

Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations
Meeting Minutes
October 21, 2020

A meeting of the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (the JLC) was held on October 21, 2020, at the Virginia War Memorial, 621 S. Belvidere, Richmond.

Members Present

- Thomas Wozniak, Air Force Association
- Richard Oertel, American Legion
- John Cooper, AMVETS
- Michael Flanagan, Association of the United States Army
- Denice Williams, Disabled American Veterans
- William Ashton, Fleet Reserve Association
- Lauren Augustine, Iraq & Afghanistan Veterans of America
- Tim Whitmore, Korean War Veterans Association
- James Barrett, Marine Corps League
- Monti Zimmerman, Military Officers Association of America
- Vernon Peters, Military Order of the World Wars
- Preston Curry, Paralyzed Veterans of America
- David Sitler, Reserve Officers Association
- Perry Taylor, Roanoke Valley Veterans Council
- Daniel Boyer, Veterans of Foreign Wars
- Robert Barnette, Virginia Army/Air National Guard Enlisted Association
- Kevin Hoffman, Virginia National Guard Association
- Judy Reid, Women Marines Association
- John Lesinski, Chairman, Veterans Services Foundation
- John Maxwell, Commissioner, Department of Veterans Services

Members Absent

- John Manning, Fifth Baptist Church Veterans Ministry
- Robert Herbert, Legion of Valor
- James Cuthbertson, Military Order of the Purple Heart
- Mike Boyle, Navy Seabee Veterans of America
- Jon Ostrowski, Non Commissioned Officers Association
- Charles Montgomery, Vietnam Veterans of America
- Michael Dick, Chairman, Board of Veterans Services

Alternates Present (representing their VSO)

- Thad Jones, Fifth Baptist Church Veterans Ministry
- Tyrone Anderson, Non Commissioned Officers Association
- George Corbett, Vietnam Veterans of America

Alternates Present (not representing their VSO)

- Rich Mansfield, AMVETS

Commonwealth of Virginia Officials Present

- Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs Carlos Hopkins
- Assistant Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs Jon Ward
- Steven Combs, Department of Veterans Services (DVS)
- Claudia Flores, DVS
- Glendalynn Glover, DVS
- Major General Tim Williams, the Adjutant General
- Walter Mercer, Department of Military Affairs (DMA)
- Cassy Horn Russell, DMA
- Zane Ruzicka, DMA
- Robin Beres, Veterans Services Foundation (VSF)
- Karla Boughey, VSF

Guests

- Faye Earley, AUSA State President

Items included in the Agenda Packet

- Draft Agenda (Agenda Item IV)
- Draft minutes of the July 22, 2020 meeting (Agenda Item V)
- Reports (Agenda Item VI)
 - Board of Veterans Services (Agenda Item VI.a)
 - Veterans Services Foundation (Agenda Item VI.b)
- New Business (Agenda Item VII)
 - Summary table of proposed JLC 2021 Initiatives
 - Position Papers for ten (10) proposed initiatives
 - List of JLC Officers for 2020-2021 (Agenda Item VII.d.)

Opening, Pledge of Allegiance, Thoughts & Meditation

JLC Chairman Bill Ashton called the meeting to order at 10:13 a.m. and led the Council in the Pledge of Allegiance.

JLC Vice Chair and Chaplain Denice Williams offered opening thoughts and meditation.

Roll Call of VSOs and Quorum Determination

The roll was called, and 21 of the 24 Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) represented on the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (the JLC) were recorded as being represented. Mr. John Lesinski, Chairman of the Veterans Services Foundation (VSF) and DVS Commissioner John Maxwell were recorded as present. A quorum was determined.

Approval of the Agenda

Chairman Ashton asked for a motion to approve the Agenda. Mr. Dan Boyer made a **motion, seconded** by Mr. John Cooper, to approve the meeting agenda as presented. The motion carried **unanimously**. (See Attachment 1).

Introduction of Guests and DVS staff

Chairman Ashton asked the guests and DVS team members to introduce themselves. Their names are recorded above.

Approve July 22, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Chairman Ashton asked for a motion to approve the July 22, 2020 meeting minutes. Mr. Dan Boyer made a **motion, seconded** by Mr. George Corbett, to approve the minutes as drafted. The motion carried **unanimously**.

Board of Veterans Services Report

Veterans Services Foundation (VSF) Chairman John Lesinski, who also serves on the Board of Veterans Services (BVS), presented the BVS report. (See *Attachment 2*). He highlighted the role that a BVS Point of Contact (POC) plays in working with DVS, the delivery of BVS POC reports at the September 16 BVS meeting, and the plan for additional POC reports at the December 17 BVS meeting. He noted that the next BVS meeting would be November 13 and it would focus on the recommendations adopted by the JLC.

Veterans Services Foundation Report

VSF Chairman John Lesinski presented the VSF report. (See *Attachment 3*). He noted that the VSF met electronically on September 17. He said that VSF had received over \$637,000 in FY20 and disbursed over \$360,000 to support DVS programs and services. He recognized VSF member Robin Beres, the VSF Development Committee Chair, who will be leading work on identifying new funding initiatives.

Department of Veterans Services Report

DVS Commissioner John Maxwell thanked the members for attending the meeting. He spoke about DVS current operations, including shifting to hybrid operations at DVS Benefits offices (mix of in-person services and online appointments); memorial services at the veterans cemeteries, Virginia War Memorial visitation and programs, and education programs. He also reported on the COVID-19 outbreaks at the veterans care centers, the loss of COVID-19 positive veterans at both facilities, and the efforts of the entire DVS team to bring the outbreaks to an end and to do all that is possible to try to prevent further losses.

Commissioner Maxwell spoke about the work of the Virginia Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans, and Families (SMVF) and that the VISR (Virginia Identify SMVF, Screen for suicide risk, and Refer for services) pilot. He spoke about the new DVS Virginia Veteran and Family Support (VVFS) Program Director – Brandi Jancaitis; the new DVS Cemeteries Director – Michael Henshaw; and the new DVS Director of Policy & Planning Claudia Flores. The Commissioner also noted that the November 11 Veterans Day Ceremony at the Virginia War Memorial would be livestreamed on social media and broadcast on CBS-6 in Richmond.

Commissioner Maxwell also talked about DVS work with the VA Undersecretary of the Veterans Benefits Administration, Dr. Paul Lawrence, through tele town halls and the links to DVS Benefits offices for help in filing veterans disability claims.

Mr. Cooper asked if staff members were the source of the COVID-19 outbreaks at the care centers. Commissioner Maxwell replied that it possible that a staff member or another source were possibilities.

Mr. Dave Sitler asked about veterans suicide, and whether there was any uptick in numbers due to COVID-19 isolation. Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs Carlos Hopkins responded that there did not seem to be an uptick in overall numbers of suicides, but there had been an uptick in the number of persons who were reaching out for help connect to suicide prevention resources. He noted that it was important to increase the numbers of DVS Peer Support specialists and availability of other resources so as to prevent any uptick in suicide numbers.

Update from the Adjutant General

Chairman Ashton introduced Major General Tim Williams, the Adjutant General of Virginia. MG Williams spoke about the support that the Virginia National Guard (VaNG) was providing for COVID-19 response efforts across the Commonwealth, with approximately 300 currently activated to support testing, respirator fit testing, and other activities. He also noted that the VaNG was also preparing for a future overseas deployment, with an expected 3,000 VaNG soldiers and airmen expected to be activated.

He thanked the JLC for all that it has done to support the soldiers and airmen of the Virginia National Guard, including the 2020 JLC initiative to support increased emergency response pay when VaNG soldiers and airmen are mobilized to support state operations, and the positive impact this had on the VaNG.

Update from the Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs

Chairman Ashton recognized Secretary Hopkins, who spoke about the new *Virginia Military Factbook* that captures the approximately \$100B that the military spends in the Commonwealth of Virginia, broken down by region. He noted that he would share a link to the online version of the *Factbook* with the JLC members, and that it would also be available in print format upon request.

Secretary Hopkins said that he had resumed visits to DVS offices across the Commonwealth.

He noted the vital importance of peer support specialists in helping veterans facing challenges associated with behavioral health or suicide prevention counseling. He appealed to the JLC members to share with their VSOs of both the availability of help through DVS or other sources, and the need for additional peer specialists.

He spoke of one of his initiatives – extension of health care for members of the Virginia National Guard when they are mobilized for state missions. He noted that he would be asking for support from the JLC after it is presented in January. Secretary Hopkins thanked the JLC for its support.

Chairman Ashton thanked Secretary Hopkins, Commissioner Maxwell, and General Williams for their reports/updates. Before turning to new business, he noted that the VA now offers a personal health care benefits guide, and that he would share information on how to request a personal guide.

NEW BUSINESS

Review potential initiatives for 2021

Chairman Ashton turned the gavel over to JLC Legislative Officer Lauren Augustine.

Ms. Augustine explained that ten proposals had been submitted prior to the meeting for consideration as potential JLC initiatives for 2021. She said the JLC representative making the proposal would explain the proposal and answer any questions from other representatives. After all proposals had been presented, a vote would be taken to include the proposal as part of the JLC's 2021 recommendation package, after which the approved initiatives would be prioritized.

DVS Chief Deputy Commissioner Steven Combs called the member's attention to the tracking sheet included in agenda packet (see *Attachment 4*). Mr. Combs noted that DVS would send out the link to the *Virginia Military Factbook* as part of the post-meeting distribution to members. He said that each member had been given a copy of the latest edition of the *Virginia Capitol Connections Quarterly Magazine*, featuring an article by DVS Commissioner John Maxwell, the *Virginia Capitol Connections "Red Book"* listing executive and legislative branch officials, and the 2020-2021 edition of the *"In Service to Our County – Virginia Officials and their Military Service"* guide.

The JLC sponsors of each of the 10 proposed initiatives reviewed their proposals. The 10 proposals are included as *Attachment 5*. Recommendations were made and accepted by the sponsors to make minor changes to "tighten up" several of the proposals before being published in final form no later than October 30. Following these presentations and questions from members, the JLC voted on each as follows:

Votes on whether to include in JLC 2021 Package:

AL-1: **motion** by Mr. Rick Oertel, **second** by Mr. Dan Boyer, to include in JLC 2021 package. **Unanimous** vote to include.

AL-2: **motion** by Mr. Monti Zimmerman, **second** by Mr. Thad Jones, to include in JLC 2021 package. **Unanimous** vote to include.

AUSA-1: **motion** by Mr. Dan Boyer, **second** by Mr. Thad Jones, to set this proposal aside until developed further. **Unanimous** vote to set aside pending further discussion.

FRA-1: **motion** by Mr. Bill Ashton, **second** by Mr. John Cooper, to include in JLC 2021 package. **Approved 19-2** to include, with Mr. Thomas Wozniak and Mr. Thad Jones voting no.

FRA-2: **motion** by Mr. Bill Ashton, **second** by Mr. Dan Boyer, to include in JLC 2021 package. **Approved 20-1** to include, with Mr. Thomas Wozniak voting no.

MCL-1: **motion** by Mr. Dan Boyer, **second** by Mr. Monti Zimmerman, to set aside. **Unanimous** vote to set aside.

Mr. Dan Boyer made a **motion, second** by Mr. George Corbett, that the JLC send a letter to Senator Bryce Reeves asking that he take this recommendation for action in the 2021 session. **Unanimous** vote to send letter.

VaA/ANGEA-1: **motion** by Mr. Robert Barnette, **second** by Mr. Rick Oertel, to include in JLC 2021 package. **Unanimous** vote to include.

VaA/ANGEA-2: **motion** by Mr. Robert Barnette, **second** by Mr. Dan Boyer, to set aside. **Unanimous** vote to set aside.

Mr. Robert Barnette made a **motion, second** by Mr. David Sitler, that the JLC send a letter to Secretary Carlos Hopkins asking that he take this recommendation for action with the Virginia National Guard. **Unanimous** vote to send letter.

VNGA-1: **motion** by Mr. Dan Boyer, **second** by Mr. Monti Zimmerman, to include in JLC 2021 package. **Unanimous** vote to include.

VNGA-2: **motion** by Mr. Dan Boyer, **second** by Mr. Kevin Hoffman, to include in JLC 2021 package. **Unanimous** vote to include.

Votes on prioritization of JLC 2021 Package

JLC 2021-01: **motion** by Mr. Monti Zimmerman, **second** by Mr. Rick Oertel, to make AL-2 the first priority. **Unanimous** vote to make this first priority.

JLC 2021-02: **motion** by Mr. Dan Boyer, **second** by Mr. Robert Barnette, to make VaA/ANGEA-2 the second priority. **Unanimous** vote to make this second priority.

JLC 2021-03: **motion** by Mr. Bill Ashton, **second** by Mr. Dave Sitler, to make FRA-2 the third priority. **20-1** vote to make this third priority, with Mr. Thomas Wozniak voting no.

JLC 2021-04: **motion** by Mr. Dan Boyer, **second** by Mr. George Corbett, to make AL-1 the fourth priority. **Unanimous** vote to make this fourth priority.

JLC 2021-05: **motion** by Mr. Thad Jones, **second** by Mr. Michael Flanagan, to make VNGA-1 the fifth priority. Discussion on options to make this proposal “half price annual pass” instead of free. Discussion around whether VNGA-1 or VNGA-2 should be fifth priority. Mr. Jones withdrew his motion.

Substitute motion by Mr. Kevin Hoffman, **second** by Mr. Kevin Hoffman, to make VNGA-2 the fifth priority. **Unanimous** vote to make this fifth priority.

JLC 2021-06: **motion** by Mr. Dan Boyer, **second** by Mr. Monti Zimmerman, to make VNGA-1 the sixth priority. **Unanimous** vote to make this sixth priority.

JLC 2021-07: **motion** by Mr. Bill Ashton, second by Mr. Kevin Hoffman, to make FRA-1 the seventh priority. **19-2** vote to make this seventh priority, with Mr. Thomas Wozniak and Mr. Thad Jones voting no.

Mr. Combs asked that JLC sponsors update/revise/clarify/tweak the position papers for the seven approved initiatives by October 28 so that they could be reviewed/approved and posted on the JLC webpage by October 30. He offered the assistance of DVS in preparing these papers.

He recommended that the two letters (MCL-1 and VaA/ANGEA-2) also be drafted no later than October 28 so that they can be reviewed and sent to Senator Reeves and Secretary Hopkins, respectively, by October 30, as well as posted on the JLC webpage. He offered DVS assistance with this.

Mr. Combs recommended that AUSA-1 be updated by December 2 so it was ready for presentation at the December 16 JLC meeting. When asked by Chairman Ashton about presenting this at the November 13 Board of Veterans Services (BVS) meeting, Mr. Combs noted that it was very likely that this paper would not be ready, and that the Chairman would have to note that it was under revision.

The table on the next page summarizes the prioritization and “next steps” on the JLC 2021 package.

**Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations
2021 Initiatives – Summary as of 10/21/20**

JLC 2021 Priority	VSO	Proposal Identifier	Subject	JLC Identifier	Next steps
1	American Legion	AL-2	Income Tax Subtraction for Certain Low-Income Disabled Veterans	JLC 2021-01	Draft position paper (JLC letterhead) to Chair, Vice Chair, and Legislative Officer by Oct 28; approved/posted to JLC webpage by Oct 30
2	Virginia Army/Air National Guard Enlisted Association	VaA/ANGEA-1	Tax Credits for Employers Who Hire National Guard and Reserves	JLC 2021-02	Ditto
3	Fleet Reserve Association	FRA-2	Expand Tax Relief for Surviving Spouses of Military Services Members “Killed in Action” to also include “Died on Active Duty”	JLC 2021-03	Ditto
4	American Legion	AL-1	Disabled Veteran State Park Passport	JLC 2021-04	Ditto
5	Virginia National Guard Association	VNGA-2	Free (1/2 price?) entry to state parks for Guard members	JLC 2021-05	Ditto
6	Virginia National Guard Association	VNGA-1	No cost license plates for Guard members	JLC 2021-06	Ditto
7	Fleet Reserve Association	FRA-1	Partial State Tax Exemption for Military Retirement Income	JLC 2021-07	Ditto
N/A	Marine Corps League	MCL-1	VSO Color and Honor Guards	N/A – JLC letter to Senator Reeves	Draft letter by Oct 28; signed/sent/posted to JLC webpage by Oct 30
N/A	Virginia Army/Air National Guard Enlisted Association	VaA/ANGEA-2	Annual Briefing for National Guard members on State Sponsored Life Insurance Program	N/A – JLC letter to Secretary Hopkins	Ditto
N/A	Association of the United States Army	AUSA-1	Microloans for Veterans Program	N/A. JLC to consider at December 16 mtg	AUSA to revise proposal by Dec 2

Vote to confirm JLC 2020-2021 Appointed Officers

Chairman Ashton called the members' attention to the list of JLC 2020-2021 Appointed Officers included in their agenda packet. (See *Attachment 6*.) Mr. Dan Boyer noted that he would be rotating off the JLC in 2021 and for confirmation that the Chairman still wanted him to serve on the Nominating Committee. Chairman Ashton affirmed this.

Mr. Dan Boyer made a **motion, second** by Mr. Tim Whitmore, to confirm Chairman Ashton's appointments as presented. The motion carried **unanimously**.

Other New Business and Open Discussion

Chairman Ashton encouraged the JLC members to share the information from today's JLC meeting with the members of their organizations so that members could advocate with legislators for support of the JLC 2021 package.

VSF Chairman John Lesinski recognized VSF member Robin Beres and VSF Executive Director Karla Boughey, who were in attendance. He noted that the success of the VSF in raising supplemental funding to support DVS programs and services was dependent on outreach, and asked for the JLC's support. He said that JLC members could speak with him, Ms. Beres, or Ms. Boughey after the meeting on how to help spread the word.

Mr. Dan Boyer echoed the Chairman's comments about JLC members helping to spread the word about the JLC, and about the services that DVS offers, to their members.

Chairman Ashton encouraged the JLC members to review the DVS website to become familiar with all the programs and services that DVS offers to Virginia's veterans and families. He also noted that DVS had recently provided virtual training to ten Fleet Reserve Association members to help them become VA-accredited service officers. He thanked Commissioner Maxwell for DVS' help in training FRA service officers.

Commissioner Maxwell added that DVS was very much aware that despite outreach and communication through multiple outlets, there were many Virginia veterans and family members who were not aware of DVS programs and services. He asked for the JLC's help with this. He said that a DVS team member would be happy to attend VSO meetings to make connections at both the local and state levels in order to help build awareness of how DVS can help veterans and families.

Mr. Michael Flanagan asked if DVS had experienced any challenges in presenting information about Virginia's veterans programs and services during transition programs offered through active duty military bases. Commissioner Maxwell acknowledged that it could be a challenge reaching ever transitioning service members, and also noted that there was sometimes a challenge of too much information being presented. He emphasized that word of mouth was an effective way to promote DVS programs and services, and asked for JLC help with this.

Public Comment

Assistant Secretary Jon Ward noted that House Bill 411 (2020 General Assembly, Delegate Delaney) tasked DVS to work with the Department of Motor Vehicles to, upon request of the veteran, share information about DVS programs and services when they interact with veterans. Mr.

Combs noted that when a veteran applied to have a veteran indicator on their driver's license, they could "opt in" to have their contact information shared with DVS in order to receive information on veterans programs and services. He encouraged the JLC members to tell their VSOs about this. He added that one of the ways that DVS shares information is through the monthly DVS *eNews*, which goes out to about 80,000 Virginia veterans and includes a letter from Commissioner Maxwell and information about veterans programs.

Finally, Mr. Combs asked that the JLC members share the link to the DVS website (dvs.virginia.gov) with their members, noting that DVS updated the website regularly with information.

Chairman Ashton reminded the members to bring a copy of their DD-214 to DMV when applying for the veterans indicator on the driver's license.

Closing remarks and prepare for December 16 meeting

Chairman Ashton asked about the plans for the JLC Day at the General Assembly, and whether this would be held this year. Mr. Combs replied that he and Ms. Claudia Flores would work with the Chairman, Vice Chair, and Legislative Officer on a couple of options for consideration by the JLC at the December 16 meeting.

Adjournment

There being no further business before the Council, the meeting was adjourned at 12:31 p.m. by unanimous consent.

ATTACHMENT 1
Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations
Virginia War Memorial, 621 S. Belvidere St, Richmond VA
October 21, 2020
10:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

AGENDA

- I. Opening & Pledge of Allegiance – *Bill Ashton, JLC Chairman* (10:00 – 10:05)
- II. Opening Thoughts & Meditation – *Denice Williams, JLC Vice Chairman and Chaplain* (10:05 – 10:10)
- III. Roll call of VSOs, quorum determination, and introduction of guests – *Bill Ashton, JLC Chairman* (10:10 – 10:15)
- IV. Approve Agenda – *Bill Ashton, JLC Chairman* (10:15 – 10:17)
- V. Approve July 22, 2020 meeting minutes – *Bill Ashton, JLC Chairman* (10:17 – 10:20)
- VI. Reports (10:20 – 10:40)
 - a. Board of Veterans Services (BVS) – *Michael Dick, BVS Chairman*
 - b. Veterans Services Foundation (VSF) – *John Lesinski, VSF Chairman*
 - c. Virginia Department of Veterans Services (VDVS) – *John Maxwell, VDVS Commissioner*
- VII. New Business (10:40 – 12:20)
 - a. Review potential initiatives for 2021 – *Lauren Augustine, JLC Legislative Officer*
 - b. Vote on whether to adopt proposed initiatives as JLC 2021 Initiatives – *Lauren Augustine, JLC Legislative Officer*
 - c. Vote on priority of JLC 2021 Initiatives – *Lauren Augustine, JLC Legislative Officer*
 - d. Vote to confirm JLC 2020-2021 Appointed Officers – *Bill Ashton, JLC Chairman*
 - e. Other New Business and Open Discussion – *Bill Ashton, JLC Chairman*
- VIII. Public comment period – *Bill Ashton, JLC Chairman* (12:20 – 12:25)
- IX. Closing remarks and prepare for December 16 meeting – *Bill Ashton, JLC Chairman* (12:25 – 12:30)
- X. Adjourn (12:30)

ATTACHMENT 2



101 N. 14TH STREET, 17TH FL.
RICHMOND, VA 23219

Michael Dick,
Chairman

Tammi Lambert,
Vice Chairman

Victor Angry

Carl Bedell

Senator John Bell

Carl Bess

Paige Cherry

Delegate Buddy Fowler

Delegate Dan Helmer

James O. Icenhour, Jr.

Thurraya Kent

M. Lyla Kohistany

John Lesinski

Senator Mamie Locke

Delegate Kathleen
Murphy

Kathy Owens

Senator Bryce Reeves

Efrain (Frank) Reyes

Delegate Marcus Simon

Julie Waters

William Ashton

Chairman, Joint
Leadership Council of
Veterans Service
Organizations

Jack Lanier

2nd Vice Chair, Veterans
Services Foundation

Linda Schreiner,
Chairman, Virginia
War Memorial
Foundation

John Maxwell,
Commissioner, Virginia
Department of
Veterans Services

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA BOARD OF VETERANS SERVICES

REPORT TO THE JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL (JLC) October 21, 2020

The Board of Veterans Services (BVS) held an on-line meeting on September 16. The Board's 2020 meetings are focused on the role the Board plays in shaping state veterans policy and priorities, which is accomplished through a variety of means, including budget, legislation, the DVS strategic plan, and engagement with Department of Veterans Services (DVS) leaders. We will carry forth this approach into our 2021 meetings.

To facilitate engagement with DVS leaders, each Board member is assigned to be the Board's "Point of Contact" (POC) for a DVS service area and/or program. Some board members are assigned to be a POC for multiple service/program areas, just as some service/program areas have more than one POC.

Following an update from DVS Commissioner John Maxwell on current operations, the Board received POC reports from:

- Benefit Services – *Carl Bedell (Donna Williams, DVS)*
- Behavioral Health and Rehabilitative Services – *Carl Bess, Mamie Locke (Leanna Craig, DVS)*
- Homelessness/Housing Services – *Tammi Lambert (Matt Leslie, DVS)*
- Employment – *Thurraya Kent and Kathy Owens (Nicole Anderson, Ross Koenig, DVS)*
- Women Veterans – *Lyla Kohistany and Kathleen Murphy (Beverly VanTull, DVS)*

Six POC reports will be presented at the Board's December 17 meeting, which will also focus on the DVS strategic plan and budget/legislation heading into the 2021 General Assembly session. The Spring 2021 meeting will wrap up this cycle of POC reports.

The BVS greatly values its links to and coordination with the other boards that are represented *ex officio* on the BVS, including the Joint Leadership Council, the Veterans Services Foundation (VSF), and Virginia War Memorial Foundation. Reports were received from each of these boards.

Our next meeting (on-line) will be November 13, 2020, at 10 a.m. This meeting will focus on a review of the JLC priorities and recommendations for the 2021 General Assembly session and how the BVS can support the JLC.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael Dick".

Michael Dick
Chairman

ATTACHMENT 3



VIRGINIA VETERANS SERVICES FOUNDATION

**Report to the Joint Leadership Council
October 21, 2020**

The Veterans Services Foundation (VSF) Board of Trustees held an electronic meeting on September 17, 2020.

This was our first meeting with our new Chairman, John Lesinski. New Board members, Dr. Jarris Taylor, Mr. Bruce Waxman and Ms. Valerie Zimmerman also participated in their first meeting. Secretary Hopkins performed the swearing in of the new Trustees along with Mr. Kyle Craig who joined the Board in March.

The Chair announced that VSF raised over \$637,000 in FY20 and disbursements to support the Virginia Department of Veterans Services (VDVS) programs totaled \$359,169. This is a lower disbursement total than in past years due in part to the pandemic when demand for some VDVS programs and services dropped, requiring less supplemental funding from VSF. However, it is expected that support for the VDVS programs will increase in FY21.

The Chair also shared that COVID-19 will pose challenges in fundraising in FY21. To help overcome these fundraising obstacles, VSF will need to focus on renewing major donors, expand the donor database, and develop and execute a small donor program. There are plans to increase outreach to include social media, conference attendance, presentations and VSOs. All trustees were encouraged to explore personal contacts to identify those who share a common goal of helping veterans and their families. Collaborating with DVS will be critical to increase outreach and identify funding sources.

Commissioner Maxwell reported that DVS has opened almost all of their facilities. They are open for in person business by appointment only. The VVFS program continues to provide service to veterans and are expecting veteran homelessness to increase once the moratorium on eviction is over. Commissioner Maxwell noted both new care centers are on schedule to open in 2022.

Committee Appointments were approved. Ms. Robin Beres will serve as Development Chair with the help of Mr. Allan Burke as the Assistant Chair. Dr. Jack Lanier will serve as Procedures and Policies (P&P) Chair. Senator Stosch will serve as Finance Chair with Mr. Paul Haughton as Assistant Chair. The 2021 VSF Board of Trustee meeting dates are scheduled for March 25, 2021, June 10, 2021, September 16, 2021, and December 9, 2021.

Finance Chair, Walter Stosch reported that there were no adverse comments and all balances were correct in the 2019 Audit Report. A new VSF-DVS MOU was approved to include the agreement regarding reimbursement from VSF to DVS for support services provided by DVS from the funds that the General Assembly allocated.

The next Veterans Services Foundation Board of Trustees meeting is scheduled for December 10, 2020. Depending on the COVID situation, the meeting will take place at the Virginia War Memorial.

Respectfully Submitted,
John Lesinski
Chairman
Veterans Services Foundation

ATTACHMENT 4 – SUMMARY OF PROPOSED JLC 2021 INITIATIVES

Order (in your packet)	VSO	Proposal Identifier	Subject	Include in 2021 JLC Package?	Priority?
1	American Legion	AL-1	Disabled Veteran State Park Passport		
2	American Legion	AL-2	Income Tax Subtraction for Certain Low-Income Disabled Veterans		
3	Association of the United States Army	AUSA-1	Microloans for Veterans Program		
4	Fleet Reserve Association	FRA-1	Partial State Tax Exemption for Military Retirement Income		
5	Fleet Reserve Association	FRA-2	Expand Tax Relief for Surviving Spouses of Military Services Members “Killed in Action” to also include “Died on Active Duty”		
6	Marine Corps League	MCL-1	VSO Color and Honor Guards		
7	Virginia Army/Air National Guard Enlisted Association	VaA/ANGEA-1	Tax Credits for Employers Who Hire National Guard and Reserves		
8	Virginia Army/Air National Guard Enlisted Association	VaA/ANGEA-2	Annual Briefing for National Guard members on State Sponsored Life Insurance Program		
9	Virginia National Guard Association	VNGA-1	No cost license plates for Guard members		

10	Virginia National Guard Association	VNGA-2	Free entry to state parks for Guard members		
11					
12					

ATTACHMENT 5 – PROPOSED 2021 INITIATIVES

AMERICAN LEGION 1 (AL-1) **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.
- 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.
- On 22 June 2020 the United States Senate passed S327, Wounded Veterans Recreation Act, unanimously to make 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.
- H.R. 4930, a companion bill to S327. has been submitted in the House of Representatives.

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 already 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.

AMERICAN LEGION 2 (AL-2)

Income tax subtraction for certain low-income disabled veterans

OBJECTIVE: To allow individual income tax subtraction for the amount of annual retirement compensation received for service as a member of the U.S. Armed Forces, or the Virginia National Guard, for 100% service-connected disabled veterans with a federal adjusted gross income not exceeding 150% of the federal poverty level for a four-person household.

BACKGROUND:

- Virginia currently allows qualifying taxpayers to claim a subtraction for up to \$20,000 of disability income. Disabled veterans who already claim this subtraction would not qualify for the new program or would have to drop this subtraction and claim the new one.
- D.C. and Maryland offer exemptions ranging from \$3,000 to \$5,000.
 - North Carolina offers a full exemption for retirees with five years of service as of August 12, 1989; otherwise, retirees may claim a deduction of up to \$4,000.
 - Kentucky offers exemptions of \$41,110 and West Virginia \$20,000.

DISCUSSION:

- While Combat-Related Special Compensation (CRSC) is not subject to federal or Virginia taxation, Concurrent Retirement and Disability Payments (CRDP) are generally subject to both federal and Virginia taxation.
- Available reports do not provide specific data on the exact number of 100% service-connected disabled veterans in Virginia, however, the VA has given a reasonable estimate of **1,371** disabled Virginia veterans who would qualify for this benefit.
- Department of Taxation considers implementation of this bill as routine, and does not require additional funding.
- No subtraction would be permitted if another Virginia subtraction or deduction for such service has been claimed.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Governor and General Assembly approve an individual income tax subtraction for 100% service-connected disabled veterans with a federal adjusted gross income, not exceeding 150% of the federal poverty level for a four-person household, who have not already claimed another exemption.

ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY 1 (AUSA-1) **Microloans for Veterans Program**

OBJECTIVE: To establish the Microloans for Veterans Program, through the Virginia Small Business Financing Authority's system of microloans, available solely to Virginia veteran entrepreneurs establishing business ventures based in Virginia.

BACKGROUND:

- Entrepreneurship is the “third leg of the stool,” (along with Education and Employment) for Virginia veterans. It is a key for veterans and the New Virginia Economy.
- Current programs, such as the U.S. Small Business Administration's (SBA) Boots to Business program, Bunker Labs, Capital Post, and the Arsenal are focused on training and mentorship and businesses that are established and can provide proof of revenue. SBA loans can be almost impossible for veteran start-ups to access.
- The Virginia Small Business Financing Authority (VSBFA) is Virginia's business and economic development financing arm, providing financing for small businesses and economic growth in Virginia. The VSBFA already has the authority to administer microloan programs and are willing to administer a microloan for veteran entrepreneurs.

DISCUSSION:

- MVP would place veteran entrepreneurs on a more equal footing with civilian entrepreneurs and encourage the growth of small businesses in Virginia.
- MVP sets up a public-private partnership between VSBFA, DVS, Virginia Community College System and private banks to assist veterans and incentivize veterans to complete financial education and business planning classes with lower interest rates (1-2% below market rate) and extended payback periods.
- The program would have two tiers –
 - a) Tier 1: Loan amounts up to \$10,000 through VSBFA; Requirements: Honorably discharged, minimum credit credentials, repayment and interest rate terms set by VSBFA, and a willingness to sign on to education and mentorship requirements, unless comparable credentials can be produced.
 - b) Tier 2: Loan amounts up to \$50,000 through Virginia banking institutions (such as V3 partners); Requirements: Successfully completed all education and mentorship requirements of Tier 1 and paid back the loan early or on time.
- The two tiered system minimizes risk, keeps state funds circulating more quickly and promotes successful small businesses in Virginia by providing a wide range of educational and support tools to the veterans.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Governor and General Assembly provide an appropriation in the amount of \$1,000,000 in FY22 for the Microloan for Veterans Program fund.

FLEET RESERVE ASSOCIATION 1 (FRA-1)

Partial State Tax Exemption for Military Retirement Income

OBJECTIVE: To reform the Virginia state tax law, creating a partial exemption on military retirement income beginning in 2021.

BACKGROUND:

- Currently Virginia does not exempt military retirement income, while three of Virginia's neighbors (NC, WV, MD) have some level of state tax exemption on military retirement income.
- The personal income tax laws of over half the states provides various exclusions from gross income in determining tax liability, including an exclusion for combat-related special compensation and death benefit payments received by a surviving spouse or other beneficiary designated by a military veteran.

DISCUSSION:

- Non-military income, including all income derived from federal or military contracts, consulting or full-time employment will be taxed at the full gross income percentages.
- The qualifying retirement income must be received as a result of an honorable discharge and retirement from full-time, active-duty service in the armed forces of the United States, or reserve components thereof, including the National Guard.
- For each taxable year beginning on or after January 1, 2021,
- Beginning in 2021: A military retiree under the age of 65 may subtract \$2,500 and \$5,000 for those 65 years old from federally adjusted gross income before determining Virginia tax.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Governor and General Assembly support changes to the current Virginia tax laws for a partial exemption of military retirement pay to reduce state tax on military retirement income.

FLEET RESERVE ASSOCIATION 2 (FRA-2)

Expand Tax Relief for Surviving Spouses of Military Services Members “Killed in Action” to also include “Died on Active Duty”

OBJECTIVE:

- To expand Tax Relief for Surviving Spouses of Military Services Members of the Armed Forces to include both “Killed in Action” and “Died on Active Duty.”

BACKGROUND:

- a. Virginia Code Title 58.1, Chapter 32, section 58-1-3219.9 states:
On March 23, 2015, legislation was approved by the Virginia General Assembly providing for an exemption of real estate taxes for the surviving spouse of a member of the United States Armed Forces who was Killed in Action as determined by the United States Department of Defense
- b. Disabled Veterans or Surviving Spouses Real Estate Exemption:
The Commonwealth of Virginia exempts from taxation the real property, including the joint real property of husband and wife, of any veteran who has been rated by the U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs or its successor agency pursuant to federal law to have a 100% service connected permanent and total disability, and who occupies the real property as his or her principal place of residence.

DISCUSSION:

- a. Approximately only 1% of the American population served in our Armed Forces
- b. Virginia Code states a surviving spouse is eligible for exemption of real estate taxes if the spouse is “Killed in Action” verified by Department of Defense
- c. Disabled Veterans who are 100% Permanent and Total rating by the Veterans Administration are eligible for the tax exemption. If this Veteran dies of a service connected disability his/her spouse will continue the entitlement.

RECOMMENDATION:

Legislation introduce in the General Assembly to amend the Code of Virginia to change “Killed in Action” to “Died on Active Duty.”

MARINE CORPS LEAGUE 1 (MCL-1)

VSO Color and Honor Guards

OBJECTIVE: To address concerns expressed by members of Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs) participating in color guard or honor guard activities.

BACKGROUND:

- During the 2020 session of the Virginia General Assembly §18.2-433.2 was passed and signed into law.
- §18.2-433-2 makes it a Class 5 felony for any person to teach or demonstrate to any other person the use, application, or making of any firearm ... or technique capable of causing injury or death to persons...
- In the performance of their duties members of Veteran Service Organizations teach or demonstrate the use of firearms and train in their use both while practicing and during the employment of firearms for color guards or honor guards rendering final military honors to diseased veterans.
- Subsection 3. of this section further states that “Violates subsection A of § [18.2-282](#) while assembled with one or more persons for the purpose of and with the intent to intimidate any person or group of persons.
- In this day and time it is felt that the possession of rifles being used for a color guard and during funerals or other ceremonies the use of rifles firing three volleys could intimidate individuals or groups of persons leaving the members of the color guard or honor guard open to prosecution for a Class 5 felony.

DISCUSSION: The use of rifles accompanying the American flag and the service flags of the five military services of the United States has been recognized for many years as a tradition. Further the rendering of three rifle volleys followed by *Taps* has been a tradition at military funerals since the Civil War when the three volleys were used to tell opposing forces that the wounded and dead had been removed from the battlefield.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Virginia General Assembly amend §18.2-433.2 to grant an exemption to Veteran Service Organizations performing authorized color guard activities such as parades or dedication ceremonies and honor guard activities such as funerals or dedication ceremonies as well as the teaching, training, and practices necessary to achieve and maintain a level of professional proficiency.

JLC Contact
Marine Corps League
Jim Barrett
Jrb1940@icloud.com

VIRGINIA ARMY/AIR NATIONAL GUARD ENLISTED ASSOCIATION 1
(VaA/ANGEA-1)

Tax Credits for Employers Who Hire National Guard and Reserves

OBJECTIVE: To ensure Individual and corporate income tax credit; employers of National Guard members and self-employed National Guard.

BACKGROUND:

- Provides for taxable years 2019 through 2023 a non-refundable tax credit against individual and corporate income taxes for wages paid by an employer to an employee who is a Virginia National Guard member or Reserves.
- Income of a self-employed National Guard member or Reservist attributable to his business would also qualify for a non-refundable tax credit against individual and corporate income taxes for wages paid for taxable years 2020 through 2024.
- For taxable years beginning on and after January 1, 2020, but before January 1, 2025, a self-employed National Guard member shall be allowed a credit against the tax levied pursuant to § [58.1-320](#) or [58.1-400](#) for income attributable to his trade or business during the taxable year.

DISCUSSION:

- The amount of the credit shall be:
 - 25%, if such member was in a military pay status for 65 days or more during such taxable year; or
 - 15% if such member was in a military pay status for 45 days or more during such taxable year.
- The credit should not be allowed if such member was in a military pay status for less than 45 days during such taxable year.
- The taxpayer should be allowed to carry unused credits over for up to five taxable years within the taxable years of 2024 to 2028.
- The amount of the credit claimed shall not exceed the total amount of tax imposed pursuant to § [58.1-320](#) or [58.1-400](#) upon the employer for the taxable year.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Governor and General Assembly approve Tax credits for employers of National Guard members and self-employed National Guard members

VIRGINIA ARMY/AIR NATIONAL GUARD ENLISTED ASSOCIATION 2
(VaA/ANGEA-2)
Annual Briefing for National Guard members
on State Sponsored Life Insurance Program

OBJECTIVE: To ensure all members of the Virginia National Guard shall receive an annual briefing on the State Sponsored Life Insurance program to encourage persons to join and remain in the National Guard.

BACKGROUND:

- State Sponsored Life Insurance is a program that provides group term life insurance exclusively for National Guard members and their dependents. The program is derived from United States Public Law 93-289, May 24, 1974, enacted “to encourage persons to join and remain in the National Guard.”
- State Sponsored Life Insurance (SSLI) is a program that provides group life insurance exclusively for National Guard members and their dependents.
- All members of the Virginia National Guard shall be entitled to receive an annual briefing on the State Sponsored Life Insurance program to encourage persons to join and remain in the National Guard.
- For taxable years beginning on and after January 1, 2019, but before January 1, 2024, a self-employed National Guard member shall be allowed a credit against the tax levied pursuant to § [58.1-320](#) or [58.1-400](#) for income attributable to his trade or business during the taxable year.

DISCUSSION:

- It is desirable for members of the Virginia National Guard to have access to low-cost life insurance in addition to Servicemembers Group Life Insurance.
- Absent a beneficiary designation for the \$1,000 benefit because of inability to brief the members the benefit is paid to the estate and thus subjects it to probate fees and not being available within the usual 24-hour period.
- In order to maintain up to date information about the member’s beneficiaries or coverage amount desired it is necessary for the enrollers to visit with the units and brief the soldiers and airmen on a regular basis and at a convenient time for the members to attend the briefings during duty hours.
- The SSLI program is a group term life program authorized for the Payroll Deduction (PRD) slot by Congress in 37 U.S.C 707. Only term life is authorized for this special deduction slot from the pay of National Guard Members.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Governor and General Assembly approve National Guard members to receive State Sponsored Life Insurance briefings annually.

VIRGINIA NATIONAL GUARD ASSOCIATION 1 (VNGA-1)

No cost license plates for Guard members

OBJECTIVE: To ensure Virginia's continued commitment to the men and women of the Virginia National Guard by changing the current 50% reduced price for license plates and registrations to 100% reduction in cost of license plates.

BACKGROUND:

- Virginia currently offers a 50% reduction in cost for National Guard members to register their vehicles in the Commonwealth if they register them using Guard plates. These plates contain a logo indicating National Guard membership.
- Currently less than 20% of Guard members opt to get the plates.

DISCUSSION:

- Further reducing the cost of license plates for National Guard members would incentivize more members to obtain the National Guard plates which would in turn further highlight their contributions and awareness of the Guard members in our communities.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Governor and General Assembly further reduce the cost of license plates so all Guard members that register with Guard plates receive them at no cost.

VIRGINIA NATIONAL GUARD ASSOCIATION 2 (VNGA-2)

Free entry to state parks for Guard members

OBJECTIVE: To ensure Virginia's continued commitment to the men and women of the Virginia National Guard by offering free entrance to state parks for all members.

BACKGROUND:

1. Numerous states offer free admission to state parks for their National Guard Members.
2. Federal parks are now free for active service members which includes the National Guard members.

DISCUSSION:

1. Virginia National Guard Soldiers will mobilize into federal service from Fort Hood Texas in the spring of 2021. They will be able to visit all of the State parks in Texas without paying an entrance fee. Those same Soldiers will have to pay a fee to use a state park in Virginia.
2. The cost of this effort is relatively low and in extending free admission to our National Guard members we recognize their continued service to the Commonwealth during times of need. This year alone approximately 1,500 Guard members have mobilized in response to COVID 19 and civil disturbances throughout the Commonwealth.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Governor and General Assembly grant no cost admission to Virginia State parks to members of the Virginia National Guard.

ATTACHMENT 6 – JLC Officers 2020-2021



101 N. 14TH STREET, 17TH FL.
RICHMOND VA 23219

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

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

JLC ELECTED OFFICERS: 2020-2021

- Chair: Bill Ashton
- Vice Chair: Denice Williams

JLC APPOINTED OFFICERS: 2020-2021

- Legislative Officer: Lauren Augustine
 - Assistant Legislative Officer: Monti Zimmerman
- Chaplain: Kevin Hoffman
- Constitution & By-Laws Committee Chair: James Barrett
- Nominating Committee Chair: Dan Boyer
- JLC Representative to the Virginia Military Advisory Council (VMAC)
 - Primary: David Sitler
 - Alternate: Rick Oertel
- JLC Representatives to the Governor's Challenge Team to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans, and Families
 - Primary: John Cooper
 - Alternate: Rich Mansfield
- JLC Representatives to Veterans Treatment Dockets
 - Hampton Roads: John Cooper and Rich Mansfield
 - NoVa: Monti Zimmerman
 - Spotsylvania/Central: Bill Ashton

CODE-DESIGNATED EX OFFICIO POSITIONS

- JLC Representatives to the Board of Veteran Services (BVS)
 - Primary: JLC Chair
 - Alternate: JLC Vice Chair
- JLC Representatives to the Veterans Services Foundation (VSF)
 - Primary: JLC Chair
 - Alternate: JLC Vice Chair

THE 25 ORGANIZATIONS OF THE JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL HAVE MORE THAN 250,000 MEMBERS