



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

101 N. 14TH ST., 17TH FLOOR
RICHMOND, VA 23219

Air Force Association
American Legion
AMVETS
Association of the United States Army
Disabled American Veterans
Fifth Baptist Veterans Ministry
Fleet Reserve Association
Iraq & Afghanistan Veterans of America
Korean War Veterans Association
Legion of Valor of the U.S., Inc.
Marine Corps League
Military Order of the Purple Heart
Military Officers Association of America
Military Order of the World Wars
Navy Mutual Aid Association
Navy Seabee Veterans of America
Non-Commissioned Officers Association
Paralyzed Veterans of America
Reserve Officers Association
Roanoke Valley Veterans Council
Veterans of Foreign Wars
Vietnam Veterans of America
Virginia Army/Air National Guard Enlisted Association
Virginia National Guard Association
Women Marines Association

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Department of Veterans Services (DVS) programs and services

OBJECTIVE: To support the operations of the Virginia Department of Veterans Services (DVS) related to suicide prevention, homelessness, disability claims processing, women veterans, and education.

BACKGROUND:

- The Governor and the 2020 General Assembly approved new funding in FY21 (\$1.15M) and FY22 (\$1.38M) to support critical DVS programs/services related to suicide prevention, homelessness, disability claims processing, women veterans, and education.
- This funding included additional peer specialist positions for the Virginia Veteran and Family Support (VVFS) program. Working in conjunction with VVFS resource specialists, peer specialists play a critical role in helping veterans who are in crisis or at risk. They used their “lived experiences” to help their fellow veterans facing the challenges of post-traumatic stress, who are at risk of suicide, or who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless (6,153 veterans were housed statewide from October 2014 – September 2020).
- This funding included additional funding for the DVS benefits services program, which helps veterans and family members develop and submit claims with the federal government related to a service-connected disability (for a wound, injury, exposure to toxic substance, etc.). The award of a disability rating by the VA results in direct monetary compensation paid to the veteran (\$3.57B to Virginia veterans in FFY19) and priority access to VA medical care (VA spent \$1.99B on medical care for 167,677 Virginia veterans in FFY19).
- This funding included a second position for the DVS women veterans program, which helps support largest (per capita) population of women veterans in the U.S. – over 110,000 and growing – by addressing the unique challenges that women veterans face related to their military service, and the unique strengths they bring to Virginia through their talent and drive to succeed.
- This funding included a position to support DVS education programs for veterans and families, including support of the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP), which saw 1,438 new students in FY20. In FFY19, 51,489 Virginia veterans and family members received over \$857M in G.I. Bill education benefits.

DISCUSSION:

- The new funding approved by the Governor and 2020 General Assembly had to be “un-appropriated” due to the downturn in revenues caused by COVID-19.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Governor and General Assembly take action to restore the funding for critical DVS programs and services.