

Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations
Meeting Minutes
July 14, 2021

A meeting of the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (the JLC) was held on July 14, 2021 at 10 a.m. at the Virginia War Memorial, 621 S. Belvidere St, Richmond VA 23220.

Members Present

- Thomas Wozniak, Air Force Association
- John Cooper, AMVETS
- Michael Flanagan, Association of the United States Army
- Denice Williams, Disabled American Veterans
- William Ashton, Fleet Reserve Association
- 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
- Kevin Hoffman, Virginia National Guard Association
- Michael Dick, Chairman, Board of Veterans Services
- John Lesinski, Chairman, Veterans Services Foundation
- John Maxwell, Commissioner, Department of Veterans Services

Members Absent

- Richard Oertel, American Legion
- John Manning, Fifth Baptist Church Veterans Ministry
- Lauren Augustine, Iraq & Afghanistan Veterans of America
- Robert Herbert, Legion of Valor
- James Barrett, Marine Corps League
- James Cuthbertson, Military Order of the Purple Heart
- Michelle Ramos Domingue, Navy Mutual Aid Association
- Mike Boyle, Navy Seabee Veterans of America
- Jon Ostrowski, Non Commissioned Officers Association
- Daniel Boyer, Veterans of Foreign Wars
- Charles Montgomery, Vietnam Veterans of America
- Robert Barnette, Virginia Army/Air National Guard Enlisted Association

Alternates Present (representing their VSO)

- Thad Jones, Fifth Baptist Church Veterans Ministry
- John Clickener, Marine Corps League
- Mark Atchison, Military Order of the Purple Heart
- Rick Raskin, Veterans of Foreign Wars
- George Corbett, Vietnam Veterans of America
- Carl Holcomb, Virginia Army/Air National Guard Enlisted Association

Alternates Present (not representing their VSO)

- Richard Mansfield, AMVETS
- Jeff Gilmartin, Fleet Reserve Association
- Terrance Moore, Reserve Officers Association

Commonwealth of Virginia Officials Present

- Delegate Joshua Cole, Virginia House of Delegates
- James Wade, Legislative Assistant to Delegate Cole
- Steven Combs, Department of Veterans Services (DVS)
- Claudia Flores, DVS
- Glendalynn Glover, DVS
- Quintrel Lenore, DVS
- Martina Murray, DVS
- Ravi Padma, DVS
- Beverly VanTull, DVS
- Annie Walker, DVS
- Cassy Russell, Department of Military Affairs (DMA)
- Larry Jarrell, Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV)
- David Wingfield, Department of Corrections (VADOC)
- Karla Boughey, Veterans Services Foundation (VSF)

Guests

- Caleb Smith, Peninsula Caseworker, Office of Congresswoman Elaine Luria
- Dr. Charles Stuppard, District Director, Office of Congresswoman Elaine Luria
- Bill Aramony, American Legion
- Frank Wickersham, American Veterans Vote (AVV)
- Maggie Wickersham, AVV
- Jay Marts, AMVETS
- Richard Van Norton, Jr., AMVETS
- Faye Earley, Association of the United States Army (AUSA)
- Glenn Yarborough, AUSA
- Sha'ron Martin, Fleet Reserve Association
- Cliff White, Virginia Army/Air National Guard Enlisted Association
- Andrew Czaplicki, Virginia National Guard Association
- Judy Reid, Women Marines Association

Items included in the Agenda Packet

- Draft Agenda
- Draft Minutes May 14th, 2021 meeting
- BVS Report to JLC
- VSF Report to JLC
- VDVS Operational Update
- VDVS Strategic Priorities Brief

Call to Order

Chairman William Ashton called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m.

Thoughts and meditation

The JLC Chaplain, Mr. Kevin Hoffman, provided thoughts and meditation.

Roll Call of VSOs, Quorum Determination, and Introduction of Guest

The roll was called, and 17 of the 23 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. The three *ex officio* members were recorded as present.

Chairman Ashton asked the guest to introduce themselves. Their names and organizational affiliation are recorded above.

Approval of the Agenda (Attachment 1)

Chairman Ashton asked for a motion to approve the Agenda. Mr. John Clickener made a **motion, seconded** by Mr. David Sitler, to approve the meeting agenda as presented. The motion carried by unanimous vote.

Approve May 14, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Chairman Ashton asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the May 14, 2021 meeting. Mr. George Corbett made a **motion, seconded** by Mr. John Cooper, to approve the minutes with one correction – to note that Mr. Cooper was present. The motion carried by unanimous vote.

Reports / Updates

Chairman Ashton turned the floor over to Chairman Michael Dick from the Board of Veteran Services for his report.

BVS Report (Attachment 2)

Chairman Dick noted three members leaving BVS whose term concluded June 30, 2021. He highlighted the Veterans in the Arts working group and the recommendation that VDVS establish a central point of contact for Veterans in the Arts program.

Chairman Dick commented on the VDVS strategic priorities and further noted the BVS commitment to assist VDVS to develop metrics and measures for achieving strategic priorities. Chairman Dick thanked Chairman Ashton for all of his work and leadership on the JLC.

VSF Report (Attachment 3)

Chairman John Lesinski of the Veterans Services (VSF) reported that the VSF met on June 10th virtually, and received information from Dominion Energy. VSF received annual Freedom of Information Act training during their meeting. He noted donations were down 30% with a shortfall of \$200,000. He noted outreach efforts to corporate and individual donors. He highlighted the Virginia Circle of Heroes. The next meeting is planned for September 9, 2021. Chairman Lesinski thanked Chairman Ashton for his work and leadership on the JLC.

VDVS Operational Update *(Attachment 4)*

Commissioner John Maxwell commented on status of VDVS operations. He noted in-person services along with virtual services. Commissioner Maxwell commented on the increase in housing services needs / requests.

Commissioner Maxwell commented on VDVS participation in the VISR Pilot. He commented on increased service demand for the state cemeteries. He also commented on education and transition services. The Commissioner reports that transition assistance remains strong with the average salary of those seeking VDVS assistance is \$97K.

Commissioner Maxwell highlighted the Virginia Women Veterans Program Summit. He also noted the addition of a Women Veterans Assistant allowing greater ability to work with partners. He noted the communications effort of VDVS to include the social media focus. The Commissioner highlighted the recent Memorial Day ceremony from the War Memorial held both live and virtual.

Mr. Monti Zimmerman from MOAA commented that VMSDEP has a large impact for Virginia Veterans and their families across the Commonwealth.

Commissioner Maxwell responded to a question on suicide prevention and VISR efforts. The Commissioner noted the warm hand-off between service lines within VDVS as a holistic effort to care for transitioning service members, veterans, and their families.

Chairman Ashton recognized Delegate Joshua Cole of the Virginia House of Delegates and thanked him for his attendance

VDVS Strategic Priorities *(Attachment 5)*

Commissioner Maxwell provided an update on the VDVS Strategic Priorities. He highlighted VDVS as a Port of Entry to services. He also highlighted the draft Compact with Virginia Veterans and their families as a unifying effort. Commissioner Maxwell noted the importance of VDVS service accessibility.

Commissioner Maxwell commented on the effort to identify measures and metrics for achieving the strategic priorities working in conjunction with the BVS.

Commissioner Maxwell commented on the focused effort in suicide prevention. He also commented on the need to increase technology to enhance services and gave the examples of women veteran needs and services.

The Commissioner highlighted the need to enhance VDVS internal support services for employees as staff serves veterans. He noted hybrid services to include educational programming at the Virginia War Memorial.

He commented on the services to include the Military Spouse Liaison, Women Veteran Services and Peer Support groups. He noted the need for secure IT virtual services. He commented on the need for data sharing to enhance services. Commissioner Maxwell commented on the need for Care Center staffing given current Care Centers and new Care Centers opening in 2022.

Commissioner Maxwell highlighted the importance of investing in the VDVS Team and professional development needs / requirements.

Commissioner Maxwell addressed questions on suicide prevention, Compact priorities, Entrepreneurship, and the process of presenting legislative / budget priorities by VDVS through the BVS and JLC. The Commissioner addressed a question on the Shrine Status for state cemeteries. The Commissioner noted the recognition it would bring to the state cemeteries in include increased awareness of this service.

Commissioner Maxwell thanked Chairman Ashton for his service and leadership on the JLC.

Potential Initiatives for 2022

Chairman Ashton asked for presentation of potential 2022 JLC Initiatives and provided a brief background on past JLC initiative successes. VDVS Chief Deputy Commissioner Steven Combs commented on the value of BVS feedback on the 2022 JLC initiatives in order for the JLC to edit, modify, and rack & stack in priority order.

Mr. William Ashton, representing the Fleet Reserve Association, presented FRA-1 on partial tax exemption for military retirement. He presented FRA-2 on increased general funds to eliminate the Spousal Burial Fee at state cemeteries requesting, and FRA-3 on the Post 9/11 GI Education Bill Grant.

Chairman Ashton turned the floor over to AMVETS. Mr. John Cooper, representing AMVETS, presented an initiative to obtain momentum on state-level efforts to prevent suicide among Service Members, Veterans, and their Families in the Commonwealth of Virginia by funding and hiring a dedicated Suicide Veterans Coordinator. Mr. Cooper highlighted the AMVETS online program to train people on suicide awareness.

Chairman Ashton turned the floor over to the Virginia National Guard Association. Mr. Kevin Hoffman, representing VNGA, presented VNGA-1 on increasing the Virginia National Guard Tax Exemption adjustment from \$3,000 to \$6,000 and VNGA-2, which advocates free state park admission for Virginia National Guard members.

Mr. John Clickener of the Marine Corps League presented a recommendation (subsequently designated MCL-1), which recommend 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.

The Military Officers Association of America, represented by Mr. Monti Zimmerman, proposed two initiatives that had been part of the JLC's 2021 recommendations. One is for income tax subtraction for certain low-income disabled veterans (subsequent designated MOAA-1) and one for an expansion of tax relief for surviving spouses of military service members to include "died on active duty" (subsequently designated MOAA-2).

Mr. Mark Atchison of the Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH) identified three potential initiatives: to allow military personnel and their spouses to vote in the state and local elections if assigned in Virginia on PCS orders, job preferences for military spouses, and issues facing homeless veterans was addressed as a point of concern and consideration.

Chairman Ashton asked for any additional recommendations. None were presented. Chairman Ashton recognized 12 potential initiatives including the three potential MOPH ideas. Chairman Ashton asked the Marine Corps League, MOAA, and MOPH to submit their recommendations in writing as soon as possible.

Chairman Ashton asked the members to vote as to whether a proposed initiative would continue (remain) on the potential list for the September 9 meeting.

Chairman Ashton asked for a vote on the three FRA initiatives. All voted in favor with none opposed.

Chairman Ashton asked for a vote on the two Virginia National Guard Association initiatives. All voted in favor with none opposed.

Chairman Ashton asked for a vote on the Marine Corps League initiative. All voted in favor with none opposed.

Chairman Ashton asked for a vote on the two MOAA initiatives. All voted in favor with none opposed.

Chairman Ashton asked for a vote on the AMVETS initiative. All voted in favor with none opposed.

Chairman Ashton asked for a vote on the three MOPH recommendations.

The first recommendation (on ability to vote in the Commonwealth for active duty on PCS orders to Virginia) did not pass, with 12 Nays.

The second recommendation (on job preferences for military spouses) will be deferred pending further development. Commissioner Maxwell commented VTAP can assist to further develop this initiative since some services are already available within the Commonwealth.

Chairman Ashton commented that the homelessness recommendation should also be deferred pending further development. There was no further discussion.

Chairman Ashton summarized the voting, noting that nine initiatives were on the potential list for 2022 and that two of the three MOPH recommendations were pending further development.

Chairman Ashton recommended that JLC Vice Chairman Denice Williams act as the Chairman for the September meeting. Chairman Ashton asked for discussion. None was heard. Chairman Ashton

asked for approval by consent, which was given unanimously.

Public Comment

Frank Wickersham, a member of American Veterans Vote, presented their organization and informed the JLC the organization encourages veterans to vote and volunteer in the political process.

Delegate Joshua Cole thanked the JLC.

Good of the Order

Cliff White of the VaA/ANGEA noted that Mr. Carl Holcomb had had to leave the meeting a few minutes early, and did not present a VaA/ANGEA proposal regarding grants for employers that hire Guardsmen and Reservists, which was part of the JLC's 2021 package. He said that the organization would submit this initiative by July 23, 2021, if the JLC was agreeable. Chairman Ashton said this would be acceptable.

With the VaA/ANGEA proposal, the JLC will head into the September 9 meeting with 10 potential initiatives for consideration, plus two MOPH TBD proposals.

Chairman Ashton thanked the JLC for his time as Chairman.

Adjourn

Chairman Ashton adjourned the meeting at 12:40 p.m. The next meeting is September 9, 2021 at 10 a.m. at the Virginia War Memorial.

ATTACHMENT 1

Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations

July 14, 2021

10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

AGENDA

- I. Opening & Pledge of Allegiance – *Bill Ashton, JLC Chairman* (10:00 – 10:05)
- II. Opening Thoughts & Meditation, *Kevin Hoffman, JLC 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 May 14, 2020 meeting minutes – *Bill Ashton, JLC Chairman* (10:17 – 10:20)
- VI. Reports (10:20 – 10:35)
 - 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. VDVS Strategic Priorities - *John Maxwell, VDVS Commissioner* (10:35 – 11:00)
- VIII. Proposed initiatives for 2022 consideration, *Bill Ashton, JLC Chairman* (11:00 – 11:30)
- IX. Nomination for Chairman and Vice-Chairman, *Bill Ashton, JLC Chairman* (11:30 – 11:45)
- X. New Business and Open Discussion, *Bill Ashton JLC Chairman* (11:45-11:50)
- XI. Public comment period – *Bill Ashton JLC Chairman* (11:50-11:55)
- XII. Closing Remarks – *Bill Ashton JLC Chairman* (11:55 – 12:00)
- XIII. Adjourn (12:00)

ATTACHMENT 2

Board of Veterans Services Report



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
Jenny Dye
Mario Flores
Delegate Buddy Fowler
Delegate Dan Helmer
James O. Icenhour, Jr.
Thuraya 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 July 14, 2021

The Board of Veterans Services (BVS) held an on-line meeting on June 29, 2021. It was the last meeting for three of our members who completed their terms: Ms. Lyla Kohistany, Ms. Julie Waters, and Mr. Frank Reyes. Their service on the Board and their efforts on behalf of veterans across the Commonwealth have been tremendously appreciated. I am honored and thankful to have worked with these exemplary citizen members the past several years. We anticipate appointments to fill these three positions over the next few weeks.

During our meeting, we recognized the impressive success of the 2021 Women Veterans Summit. Ms. Julie Waters, a BVS member, served as the summit's Emcee. BVS Vice-Chair Tammi Lambert attended the summit virtually and encouraged the Virginia Department of Veterans Services (VDVS) to include live-stream capability during next year's planned in-person event.

We had several POC reports briefed during the meeting. Ms. Julie Waters gave the final briefing on the Veterans in the Arts Working Group and reported on the wide variety of resources across the Commonwealth for veterans to engage in art programs. Ms. Waters recommended the identification or establishment of a central office to compile and disseminate information about all of the various programs. POC reports on the Benefits and Education service lines were also briefed. These two working groups will continue to serve and work alongside VDVS.

Commissioner Maxwell presented an operational update and a briefing on efforts to refine the VDVS's strategic priorities. Action items corresponding to each of the top three priorities and their associated goals were reviewed. The BVS committed to assisting VDVS in developing metrics by which progress in achieving objectives and goals can be assessed. BVS Vice-Chair Tammi Lambert will head this working group.

Our next meeting is scheduled for August 11, during which we plan to focus on our initial review of legislation and budget initiatives needed to meet the goals of the Compact With Virginia's Veterans as outlined by Commissioner Maxwell. We are also looking forward to discussing the 2022 legislative initiatives the JLC is planning to support.

Finally, the Board expressed its deep appreciation for the participation of outgoing JLC Chair Bill Ashton. His astute and insightful efforts were always helpful and contributed greatly to the accomplishment of the Board's mission.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Michael Dick
Chairman

ATTACHMENT 3
Veterans Services Foundation (VSF) Report



VIRGINIA VETERANS SERVICES FOUNDATION
Report to the Joint Leadership Council
July 14, 2021

Thank you to the Chairman Ashton for allowing VSF to present at the last meeting.

The Veterans Services Foundation (VSF) Board of Trustees held a virtual meeting on June 10, 2021. The VSF Chairman, John Lesinski welcomed Irene Roberts of Dominion Energy and Steve Schoenfeld of the Dominion Energy Charity Classic. Irene and Steve gave a brief presentation on the Dominion Energy Charity Classic and the way this event supports the VSF.

Secretary Jabs provided remarks to include the ongoing services for veterans in Virginia and to thank Dominion Energy for their continued support that allows DVS to continue providing necessary assistance to veterans. Secretary Jabs also noted the peer support specialists from DVS are working in communities throughout the Commonwealth on suicide prevention efforts. Secretary Jabs thanked the Trustees and the Foundation for their continued fundraising efforts in support of DVS programs and looks forward to being in person with the Trustees at their next meeting in September.

Commissioner Maxwell provided a brief report on behalf of VDVS. The agency continues to focus on their role as a port of entry for services needed by veterans. Their top priorities are housing and transition services. Their belief is that housing creates better outcomes and that transition services will assist in the suicide prevention and the success of mental health services. Commissioner Maxwell noted that VVFS is now seeing new client numbers increase and while expenses were down over FY21 he believes they will increase as the eviction moratorium is lifted and more homeless veterans reach out for assistance. The 2021 Women's Veterans Summit is quickly approaching, and the Commissioner encouraged everyone to attend. Commissioner Maxwell lastly noted that the laptop program between VETE and VCCS is progressing successfully with 80 laptops distributed to veteran community college students to date.

Chairman Lesinski provided an update on the Foundation's efforts in the final quarter of FY21. The Development Committee is working hard to establish relationships with new corporate donors in hopes of creating partnerships that aid in veteran assistance efforts. The Finance Committee has worked with the VSF Treasurer to recommend the DVS' FY22 budget request and the Procedures and Policies Committee will be meeting in the near future to work on the Foundation's operational documents.

Jim Flaherty of the Attorney General's office conducted comprehensive FOIA training for the Trustees.

The Trustees elected their new slate of leaders to include John Lesinski as Chairman, Nicole Carry as First Vice Chair, and Paul Haughton as Second Vice Chair.

Overall donations are down for the Foundation in FY21, much of what can be attributed to the overall impact of the pandemic. To counter this effect several fundraising campaigns, including the Circle of Heroes recurring donation campaign, were launched to inspire donations before the end of FY21. Also, the VSF brochure is being updated and should be available for dissemination in early FY 22.

The next Veterans Services Foundation Board of Trustees meeting is scheduled for September 9, 2021, at a time and location to be determined.

Respectfully Submitted,

John Lesinski, Chairman
Veterans Services Foundation

ATTACHMENT 4
VDVS Operational Update



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Department of Veterans Services

John Maxwell
Commissioner

Telephone: (804) 786-0220
Fax: (804) 786-0302

**Virginia Department of Veterans Services (VDVS)
Operations Update for the
Joint Leadership Council July 14, 2021**

With minor exceptions, VDVS has completed its transition from pandemic to normal operations. Our staff in Benefits and VVFS returned to the offices full-time in May and are providing services by appointment only; we are reviewing ways to safely return to walk-in services. Virtual/phone appointments remain an option if preferred. Overall, the number of clients served is trending upward.

Benefits was able to keep community partners and military installations aware of our staged return to offices for one-on-one meetings with veterans. We also reached out to clients we have previously assisted, and informed them of our operating schedule. This effort allowed us to keep veterans and families updated on changes in VA benefits and law, reminders of intent-to-file (ITF) expiration dates and continued efforts to assist in the management of pending VA disability compensation claims.

For VVFS, 41% of clients require housing/homeless assistance, followed by benefits and behavioral health assistance. VVFS is filling multiple vacancies in order to get back up to full operational capacity. Despite vacancies, the number of total clients (which captures services to existing/repeat clients) served by VVFS was significantly higher in June 2021 (343 total clients) than June 2020 (120 total clients).

In addition to client services, including care and community resource coordination and peer and family support, VVFS continues to coordinate expansion of Virginia's Identify Military Service Members, Veterans and families (SMVF), Screen for Suicide Risk, and Refer for Services (VISR) pilot as part of the Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide. VISR 2.0 will kick off in September and run for one year. VISR recruitment is open now for new community partners including VSOs that want to expand their suicide prevention training and suicide risk screening activities.

The Cemeteries division had another record month in June with 209 interments. FY21 burials totaled 2,297, a 24% increase over FY20 (1,852 burials). The crypt expansion project at Amelia started in May, with completion expected in early CY22. All three veterans cemeteries returned to normal operations on May 1 and are seeing walk-in numbers return to pre-COVID levels. Renovation projects for the chapel, maintenance building and public restrooms at Amelia are scheduled to begin in July, followed by needed repairs/additions at the Dublin cemetery. Cemetery staff are greatly benefiting from professional training from the National Cemetery Administration, which is resulting in much improved appearances and National Shrine Commitment reporting statistics. We are digitizing management of documents at all three cemeteries and unifying the analog phone systems. Solutions for intelligent call routing are in development and testing.

VMSDEP is continuing to grow and trend upward. We ended the fiscal year with a record 3,185 applications submitted and 3,282 applications approved (includes applications submitted in FY20). These numbers represent an increase of 164% in applications submitted and 413% in applications approved since the legislation as a result of the JLC initiative that expanded the program to non-combat veterans effective July 1, 2019. VDVS is in contact with the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) to find ways to better forecast future application numbers.

The Virginia Transition Assistance Program (VTAP) continues to provide transition assistance to service members and military spouses throughout the Commonwealth, helping thousands with employment, education, and entrepreneurship. After nearly a decade, the team is still at the forefront of successfully helping individuals transition from active duty to the civilian workforce by offering career coaching, job search assistance, resume writing, networking, and more. During FY21, the team directly served 3,135 Transitioning Service Members (TSM) and veterans, and reached over 78,000 TSM through items like the Virginia Welcome Letter and the Transition Connection newsletter. The reported average salary from VTAP services increased from \$67,522 in FY 2018 to \$97,546 in FY 21.

The State Approving Agency (SAA) is wrapping up its participation in the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) risk-based survey pilot. The National Association of State Approving Agencies (NASAA), Education Counsel, and the USDVA developed the pilot to test effective data collection processes and a risk-based survey process that complies with both the Colmery Act and the newly enacted Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020 (Public Law 116-315). Virginia is one of six states in the Nation participating in the pilot. The resulting process creates incentives for schools to maintain and improve access, affordability, high levels of completion, and increased earnings for student veterans. Schools must also demonstrate financial integrity in the handling of taxpayer resources. National implementation of risk-based surveys must occur by October 1, 2022.

The VDVS Communications Team relied on an aggressive earned media strategy. This strategy resulted in more earned media than any other comparable state agency over

the past five years. Additionally, social media usage and engagement have played a crucial role in communicating with veterans and families. They are also being used increasingly to distribute messaging in real time and to analyze predictive behavior, which makes communications even more efficient. VDVS use of social media continues to track well above government standards and continues to grow.

The Virginia Women Veterans Program (VWVP) hosted the eighth annual Women Veterans Summit as a virtual event for the second year in row. The theme of the 2021 Summit was *"Empowered: Bold with a Purpose, Finding Clarity Beyond Crisis"* This year's event included 18 viewing hours over two days, 70 speakers, and 30 partners. Presentations and panel discussions were available on topics that focused on women veterans, including services for women veterans in Virginia, career planning, entrepreneurship, mentorship, financial stewardship, employment opportunities, personal health, wellness, and community resources designed for women and/or veteran needs. DAV representative to the JLC, Denice Williams was the recipient of the 2021 Change Maker of the Year Award.

The Virginia War Memorial hosted the 65th Annual Commonwealth's Memorial Day Ceremony on May 31, 2021. Acting Secretary Kathleen Jabs was the keynote speaker. The relaxation of limits on in-person gatherings enabled the 2021 ceremony to be both in-person (almost 1,000 in attendance) and virtual (with over 45,000 watching the television broadcast and over 12,000 watching the livestream). This combination of in person/ broadcast/ livestream will be our new SOP for the annual Memorial Day and Veterans Day ceremonies at the Virginia War Memorial. The recording of the 2021 Memorial Day Ceremony is available here: <https://vawarmemorial.org/events/memorialday2021/>.

On June 25, volunteers placed 12,000 American flags on the hillside along the Shrine of Memory to honor the nearly 12,000 Virginians killed in service to our Nation from World War II to the present day. The annual "Hill of Heroes" will remain in place until July 16, 2021. The Memorial also continues to host a number of virtual educational programs and is planning to resume some in-person programming. Please visit <https://vawannemorial.org/events/> to learn more.

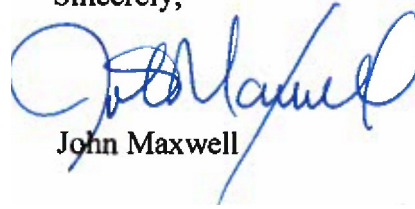
The Virginia Veterans Care Center in Roanoke has been COVID-free (both residents and staff) for several weeks. The Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center in Richmond is tracking one active staff positive (the staff member is out on leave until recovered). VVCC and SBVCC are now set up to administer the COVID-19 vaccine to residents and staff, with approximately two dozen doses administered to date. Both have expanded visitation options for families and are accepting new admissions.

The Puller VCC (Fauquier County) and Jones & Cabacoy VCC (Virginia Beach) projects continue on schedule and on budget, with projected first admissions in March and August of 2022, respectively.

As we settle into post-COVID routines, we are focused on resuming steady-state service delivery while planning for agency enhancements that will help with future service

delivery. We look forward to JLC feedback and input as we align our work to best serve Virginia's veterans and their families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John Maxwell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "M".

John Maxwell

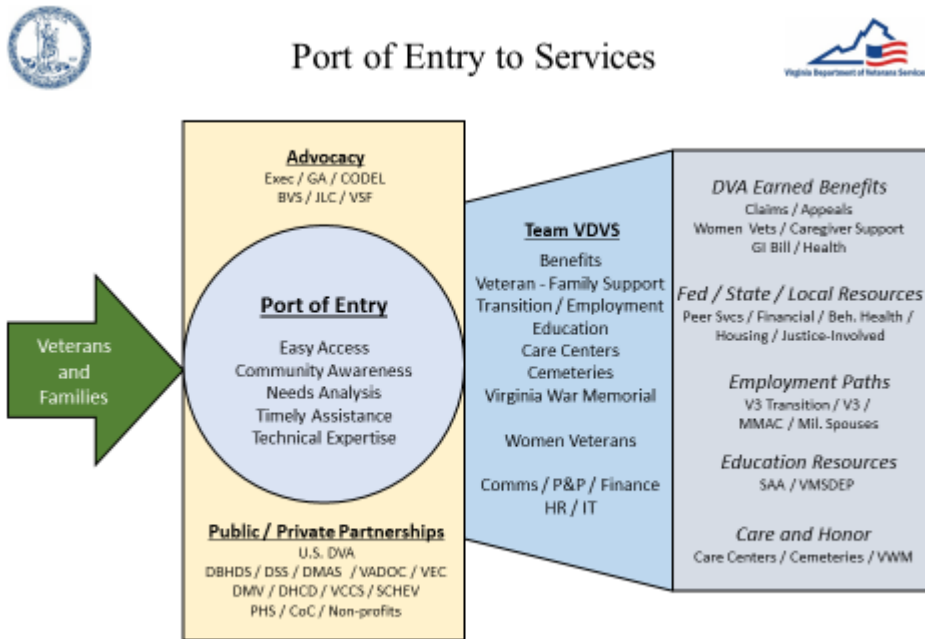
ATTACHMENT 5
VDVS Strategic Priorities Brief

Virginia Department of Veterans Services

Strategic Priorities - Implementation

Presentation to the:
Joint Leadership Council
July 14, 2021
Commissioner John Maxwell
www.dvs.virginia.gov

1



2

The Compact with Virginia's Veterans

The Virginia Department of Veterans Services will unify the state's efforts in veterans services. With a highly trained and professional workforce, we will serve as a primary port of entry to federal, state and community resources, connecting veterans and their families to earned benefits. We will optimize technology advances to enrich services and increase outreach. We will advocate for veteran quality of life enhancements and prioritize accessibility of services for transitioning service members, veterans, and their families throughout the Commonwealth.

3

Fulfilling the Compact

Strategic Priorities

- Make Virginia the most veteran-friendly state in the Nation
- Serve as a primary port of entry to federal, state and community resources
- Invest in the VDVS Team

Lines of Effort

- Suicide Prevention through focused stakeholder coordination and programs
- Technological improvements (e.g. web applications and external interfaces with veterans and clients) that support service delivery
- Capacity to meet increasing numbers of veterans and families who require agency's current services
- Agency infrastructure – strengthen the backbone of direct services delivery
 - Internal programs and positions
 - Improvements to IT
- Communicate to veterans, their families, and the public through outreach, marketing, social media, videography

4

Supporting Objectives
Compact with Virginia's Veterans

GOAL: Make Virginia the most veteran-friendly state in the nation

- LOEs: Communication, technology improvements, capacity to meet demand
- Objectives:
 - Unify the Commonwealth's efforts in Veterans Services among state agencies / stakeholders / community partners
 - Be a thought leader among and create opportunities for collaboration in veterans services
 - Improve collaboration with JLC and VSO's
 - Prioritize accessibility of services throughout the Commonwealth
 - Institutionalize hybrid offerings through technology and staff training
 - Review office alignment to ensure veteran inclusivity

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Supporting Objectives
Compact with Virginia's Veterans

GOAL: Make Virginia the most veteran-friendly state in the nation

- LOEs: Capacity to meet demand
- Objectives:
 - Honor Veterans, Preserve History, Educate Youth
 - Virginia War Memorial Programs –fully develop complementary in-person and virtual capabilities
 - Cemeteries –achieve National Shrine status for all cemeteries

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Supporting Objectives
Compact with Virginia's Veterans

GOAL: Make Virginia the most veteran-friendly state in the nation

- LOEs: Suicide prevention, capacity to meet demand, agency infrastructure
- Objectives:
 - Improve outcomes for veterans and their families in the areas of behavior health, rehabilitative services, supportive services, financial stability
 - Provide readily available assistance for new clients
 - Maintain favorable pension claim adjudication rate

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Supporting Objectives
Compact with Virginia's Veterans

GOAL: Make Virginia the most veteran-friendly state in the nation

- LOE: Suicide prevention, capacity to meet demand, communications, agency infrastructure
- Objectives:
 - Improve outcomes for veterans and their families in the areas of behavior health, rehabilitative services, supportive services, financial stability
 - Complement favorable adjudications with high appeals success rate
 - Reduce SMVF suicides through more focused stakeholder coordination
 - Broaden/deepen support for women veteran and military spouse hires

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Supporting Objectives
Compact with Virginia's Veterans

GOAL: Make Virginia the most veteran-friendly state in the nation

- LOEs: Technology improvements, agency infrastructure
- Objectives:
 - Holistically connect veterans and their families to earned benefits, resources, and opportunities
 - Implement an agency-wide case management system
 - Improve inter- and intra-agency referrals
 - Enhance current online appointment system
 - Analyze / potentially participate in COVA data trusts
 - Use/share data internally to support growth in social media presence

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Supporting Objectives Compact with Virginia's Veterans

GOAL: Make Virginia the most veteran-friendly state in the nation

LOEs: Technology improvements, capacity to meet demand, communications

- Objectives:
 - Provide the residents of Virginia's veterans care centers with exceptional person-centered care in an enriching environment that enhances their sense of physical, emotional, and social well-being
 - Improve competitiveness of staff recruiting / retention incentives
 - Advocate for quality of life enhancements for transitioning service members, veterans, and their families
 - Demonstrate Virginia-wide commitment through collaborative partnerships
 - Improve the agency's effectiveness at reaching and serving Virginia's veterans and families through the implementation of technology
 - Provide ease of access through a secure virtual platform
- Support USDVA telehearing and telehealth options

Supporting Objectives Port of Entry

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GOAL: Serve as a Primary Port of Entry to federal, state and community resources

LOEs: Capacity to meet demand, technology improvements, communications

- Objectives:
 - Improve veterans' and their families' access to services through any entry point into VDVS
 - Strengthen local / state / federal partnerships and advocate for federal and state resources to improve services
 - Initiate and strengthen relationships with academic institutions
 - Build partnerships with national and local trade organizations
 - Serve as a port of re-entry for justice involved veterans
 - Improve incarcerated veteran transition capacity
 - Increase outreach and community awareness; anticipate and address requirements / shortfalls created by increased demands for VDVS services
 - Formalize outreach as an agency function

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Supporting Objectives Port of Entry

GOAL: Serve as a Primary Port of Entry to federal, state and community resources

LOEs: Capacity to meet demand, technology improvements

- Objectives:
 - Align VDVS support and partner resources to achieve equity in access
 - Offer in-person and virtual services that facilitate service imminently following engagement
 - Enhance access to education and employment opportunities for transitioning service members, veterans, and their families
 - Foster and encourage veteran and military spouse entrepreneurship
 - Enhance the security of VDVS applications while integrating ease-of-use features that promote awareness and resource connections for veterans and families
 - Improve VDVS IT capability to more readily implement business applications that facilitate services

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Supporting Objectives Invest in the VDVS Team

GOAL: Enhance the strength of Team VDVS through employee development, support, and collaboration

LOE: Agency infrastructure

- Objectives:
 - Foster a supportive, collaborative, equitable and inclusive culture
 - Identify and address shortfalls in agency infrastructure
- Analyze/expand HR, IT, Finance, Communications capacity

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Supporting Objectives
Invest in the VDVS Team

GOAL: Enhance the strength of Team VDVS through employee development, support, and collaboration

LOE: Agency infrastructure

- Objectives:
 - Recruit a diverse workforce; create an environment and opportunities that encourage retaining talented, skilled, and experienced teammates
 - Incorporate flexible work plans as a quality of life/work practice
 - Integrate recruiting, hiring and retention into ONE Virginia plan
 - Institutionalize a Professional Development Program that fosters technical, leadership, individual and team growth

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Supporting Objectives
Invest in the VDVS Team

GOAL: Enhance the strength of Team VDVS through employee development, support, and collaboration

LOE: Agency infrastructure

Objectives:

- Institute a compensation plan based on skillsets, experience, and level of responsibility
 - Conduct a formal salary/position classification review in CY 2021
- Leadership remain accountable to employees
 - Implement deliberate and meaningful recognition practices
 - Provide structured, equitable training opportunities
 - Improve vertical and horizontal communication

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Thank you!

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