



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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Position Paper 2021-04

Disabled Veteran State Park Passport

OBJECTIVE: To expand the Disabled Veterans Passport for free entry into state parks and discounted services to all service-connected disabled veterans

BACKGROUND:

- Currently a veteran must have a 100% service-connected permanent disability to receive free entry to state parks and a 50 percent discount on camping and swimming fees, picnic shelter rentals, and other Department of Conservation and Recreation equipment rentals.
- Maryland waives admission fees for all veterans and most North Carolina parks are free. All Border States offer state park lodging and / or offer outdoor recreation discounts to veterans.
- In 2010, HB3 was proposed to expand eligibility to all service-connected disabled veterans. The fiscal impact at the time was estimated to be a revenue loss of under \$38,000/year. This bill had bipartisan support but did not make it out of sub-committee for reasons not related to its worthiness.
- PL 116-205 was signed by the President on 3 December 2020 making the National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass available, without charge and for the lifetime of the passholder, to any veteran who has been found to have a compensable or non-compensable service-connected disability.

DISCUSSION: The National Park Service, recognizing the importance of outdoor activities and access to historic sites as rehabilitation for those who have become disabled in service to the Country, has unofficially loosened requirements to allow those with less than a 100% disability to be issued a National Park Pass free for life. The Congress of the United States is in the process of officially making this law and Virginia should follow suit.

RECOMMENDATION: That the General Assembly enact and the Governor sign legislation that that would expand the Virginia Disabled Veteran's Passport to any Virginia veteran who has been found to have a service-connected compensable or non-compensable disability.