



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

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Virginia National Guard
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Position Paper 2022-06 **Virginia National Guard State Park Admission**

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

BACKGROUND:

- Federal parks offer free admission for all National Guard members.
- Numerous states offer free admission to state parks for their National Guard members. Some states extend this to Guard members from out of state for example:
 - Thousands of Virginia Soldiers will mobilize through installations in Texas in 2021 and 2022.
 - They are able to visit all of the State parks in Texas without paying an entrance fee.
 - Those same Soldiers have to pay a fee to use a state park in Virginia.
- This year alone approximately 1,500 members of the Virginia National Guard were mobilized in response to COVID-19 and civil disturbance response throughout the Commonwealth.
- As of June 30, 2021, there were 8,671 members for the Virginia Army National Guard (7,152 Soldiers) and the Virginia Air National Guard (1,519 Airmen).

DISCUSSION:

- Offering free or reduced state park admission for members of the Virginia National Guard recognizes their continued service to the Commonwealth during times of need.
- There will be a cost to the state (i.e. foregone revenue for the state park system) of providing this recognition, but the costs should be relatively low.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Governor and General Assembly grant free or reduced price admission to Virginia State parks to members of the Virginia National Guard.