

Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations
Meeting Minutes
December 21, 2006

A meeting of the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (JLC) was held on Thursday, December 21, 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*; Paul Galanti, *BVS Chairman (ex-officio)*, Robert O. Gray, *American Ex-Prisoners of War*; Jenny M. Holbert, *Women Marines Association*; John T. Jackson, *Paralyzed Veterans of America*; Norman Jasper, *Military Order of the Purple Heart*; R. Goodwin Sacra, *Navy Seabee Veterans of America*; Richard Schneider, *Non-Commissioned Officers Association*; Frank Sherman, *Roanoke Valley Veterans Council*; Tom Stephen, Jr., *Reserve Officers Association*; Frank Wickersham, *MOAA*; and Sam Wilder, *AUSA*.

Members Absent

David Ellis, *NAUS*; Daniel Miller, *Disabled American Veterans*; Cornelius T. O'Neill, *American Legion*; Richard J. Rinaldo, *Legion of Valor of the U. S., Inc.*; Kenneth Smith, *Virginia National Guard Association*; Thomas Snee, *Fleet Reserve Association*

Alternates Present

Dale Chapman, *American Legion*; Paul Hamaker, *NAUS*; Jack Hilgers, *Legion of Valor of the U. S., Inc.*; David Martinez, *Disabled American Veterans*

Other Alternates Present

John Cooper, *AMVETS*; John Dozier, *Korean War Veterans*; Wes Edwards, *MOAA*; Dan Karnes, *Roanoke Valley Veterans Council*; Don Kaiserman, *AUSA*

Commonwealth of Virginia Officials Present

The Honorable John Marshall, *Secretary of Public Safety*; Jon Hatfield, *Director, Virginia War Memorial*; Harry Warner, *Executive Director, Virginia War Memorial Foundation*; Roz Trent, *Virginia Department of Veterans Services*; Steven Combs, *Virginia Department of Veterans Services*; Anne Atkins, *Virginia Department of Veterans Services*; Lew Deal, *Virginia Department of Veterans Services*; Don Ferguson, *Office of the Attorney General*

Others Present

Todd P. Golding; Tom Briggs (*Va. Veterans Coalition*); Roger Overstreet (*Va. Veterans Coalition*); Roger Sullivan (*Va. Veterans Coalition*)

Agenda Packet

Meeting Agenda; draft Minutes of the October 11, 2006, meeting; Veterans Services Foundation Chairman's Report; Virginia Citizen-Soldier Support Council information; JLC Legislative Report; Governor Kaine's Proposed Amendments to the 2006-2008 Biennial Budget; Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations 2007 Legislative Agenda (Adopted August 9, 2006 – Updated December 15, 2006); Veterans Benefits, Health Care, and Information Technology Act of 2006 Summary; JLC Member Picture Listing

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. The Council recited the Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag.

Roll Call of VSOs and Quorum Determination

Seventeen of the twenty-one member Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) were recorded as being represented (14 by a primary member; 3 by an alternate member), and a quorum was determined. Dale Chapman (*Alternate - American Legion*) and Richard Schneider (*Non-Commissioner Officers Association*) arrived after the roll was called.

Review and Approval of October 11, 2006 Meeting Minutes

The minutes of the October 11, 2006 meeting were reviewed. A **motion** was made by Norman Jasper, seconded by Paul Hamaker and passed unanimously, to approve the minutes with the following amendment:

P. 9 - Priority #2 – change to: *Frank Sherman (primary); Dan Karnes, Steven Combs (subject matter expert)*

Governor's Proposed Amendments to the 2006-08 Biennium Budget

The Honorable John Marshall, Secretary of Public Safety, gave the JLC a brief overview of Governor Kaine's proposed amendments to the 2006-08 Biennium Budget. A copy of the Governor's proposed amendments was included in the member agenda packets. The Secretary acknowledged the one year anniversary of the Department of Veterans Services' (DVS) transfer to the Public Safety Secretariat, and the accomplishments of the Department under the leadership of Commissioner Burgess. Secretary Marshall highlighted the Governor's amendments regarding the Virginia National Guard, which was the top legislative priority of the JLC.

The Secretary reminded members that this year, Governor Kaine could only make amendments to the budget that was adopted by the 2006 General Assembly, but next year will actually be Governor Kaine's prepared and introduced budget. He emphasized the Governor's commitment to the veterans of Virginia through the issuance of Executive Order 19. He thanked the JLC for its hard work, and pledged his continued support to the DVS, JLC and veterans of Virginia. Questions were addressed.

Public Comment Period

Roger Sullivan, Va. Veterans Coalition, asked Commissioner Burgess of the status of the 80-bed addition to the Sitter-Barfoot Veterans Care Center in Richmond. Commissioner Burgess advised Mr. Sullivan that the DVS has submitted a Request for Proposal to study long-term care needs in the Commonwealth, and the Sitter-Barfoot Care Center will be addressed in this study. He stated that a proposal has been received; however, the bid was extremely expensive. The DVS is considering working with one of the universities in administering this study. He advised that the general public will also have input into this study. Mr. Sullivan stressed that recent legislation passed by Congress indicates that there is definitely a need for the additional beds

Commissioner Burgess clarified that the “additional beds” are domiciliary beds that would be in an additional wing to be added at a later time, in addition to the 160 rooms already at the Sitter-Barfoot Care Center. The additional beds will be for independent living.

Chairman’s Report: Board of Veterans Services

Paul Galanti, Chairman of the Board of Veterans Services, stated that the BVS has been heavily involved with the TurboVet project. TurboVet is a Turbo-Tax- Type software application which will assist veterans and benefit service representatives in preparing and submitting claims to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. It will also help veterans identify their needs and locate resources that will address those needs. This type of software application will also positively impact the VA by improving the accuracy of applications and ensuring supporting information is presented in a clear and consistent manner. Partnering agencies working on this project are DVS, Virginia Information Technologies Agency, and Virginia Commonwealth University.

Chairperson’s Report: Veterans Services Foundation

In the absence of Lydia Dudley, Chairperson, Veterans Services Foundation (VSF), Chairman Botts gave a brief update of VSF activities. A copy of the VSF Chairperson’s report was included in member agenda packets.

Chairman Botts stated that the VSF had conducted a needs assessment to help identify unmet needs of veterans. He stated that JLC would assist the VSF in identifying further needs. Commissioner Burgess commended Lydia Dudley in taking a proactive approach in assisting the VSF in fulfilling its mission.

Department of Veterans Services Initiatives

Commissioner Burgess stated that the DVS had done extremely well in the Governor’s proposed amendments and gave an overview of those amendments (copy included in agenda packets) which addressed critical findings from the June 2006 report of the Auditor of Public Accounts, in addition to laying the firm management foundation of current and future growth of the Department in the areas of Benefits, Cemeteries, Care Centers, Education and Administration.

Commissioner Burgess briefly highlighted the three initiatives in support of Executive Order Nineteen – Internet Portal (TurboVet), Workforce Development and Outreach. Anne Atkins, DVS Communications Director, and Board of Veterans Services members Paul Galanti and Al Sample have been working on these major initiatives. In addition, Executive Order Nineteen

will also focus on overall role that the Commonwealth is playing and should play in serving its veterans.

Lastly, the Commissioner distributed a copy of the job advertisement for the Sitter-Barfoot Veterans Care Center Administrator, which had been placed in the Richmond Times-Dispatch Newspaper. The closing date for this position is January 19th. Once this position is filled, the hiring process for staff at the Care Center can begin. Commissioner Burgess requested JLC members to share this information with anyone who may be interested.

Old Business

Virginia Citizen-Soldier Support Council Report

Sam Wilder, JLC Vice-Chair, briefly discussed and focused members' attention to the handout of the Virginia Citizen Support Council meeting held on Wednesday, December 13, 2006, which was included in the agenda packets.

JLC 2007 Legislative Agenda: Actions to Date, Potential Changes and Future Plans

Vice Chairman Wilder focused members' attention on the handout included in the member agenda packets "JLC Meeting – Legislative Report." He gave a recap of the JLC legislative process that has taken place. He stated that it is very important that the JLC stay connected with organizations such as the Virginia Citizens-Soldier Support Council, the Board of Veterans Services and the Virginia Military Advisory Council early in the process of formulating objectives.

Mr. Wilder gave an overview of the legislative "climate." He stated that since this is a short session (46 days), it may be difficult to have all issues addressed and some may be carried over to next year's session.

The current status of the JLC legislative objectives was discussed, in particular, the following:

- **Priority #4 - Virginia War Memorial Educational Wing** - more money is needed. Most difficult to get passed in the short session. Senator Lambert, Senator Chichester, and Delegate Hall have expressed interest in requesting additional funds.
- **Priority #5 – Veterans Preference** - there probably will not be a bill introduced. A position paper, "Clarification of Veterans' Preference in Hiring Process," was distributed for members' use.
- **Priority #6 – Pay Day Lending**
- **Priority #7 – Tax-Exempt Deployments** - more definition on "deployment" is needed and how many are impacted.

After discussion, Chairman Botts suggested that priorities #5 and #7 be the first items for next year's legislative agenda. **Frank Wickersham made a motion, seconded by Jack Hilgers and passed unanimously that legislative priority #5 and #7 will be the first items for next year's legislative agenda.** In addition, Frank Wickersham will provide a position paper on Priority #7 in defining deployments and how many are impacted by tax-exempt deployments at the next JLC meeting.

Dan Boyer stated that more clarification of Priority #5 – Veterans Preference – is needed. AMVETS and the VFW both fully support this issue. John Dozier (AMVETS) and Dan Boyer (VFW) will work together in developing a point paper. Ron Hudson, an interested citizen who has met with the JLC on this issue, will also be asked to participate in developing this point paper. Chairman Botts requested each JLC member to ask their respective organizations if there is an interest in working with Messrs. Boyer and Dozier.

Sam Wilder recommended that the JLC push forward in its support for appropriations for Legislative Priority #4 – Construction of an Educational Wing for the War Memorial. A total of \$6 million is needed. \$500,000 in General Funds was appropriated by the 2006 General Assembly, and Governor Kaine has proposed an additional \$1.5 million in General Funds. A legislative budget amendment is needed to increase the Governor’s proposal from \$1.5 million to \$3.5 million. The Virginia War Memorial Educational Foundation plans to obtain \$2 million in private donations to round out the needed \$6 million. The American Legion, MOAA and the VFW fully support this issue. Frank Wickersham spoke of the importance of having a better facility at the War Memorial. Robert Gray echoed how much the facility is needed. **A motion was made, seconded and passed unanimously, that the JLC proceed in its support for the construction of the Educational Wing for the War Memorial.**

The American Legion “Day on the Hill” is scheduled for Wednesday, January 17, 2007; the Veterans of Foreign Wars “Day on the Hill” is scheduled for Thursday January 18, 2007. E-mails will be forwarded advising members of the date/times of committee meetings.

Don Kaiserman asked for a round of applause to Sam Wilder for orchestrating the JLC legislative process in preparing talking papers so that the JLC could speak with “one voice.”

Chairman Botts urged JLC members to have constituents meet with their legislators. The Chair will provide a script that will be sent to each JLC member.

JLC Breakfast

Chairman Botts suggested that the 2007 JLC legislative breakfast be tabled and take place in January 2008, in an effort to allow more time for preparation and planning. A planning committee was appointed. Members of this committee include:

Frank Wickersham
Jack Hilgers
John Bonnell
Robert Gray
Dave Ellis

Commissioner Burgess also offered the assistance of the Department in this effort. Members of this committee will report planning recommendations to the JLC. Chairman Botts requested that members ask their organizations to contribute to the funding of the 2008 Legislative Breakfast. All questions regarding the breakfast should be directed to Mr. Wickersham.

Virginia Military Survivors & Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP)

Mr. Todd Golding addressed the JLC regarding his concerns with the VMSDEP. Mr. Golding stated that although Governor Kaine appropriated additional funds for VMSDEP in his budget amendments, he believed that the law be interpreted to include books, supplies, required computer software, room and board as waived expenses under VMSDEP. He requested the JLC to take steps to have such added to the budget amendment.

Mr. Golding inquired if DVS could form a partnership with the colleges and universities to work together with the VSOs to raise funds to support VMSDEP long term, under Executive Order 19. He recommended that a stakeholders committee be formed to include parents, students, college/university representatives, representatives of VSOs and DVS, to write a policy to clearly define and identify what is included as a waived expense.

Chairman Botts asked John Bonnell if the Marine Corps League would take up this issue, and Mr. Bonnell agreed. John Bonnell suggested that a clearer, more defined position paper be developed. Commissioner Burgess stated that legislation will be introduced during the upcoming General Assembly session regarding VMSDEP. He and Steven Combs have provided language to several members of the General Assembly who are interested in this issue. He will brief Mr. Bonnell on this language, and assist in developing a position paper.

Don Ferguson stated that there is a federal program, and the state program mirrors the federal program. There is a state requirement that the total receipt cannot exceed actual cost. Dick Schneider suggested that the federal and state programs be accessed, and possibly the state program could augment the missing pieces that the federal program does not cover. Mr. Schneider offered his assistance in this assessment. Chairman Botts stated that this would be included as an issue for the next General Assembly session.

After further discussion, Chairman Botts stated that the JLC will work with Commissioner Burgess and Steven Combs on this issue for this General Assembly session rather than waiting until next year. Mr. Golding agreed to assist in this effort.

New Business

Unmet Needs of Veterans Discussion

Chairman Botts requested that JLC members contact their respective VSOs inquiring whether there are programs/projects (federal or state level) that the Veterans Services Foundation (VSF) might undertake in meeting unmet needs of veterans. Members were asked to e-mail this information to the Chairman or bring to the next JLC meeting. Ideas and/or suggestions will be forwarded to the VSF.

Mid-Atlantic Addiction Technology Transfer Center (ATTC)

Commissioner Burgess read correspondence from Paula K. Horvatich, Ph.D, Associate Professor and Director, Mid Atlantic Addiction Technology Transfer Center (ATTC). The ATTC is funded by the Center for the Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Association and awarded to the Commonwealth of Virginia. As part of its mission, the ATTC is developing plans for a conference designed to examine the specific challenges veterans endure, describe the manifestations of combat related stress, and identify state and community-based resources to

support their return to health. The correspondence invited DVS to join as a partner in planning and implementing a conference dedicated to addressing the health needs and future of returning veterans and their families.

Don Kaiserman suggested that the JLC have a speaker attend a JLC meeting and discuss PTSD. Jenny Holbert stressed interest in becoming more educated on this subject. Commissioner Burgess recommended that Ms. Holbert and Anne Atkins work together in securing a speaker to address the JLC on this issue at the next meeting.

Military of the Purple Heart

Norman Jasper distributed for members' information pictures of the Dedication Service of the Purple Heart Monument on November 11, 2006, D-Day Memorial.

JLC Membership

Sam Wilder stated the BVS, CSSC and VMAC all have legislative representation on its boards/councils. He stated that it would be helpful if the JLC could add legislators to its membership to ensure support on legislative issues. Mr. Wilder made a motion, seconded by Dan Boyer, that the JLC request the governor to appoint legislators to the Council. Frank Wickersham voiced concern to moving in this direction, as this action may cause a conflict of interest.

Don Ferguson was requested to research this issue. After discussion, the motion was withdrawn. This topic will be discussed as "Old Business" at the next JLC meeting.

Preparation for Next Meeting

The next meeting of the JLC will be Wednesday, March 14, 2007, 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. at the American Legion Department of Virginia Building, 1708 Commonwealth Avenue in Richmond.

The remaining meeting dates scheduled for 2007 are as follows:

May 16, 2007
August 8, 2007
October 10, 2007
December 20, 2007

Public Comment Period

There was no public comment.

Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:00 p.m.
