He said that the Virginia War Memorial Education Center has been named for Paul and Phyllis Galanti. He asked that the Educational Center be referred to as the Galanti Education Center and not the War Memorial Education Center.

Mr. Warner said he is very pleased with the Governor's support for the War Memorial. The budget for the Galanti Education Center is \$8.1 million. He said that prior to the Governor's budget proposal, the state had committed \$4,050,000 over a three year period. This was contingent on the War Memorial Educational Foundation raising \$2 million in private funding. This left a funding gap of \$2 million. He said that Governor Kaine's budget adds an additional \$1,750,000, bringing the state's commitment to \$5.8 million. The Governor's budget also makes a commitment to add a granite wall to honor Virginians killed in action in the Global War on Terror. The additional state funding is contingent on the War Memorial Educational Foundation raising an additional \$250,000, for a total of \$2.3 million. The private sector commitment of \$2.3 million and the state commitment of \$5.8 million total up to \$8.1 million. He said that as of today, private sector contributions totaled \$910,000.

Mr. Warner recognized several JLC members for their efforts:

- Mr. Kaiserman and MOAA, which has pledged \$13,000
- Mr. Chapman and the American Legion, which is working to raise \$100,000
- Mr. Boyer and the VFW, which has committed \$50,000

Mr. Warner recognized some of the other major contributors – many at the \$100,000 level.

These contributors include:

- Jim Ukrop and Ukrop's First Market Bank
- The Reynolds Foundation
- Media General
- Bill and Alice Goodwin
- Bruce Gottwald and the Newmarket Corporation
- The Cabell Foundation, and
- Dominion

At present, Mr. Warner said that over 82% of the budget has been committed by the state or by private donors, and that he is committed to raising the final \$1.4 million in private donations.

The Council took a break for lunch between 12:15pm and 12:50pm.

Chairman Wilder called the meeting back to order.

Chairman Wilder called on the members to finalize Objective 4. He read the current summary of Objective 4: “The JLC requests that the Governor and General Assembly release the \$3.5 million appropriated by the 2007 General Assembly for the construction of the Virginia War Memorial Education Wing, and that the Governor and General Assembly appropriate an additional \$2 million in General Funds for the construction of the Virginia War Memorial Education Wing.”

Chairman Wilder said that he thought the wording is no longer applicable because the Governor’s budget proposes \$2.3 million in private funds and the \$5.8 million in state funds. He said that the statement should be revised to reflect the Governor’s budget proposal.

Mr. Warner explained that he stated at the October meeting that the War Memorial position was to keep a \$2 million contingency in the budget. With the additional state funds, this is no longer a factor. The focus now is to raise the \$2.3 million. At present, the War Memorial is in the planning and development phase of the project. Drawings should be completed in August. The state has contracted the architect through March. The project is going to need additional funding to keep the architectural planning going ahead.

Mr. Warner said that \$500,000 was needed to keep planning efforts on track. However, this money won’t be released until \$2.3 million in private funds are raised. Mr. Warner is concerned that planning will come to a standstill in March because funds will not be immediately available.

Chairman Wilder asked if anyone had any revised wording for Objective 4, and Mr. Boyer proposed that Mr. Warner put forth such language. Mr. Warner stated that the objective could be modified such that \$500,000 would be released in April.

Mr. Combs said that he believed it was his sense of the General Assembly that the legislators wanted to see that private funds had been raised before state funds would be committed. Mr. Combs suggested that Objective 4 could be worded such that the \$500,000 would be released when a percentage of the \$2.3 million in private funds had been raised. The remainder of the state funds would be released when the balance of the private funds had been raised.

Mr. Kaiserman asked Mr. Warner if \$500,000 would be enough, and Mr. Warner confirmed that it would be.

Mr. Edwards proposed that the issue be tabled for a limited time, to allow Mr. Combs and Mr. Warner to work offline on a revised summary for Objective 4.

The issue was brought back before the Council, and Mr. Combs and Mr. Warner proposed a new statement for Objective 4 as follows: “The JLC supports the funding levels proposed in the Governor’s Caboose Bill, but requests that the General Assembly modify the Governor’s

proposed budget such that \$500,000 of the \$5,720,000 in state support be released upon certification that the War Memorial Education Foundation has secured \$1,000,000 in donations and/or pledges. The balance of the state funding (\$5,220,000) would be released after the War Memorial Education Foundation has secured the remaining \$1,250,000 in private funds. The purpose of the \$500,000 is to keep Education Center planning on its time line and to prevent further cost escalation.

A **motion** was made by Mr. Boyer and seconded by Mr. Jasper to adopt the new language for Objective 4. The decision was unanimous to adopt the new language.

Objective 5: Tax Relief for 100% Disabled Veterans

Chairman Wilder pointed out that Delegate Lingamfelter has submitted a bill which only asks for tax relief for combat-related disabilities. He said that Senator Puller had submitted a bill that would provide such relief for 100% service-connected disabled veterans, even if the disability wasn't combat related. Senator Puller's version supports the JLC Objective as written. Chairman Wilder asked if there are any objectives to keeping the current language of this objective. No one objected and the objective will remain as it is.

Objective 6: Provide Tax Relief for Virginia Citizen Soldiers called to Active Duty

Chairman Wilder said that Delegate Ben Cline has agreed to sponsor a bill, and that Senator Mary Margaret Whipple was considering sponsoring a bill on this objective. Chairman Wilder said he sees no reason to change anything on the objection at this time, and asked if there were any objections. No one had any objections, and the objective will remain as written.

Objective 7: Permit Virginia Resident Service Members to place a "Freeze" on their Credit Files

Chairman Wilder said that Delegate Harvey Morgan has submitted a bill dealing with this issue. Chairman Wilder said he sees no need to change the objective at this time. Mr. Schneider said he supports the issue, but wondered if it was worthy of being included on the JLC priority list, since this was an issue that impacts all citizens, not just veterans.

A **motion** was made by Mr. Schneider and seconded by Ms. Holbert to support the freeze on credit files for service members, but to take it off of the top priority list. Fourteen members voted to take it off of the priority list and two voted to keep it on the list.

A **motion** was made by Chairman Wilder and seconded by Mr. Gray to adopt a new priority list as follows:

1. Fully fund TurboVet, as briefed
2. Wounded Warrior Mental Health Care, as briefed
3. Virginia War Memorial Education Wing, with revised statement
4. Tax Relief for 100% disabled veterans, as previously stated
5. Tax relief for Virginia Citizen-Soldiers as previously proposed.

A **motion** was made by Mr. Schneider and seconded by Ms. Holbert to reprioritize the objectives as follows:

- Priority 1: Wounded Warrior Mental Health Care
- Priority 2 or 3: Fully fund TurboVet

Mr. Jasper said he would like to keep TurboVet as top priority.

Mr. Hilgers explained that the JLC has put out a prioritized list of objectives, and that the JLC's credibility would be hurt if the JLC drops items from the legislative priority list or rearranges the priority of the objectives. He strongly advised that the JLC keep the current list of priorities. He said that there is nothing to stop the JLC from putting an emphasis where it is most needed, but that the priority list should remain the same. Chairman Wilder acknowledged Mr. Hilgers' points.

Mr. Martinez stated that he believed the legislative priorities should stay as written.

Mr. Kaiserman pointed out that the emphasis could change, but not the overall list of prioritized objectives.

Discussion ensued on the merit of keeping the prioritized objectives as written.

Mr. Schneider asked to withdraw his earlier motion to change the priorities, but stated that he wanted to ensure that Wounded Warrior was a priority.

Chairman Wilder asked for a show of hands as to how many members wanted to stick with the original seven prioritized objectives. Fourteen members voted to keep the objectives as previously written. Chairman Wilder said that the JLC will not reprioritize the objectives.

The Chairman summed up the discussion as follows:

- The JLC will keep seven legislative objectives
- All seven will be listed on the summary sheet and in the point papers
- The seven objectives will be reworded to reflect actions taken today
- The wording "in priority order" will be removed from the summary sheet

Chairman Wilder asked if there was further discussion. Hearing none, he asked all those in favor to say "aye," and those opposed to say "nay." All members agreed to the summation as presented by the Chairman. Chairman Wilder asked Mr. Combs to redraft the 2008 legislative objective summary, to reflect the wishes of the Council.

Review of Meeting of November 28 re Fundraising for Wounded Warrior Mental Health

Led by Commissioner Burgess

Commissioner Burgess told the Council that a meeting was held on November 28, 2007 which included BVS Chairman Paul Galanti, JLC Chairman Sam Wilder, DVS Director of Policy and Planning Steve Combs, and DVS Development Coordinator Jack Hilgers. He said the minutes of this meeting discuss a process for fundraising efforts for the Wounded Warrior initiative. It was determined that there should be a process for the short-term as well as a more formal process for the long-term for fundraising and inter-board coordination.

Chairman Wilder provided background on fundraising goals for the Wounded Warrior project, and stated that he has approached the Veterans Services Foundation to encourage that body to undertake fundraising for the Wounded Warrior initiative. He said that he plans to work through the Board of Veterans Services to encourage the Veterans Services Foundation to launch private fundraising. He asked that the Council approve his bringing a motion before the Board of Veterans Services, with the goal that the Board of Veterans Services request that the Veterans Services Foundation take on support for the Wounded Warrior Mental Health program as a top fundraising priority.

A **motion** was made by Mr. Platte and seconded by Commissioner Burgess, which passed unanimously, for the JLC Chairman to propose to the Board of Veterans Services that they request the Veterans Services Foundation make the Wounded Warrior Mental Health program a priority fundraising objective.

Vietnam Veterans Memorial Education Center: Presentation

Led by Anya Harris

Mrs. Harris briefed the Council on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Education Center project. Council members were given a packet containing information from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund. Like the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the Education Center will honor those who gave their lives in the Vietnam War, but will also honor those who died in other conflicts. The groundbreaking is expected to take place in 2010.

Mr. Jasper told of his service as a company commander in Vietnam, saying that his company was hit by a reinforced enemy battalion. He said his company had 25 wounded and 10 killed in action. To keep his Marines in his memory he has purchased bricks for two Marines at the Marine Corps Museum and will later purchase bricks for other fallen members of his company.

JLC Meeting at the General Assembly – January 14, 2008

Led by Jack Hilgers

Mr. Hilgers passed out information on “How a Bill Becomes a Law” and “The Virginia General Assembly pocket glossary of legislative terms.” Mr. Hilgers also provided a map showing where public parking is available in the vicinity of the General Assembly Building, and the rates for those parking lots. He noted that War Memorial Executive Director Jon Hatfield has offered to accommodate parking at the War Memorial.

The meeting will be January 14, 2008 in the 5th Floor West conference room of the General Assembly Building. Co-patron forms will be available for legislators to sign. Confirmation was given by Senators John Edwards and Frank Wagner that they would attend. Confirmation was also given by Delegates John Cosgrove, Kirk Cox, Bill Janis, and Terrie Suit.

Chairman Wilder said that he wants this event to help spread the word of who the JLC is. The event will be an awareness and public relations event. Chairman Wilder said that it would be a good idea to call legislators in advance and try to set up appointments to speak with them.

Proposed Town Hall Meetings

Led by Commissioner Vince Burgess

Commissioner Burgess proposed that the JLC partner with DVS on six town hall meetings. The Commissioner said he feels that the JLC would be a great partner for DVS in hosting the meetings. He proposed that the meetings be held in Harrisonburg, Quantico, Abingdon, Richmond, Roanoke, and Tidewater, or close to the areas listed.

A **motion** was made by Mr. Schneider and seconded by Mr. Jasper, to partnership with DVS in identify meeting locations, promoting the meetings, and having a JLC member present to host the meetings with DVS. The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Freeman asked Commissioner Burgess how many people will be attending the meetings. The Commissioner replied that approximately 30- 35 individuals were present at similar meetings held last year. DVS has also invited the National Guard, the VA, and local veteran service organizations. The Commissioner plans to do a news release to inform the public of the meetings.

Department of Veterans Services Initiatives

Led by Commissioner Vince Burgess

The Commissioner sent out a briefing on the hurdles that must be crossed before DVS can open the Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center, and start accepting private pay patients and Medicare patients. One of the current problems is implementing the state patient billing system. The Virginia Department of Health has to visit the facility and review the policies and procedures, which could take up to 30 days. The projected date to start accepting private pay patients is the week of January 7. The Fire Marshal has reviewed all corrected deficiencies and has given his approval of the facility. The Commissioner said he would like to apologize to the veterans community for the delayed opening of the care center. He would have liked to see the center open right after the dedication ceremony but that was not the case.

Preparation for next meeting

Led by Chairman Sam Wilder

Chairman Wilder called the members' attention to the proposed meeting schedule for 2008:

- Monday January 14 (Day on the Hill)
- Thursday March 13
- Wednesday May 14
- Wednesday August 13 (2009 Legislative Objectives to be decided)
- Wednesday October 15
- Thursday December 18

It was unanimously agreed to adopt the 2008 meeting schedule as proposed.

Chairman Wilder thanked everyone who took the time and effort to research the objectives.

Chairman's Report: Veterans Service Foundation

Led by Commissioner Burgess

Commissioner Burgess handed out comments from Frank Wickersham, the Chairman of the Veterans Service Foundation, who sent his apologies for not being able to present the VSF briefing himself.

Public Comment Period

There was no public comment.

Ms. Holbert said she would like to have photographic support for the town hall meetings and the JLC Day at the General Assembly. She said the photos could be posted to the DVS website so that people can put a face to the JLC. Her goal is to expand the visibility of the Council. Commissioner Burgess replied that he will have Anne Atkins, DVS Director of Communications, get with Ms. Holbert and come up with a way to present the photos.

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 2:50 p.m.