

Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations
Meeting Minutes
December 16, 2020

A virtual meeting of the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (the JLC) was held on December 16, 2020.

Members Present

- Richard Oertel, American Legion
- John Cooper, AMVETS
- Denice Williams, Disabled American Veterans
- Michael Flanagan, Association of the United States Army
- William Ashton, Fleet Reserve Association
- Robert Herbert, Legion of Valor
- James Barrett, Marine Corps League
- Monti Zimmerman, Military Officers Association of America
- Vernon Peters, Military Order of the World Wars
- James Cuthbertson, Military Order of the Purple Heart
- Vernon Peters, Military Order of the World Wars
- Perry Taylor, Roanoke Valley Veterans Council
- David Sitler, Reserve Officers Association
- 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
- Michael Dick, Chairman, Board of Veterans Services
- John Lesinski, Chairman, Veterans Services Foundation
- John Maxwell, Commissioner, Department of Veterans Services

Members Absent

- Thomas Wozniak, Air Force Association
- Lauren Augustine, Iraq & Afghanistan Veterans of America
- Tim Whitmore, Korean War Veterans Association
- Michael Flanagan, Association of the United States Army
- John Manning, Fifth Baptist Church Veterans Ministry
- Mike Boyle, Navy Seabee Veterans of America
- Jon Ostrowski, Non Commissioned Officers Association
- Preston Curry, Paralyzed Veterans of America
- David Sitler, Reserve Officers Association
- Charles Montgomery, Vietnam Veterans of America

Alternates Present (representing their VSO)

- George Corbett, Vietnam Veterans of America
- Thad Jones, Fifth Baptist Veterans Ministry

- John Down, Military Officers Association of America
- George Corbett, Vietnam Veterans of America

Alternates Present (not representing their VSO)

- Rich Mansfield, AMVETS
- Rich Shook, Air Force Association

Commonwealth of Virginia Officials Present

- Steven Combs, Department of Veterans Services (DVS)
- Annie Walker, DVS
- Claudia Flores, DVS
- Brandi Jancaitis, DVS
- Glendalynn Glover, DVS
- Ravi Padma, DVS
- Eliza Henderson, DVS
- Tim Bowden, DVS
- Mark Atchison, MOPH
- Roseann Rodriguez, cv4a
- Larry Jarrell, DMV
- Jonathan Ward, Office of Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs
- Jack Lanier, Veterans Services Foundation
- Walt Mercer, Department of Military Affairs
- Cassy Horn Russell, Department of Military Affairs
- Chris Snider, Chief of Staff for Senator Bryce Reeves
- David Wingfield, Virginia Department of Corrections

Guests

- Dr. Craig Pinsker, Military Officer Association of America

Items included in the Agenda Packet

- Draft Agenda (Agenda Item III)
- Feedback and Potential Adjustments to JLC 2021 Proposals (Agenda Item V)
 - JLC Initiative 2021-02 – Promote Hiring of National Guard
 - JLC Initiative 2021-03 – Expand Tax Relief for Surviving Spouse
 - JLC Initiative 2021-07 – Partial State Tax Exemption for Military
 - JLC Initiative 2021-08 – Support for DVS Programs and Services

Roll Call of VSOs and Quorum Determination

The roll was called, and 20 of the 24 Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) represented on the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (the JLC) were recorded as being represented. A quorum was determined.

Approval of the Agenda

Chairman Ashton asked for a motion to approve the Agenda. Mr. Daniel Boyer made a **motion, seconded** by Mr. John Cooper, to approve the meeting agenda as presented. The motion was combined as a Block Vote with the motion to approve the minutes. A roll call was completed. The Block motion carried 20-Y 0-N (See Attachment I).

Approve October 21, 2020 and November 20, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Chairman Ashton asked for a motion to approve the minutes from both the October 21, 2020 and the November 20, 2020 meeting. Mr. Daniel Boyer made a **motion, seconded** by Mr. John Cooper. The motion was combined as a Block Vote with the motion to approve the agenda. A roll call was completed. The Block motion carried 20-Y 0-N

Old Business

Chairman Dick discussed the JLC initiative on microloans for veterans programs originally proposed by AUSA and asked Mr. Flanagan for an update on this initiative.

Mr. Flanagan commented AUSA is not moving forward with this initiative. Mr. Flanagan made a **motion, seconded** by Mr. Boyer to remove this initiative from the 2021 JLC Initiatives. The motion carried 20-Y 0-N

Update from the Secretariat

AS Jon Ward noted Secretary Hopkins regards. AS Ward commented that DVS, DMA, and VADA teams have worked through significant challenges and addressed new ways to operate. He noted the Secretariat continued in their role in the Virginia Emergency Support Team. He thanked the JLC for their support with the legislative priorities from last General Assembly session. AS Ward updated the JLC on the efforts and activities of the Virginia National Guard over the past 9 months to include food distribution, PPE deliveries, and COVID testing.

Chairman Ashton asked AS Ward if the COVID vaccine is available in Richmond. AS Ward responded shipments are in effect.

Reports / Updates

Chairman Ashton turned the floor over to Commissioner Maxwell. Commissioner Maxwell noted DVS services continue in a hybrid manner. He noted VVFS new client services are down, but current client services are up from previous number. The Commissioner discussed homelessness preparedness, but commented. to date, there is no spike. With respect to the VVCCs, the COVID outbreak is contained. Construction projects on track at the new VVCC, opening in 2022. Transition services continue with 33,000 TSMs reached. He commented on the Women Veterans Summit scheduled for June 2021. He spoke about DVS becoming the primary point of entry for Virginia Veterans and their families to be connected to services. He commented on the revision of the Compact and improved accessibility to services. He further noted his priority to develop partnerships.

Mr. Cooper asked what the opening date is for the VVCC in Virginia Beach. Commissioner Maxwell responded August 2022.

Mr. Lanier asked what DVS is doing with those who need behavioral health support. Commissioner Maxwell discussed services of VVFS in this area.

Chairman Ashton thanked the Commissioner and congratulated the staff of DVS for their work.

Chairman Ashton turned the floor over to DMA. Mr. Walt Mercer provided a summary of the Virginia National Guard activity. He noted the Guard have done a lot of work in response to COVID since March 2020. He commented the Guard is standing by to help with security and distribution of the COVID vaccine. He noted that DMA applied to have a Second State Partnership Program with Austria. Guard missions continue both CONUS and overseas. Planning operations in progress with DC for the Presidential inauguration. He thanked the JLC for their support.

Chairman Ashton thanked the Guard for all the hard work.

Mr. Jones asked AS Ward about the type of food distributed by the National Guard. Mr. Mercer commented the food distribution involves food from food-banks since the National Guard has the mobility.

Chairman Ashton turned the floor over to Chairman Dick from BVS. Chairman Dick commented that BVS is assisting and guiding DVS with policy advice and appointed POCs to the various service lines.

Chairman Ashton turned the floor over to Mr. Lesinski from the VSF. Mr. Lesinski highlighted the year-to-date giving is down but is hopeful for year-end giving to help close the gap. He noted the good relationship with the Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber has a veterans affairs and military council with some donors as participants. VSF is invited to present at the next meeting in February. The next VSF meeting is March 25.

Chairman Ashton turned the floor over to the Military Advisory Council. Mr. David Sittler provided a summary of the last meeting held November 19.

Chairman Ashton turned the floor over to Rich Mansfield for an update on Veterans Treatment Dockets. Mr. Mansfield provided a summary on the number of individuals participating and commented the program is currently short-staffed. Mr. Zimmerman commented the court has been quiet in the north. Chairman Ashton reported the same for the Fredericksburg area.

Chairman Ashton turned the floor over to Mr. Cooper for a report on the Governor's Challenge to prevent suicide. Mr. Cooper highlighted SB786 is now law and commented former records of members who dies by suicide to be reviewed. He noted improvement in care of services for women veterans and expansion of telehealth by the VA. Mr. Cooper noted hydrotherapy in mental health treatment. Mr. Cooper asked members of the JLC to let him know via e-mail if their representative VSO has a suicide prevention program to enable the JLC to participate in the Governor's Challenge.

Legislation and Budget Review

Chairman Ashton requested members of the JLC contact their assigned legislators with respect to the JLC 2021 Initiatives. He noted the number of bills per Delegates and Senators is limited for the

upcoming session, so it is important to contact the legislators early. Chairman Ashton opened the floor for discussion.

Mr. Boyer commented that he contacted his assigned legislators and he received a few person replies and a few automated replies.

Mr. Oertel commented on the MOAA virtual meeting to brief legislators on the initiatives. He also noted Delegate Cox planned to sponsor JLC 2021-04.

Chairman Ashton encouraged members of the JLC to keep members of their VSOs informed of the initiatives and subcommittee meetings.

Monti Zimmerman commented on two points with respect to the initiatives. He noted the federal government passed a national park disabled veteran pre-pass. Mr. Oertel confirmed the information and commented he will update initiative to reflect the federal government's efforts. Mr. Zimmerman then noted a misspelling in one of the initiatives. Mr. Hoffman acknowledged and corrected the misspelling.

Mr. John Down requested the corrected copy. Chairman Ashton acknowledged and noted the corrected copy will be uploaded on the webpage.

Budget

Chairman Ashton turned the floor over to AS Ward on the Governor's introduced budget. AS Ward noted items and priorities introduced in the Governor's budget in 2020, but were unallotted in special session. He noted many of the previously unallotted items are in the introduced budget for 2021, to include more than \$700,000 to better serve behavioral health needs and outreach for women veterans.

Claudia Flores briefed funding for behavioral health to include Peer and Resource Specialists, two VSA's, shared IT security systems, women veterans coordinator assistance. She detailed funding for VVCC renovation projects.

Cassy Russell briefed funding for protective equipment, safety and occupational health technician and mobile command post and capital outlay budget items.

CDC Combs commented on a work group focused on financing for the current care centers and new care centers. He noted an outcome of the work group is a proposed change to allow federal Medicare dollars for operations within the existing and planned care centers. This funding is not available until 2022.

AS Ward, Cassy Russell and Claudia Flores briefed agency proposed legislative items.

Chairman Ashton asked how the introduced funding compares with the original funding for the peer support / resource specialists and women veterans coordinator. AS Ward noted the Secretary supports the Governor's introduced budget and the funding is on target with the original funding.

Chairman Ashton asked if the veterans are receiving enough information in the federal TAP briefings. Commissioner Maxwell responded that TAP can be overwhelming with the amount of information presented. Commissioner Maxwell noted DVS services to transitioning service members within the Commonwealth to include assistance with employment.

Chairman Ashton asked for questions with respect to the budget. None heard.

New Business (see Attachment 2)

Chairman Ashton discussed the proposed 2021 meeting schedule and work plan and asked for a motion to accept. George Corbett made a **motion, seconded** by Denise Williams to approve the proposed work plan. Mr. Oertel asked about swearing in new members during the July 14th meeting. CDC Combs commented the ceremony can be performed if the meeting is in-person, but noted it will be added to the agenda. CDC Combs noted future correspondence forthcoming from Claudia Flores with respect to new members.

Chairman Ashton asked for any further discussion. A Roll Call was conducted and the motion carried by a unanimous vote.

General Assembly Session

Claudia Flores commented on the planned virtual nature of the upcoming General Assembly. She noted Lauren Augustine's guidance to meet with legislators virtually. Mr. Oertel commented the importance of contacting legislators prior to 13 January. Mr. Oertel outlined the process for speaking during the virtual meetings and the requirement to sign up in order to speak.

Good of the Order

Mr. Cooper clarified a point from his earlier report – hyperbaric therapy for PTSD.

CDC Combs requested a group zoom photo. No objections heard. Photo conducted.

Chairman Ashton thanked the members of the JLC and DVS. He noted the importance of VSOs knowing how to help veterans if approached. He commented that if a VSO does not know what to do, then they should refer them to DVS.

Public Comment

No comment heard.

Chairman Ashton adjourned the meeting.

ATTACHMENT 1
Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations

ELECTRONIC MEETING

December 16, 2020
1:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

AGENDA

- I. Opening, Meeting Notes, and Pledge of Allegiance – *Bill Ashton, JLC Chairman* (1:00 – 1:05)
- II. Opening Thoughts & Meditation, *Kevin Hoffman, JLC Chaplain* (1:05 – 1:08)
- III. Roll call, quorum determination, and introduction of guests – *Bill Ashton, JLC Chairman* (1:08 – 1:15)
- IV. Approve Agenda – *Bill Ashton, JLC Chairman* (1:15 – 1:18)
- V. Approve October 21 and November 20 meeting minutes – *Bill Ashton, JLC Chairman* (1:18 – 1:25)
- VI. Old Business (1:25 – 1:30)
 - a. Proposed initiative (AUSA-1) carried forward from October 21 meeting – *Lauren Augustine, JLC Legislative Officer*
- VII. Reports/Updates (1:30 – 2:20)
 - a. Veterans and Defense Affairs (VADA)
 - b. Virginia Department of Veterans Services (VDVS) – *John Maxwell, Commissioner*
 - c. Department of Military Affairs
 - d. Board of Veterans Services (BVS) – *Michael Dick, BVS Chairman*
 - e. Veterans Services Foundation (VSF) – *John Lesinski, VSF Chairman*
 - f. Virginia Military Advisory Council – *David Sitler and Rick Oertel*
 - g. Veterans Treatment Dockets – *John Cooper and Rich Mansfield, Monti Zimmerman, Bill Ashton*
 - h. Governor’s Challenge Team to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans, and Families – *John Cooper and Rich Mansfield*
- VIII. Legislation and Budget Review (2:20 – 2:50)
 - a. Status of JLC 2021 recommendations (patrons, bills, meetings, etc.) – *Lauren Augustine, JLC Legislative Officer and JLC Points of Contact*
 - b. Overview of Governor Northam’s 2021 introduced budget and summary of military/veteran-related legislation submitted to date *Jon Ward, Assistant Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs; Claudia Flores, DVS Director of Policy & Planning; and Cassy Russell, DMA Legislative and Policy Analyst*
- IX. New Business (2:50 – 3:20)
 - a. Approve 2021 Meeting Schedule/Work Plan – *Bill Ashton, JLC Chairman*

- b. The JLC and the 2021 General Assembly session – *Lauren Augustine, JLC Legislative Officer and Claudia Flores, DVS Director of Policy & Planning*
 - c. Other New Business, Open Discussion, and “Good of the Order” reports – *Bill Ashton, JLC Chairman*
- X. Closing remarks and prepare for next meeting – *Bill Ashton, JLC Chairman* (3:20 – 3:30)
- XI. Adjourn (3:30)

ATTACHMENT 2

JLC 2020 Work Plan

Approved December 18, 2019

2020 General Assembly (January 8 – March 7):

- ⊙ **Attend JLC Day on January 15, 2019** and join the Virginia National Guard at their Reception that evening.
- ⊙ Advocate for 2019 JLC Initiatives & Promote role of JLC - Goal: Every JLC Members meets with *at least 2* Senators *and 2* Delegates
- ⊙ Legislative Committee and Policy Paper Sponsors work with DVS Policy Director and legislative patrons; speak to bills at committee hearing, answer legislator questions

Spring Meeting (April 29):

- ⊙ Review 2020 General Assembly actions, including: legislation, budget and Veto Session
- ⊙ Conduct an initial review of the current status of 2020 JLC initiatives not enacted
- ⊙ Call for potential 2021 JLC Initiatives
- ⊙ Report of the Constitution and By-Laws Review Committee (annual review)
- ⊙ Nominating Committee requests candidates for Chair & Vice Chair declare intention to run

April – June

- ⊙ **NLT Monday, June 15** - JLC members submit potential initiatives, with draft papers preferably in JLC format.
- ⊙ JLC Chairman & Legislative Committee review proposals submitted and pass to DVS Policy Director for review.
- ⊙ Legislative Committee and DVS provides feedback/guidance to drafters.

30 DAYS OUT FROM SUMMER MTG (June 22):

- ⊙ JLC Chairman distributes potential 2021 JLC Initiatives to members for review, and **✦ JLC members share potential 2021 JLC Initiatives with their VSO leadership and membership to solicit feedback, comments, additional ideas, etc.**

Summer Meeting (July 22):

- ⊙ Sponsors of each potential 2021 JLC Initiative present to JLC. Each initiative is voted on to either continue forward or be rejected for 2021.

- ⊙ JLC members submit any additional potential 2021 JLC Initiatives – or concepts for initiatives based on state/national conferences, with a projected date of completion.
- ⊙ Position papers offered by DVS or DMA or otherwise without a sponsor will be presented by the Legislative Committee chair and sponsors for each propose legislative initiative will be requested at the meeting
- ⊙ Elect JLC Chair and Vice Chair

August – October:

- ⊙ Position papers distributed to JLC members for distribution to their VSO leadership and others in their VSO to solicit feedback, comment, additional ideas, etc. Feedback should be sent to the Legislative Chair and administrative support **NLT September 15**
- ⊙ DVS Policy Director works with sponsors on technical review.
- ⊙ JLC Legislative Officer reviews and approves position papers.
- ⊙ JLC Chairman reviews and approves positions papers.

30 DAYS OUT FROM FALL MTG (September 21):

- ⊙ All approved draft positions papers forwarded to JLC Members for final review.

Fall Meeting (October 21):

- ⊙ Final Review of all proposed 2021 JLC Initiatives
- ⊙ Adopt and prioritize 2021 JLC Initiatives
- ⊙ Call for JLC members to serve as an Appointed Officer (approved by the Council at the December meeting)

Day after Fall Meeting:

- ⊙ Adopted Position papers distributed to JLC members for distribution to their VSO leadership.
- ⊙ Adopted Position papers sent to Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs and General Assembly.
- ⊙ Post position papers on JLC website

November & December:

- ⊙ November 1 – JLC Chairman submits Annual Report to DVS Commissioner and BVS Chairman
- ⊙ Hold VSO legislative forums; Participate in legislators’ forums/town halls

⊗ Sponsors find and confirm patrons/co-patrons for initiatives, and meet with Executive and Legislative branch members

December Meeting (December 16):

Scheduled depending on the release date of the Governor's introduced budget

- ⊗ Review Governor's Proposed Budget
- ⊗ Receive DVS Agency proposed budget & legislation
- ⊗ Review and approve any additional 2021 Initiatives that were not voted on in October
- ⊗ Review list of approved General Assembly Patrons
- ⊗ Adopt 2021 Meeting Schedule
- ⊗ Adopt 2021 Work Plan
- ⊗ Approve JLC Appointed Officers for 2021-2022