

**Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**September 15, 2022**

A meeting of the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (the JLC) was held on September 15, 2022 at 10 a.m. at the Virginia War Memorial, 621 S. Belvidere St. Richmond VA 23220

**Members Present**

- Richard Shook, Air Force Association
- William Aramony, American Legion
- Richard Van Norton, AMVETS
- Glenn Yarborough, Association of the United States Army
- Denice Williams, Disabled American Veterans
- Thad Jones, Fifth Baptist Church Veterans Ministry
- Sha'ron Martin, Fleet Reserve Association
- John Clickener, Marine Corps League
- Monti Zimmerman, Military Officers Association of America
- Mark Atchison, Military Order of the Purple Heart
- Vernon Peters, Military Order of the World Wars
- Michelle Ramos Domingue, Navy Mutual Aid Association
- Preston Curry, Paralyzed Veterans of America
- Terence Moore, Reserve Association of America
- Dan Karnes, Roanoke Valley Veterans Council
- Rick Raskin, Veterans of Foreign Wars
- George Corbett, Vietnam Veterans of America
- Carl Holcomb, Virginia Army/Air National Guard Enlisted Association
- Michael Dick, Chairman, Board of Veterans Services
- Jack Lanier, representing the Veterans Services Foundation
- Daniel Gade, Commissioner, Department of Veterans Services

**Members attending virtually**

- None

**Members Absent**

- Rich Mansfield, Air Force Sergeants Association
- Jack Hilgers, Legion of Valor
- Kevin Hoffman, Virginia National Guard Association
- Ann Crittenden, Women Marines Association
- Jose Ramos, Wounded Warrior Project

**Alternates Present (representing their VSO)**

- Rich Rinaldo, Legion of Valor
- Andrew Czaplicki, Virginia National Guard Association

### **Alternates Present (not representing their VSO)**

- Bill Feasenmyer, American Legion
- Jay Marts, AMVETS
- Lisa Gregory, Disabled American Veterans
- David Jennings, Marine Corps League
- David Sitler, Reserve Organization of America
- Joanne Smith, Veterans of Foreign Wars

### **Commonwealth of Virginia Officials Present**

- Jason Pak, Deputy Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs
- Jordan Stewart, Assistant Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs
- Major General Tim Williams, the Adjutant General
- Captain Joshua McNallay, Virginia Air National Guard
- Cassy Russell, Department of Military Affairs
- Steven Combs, Department of Veterans Services (DVS)
- Glendalynn Glover, DVS
- Brandi Jancaitis, DVS
- Kayla LaFond, DVS
- Jayla Plymouth, DVS
- Ravi Padma, DVS
- Phil Trezza, DVS

### **Guests**

- MacKenzie Heidelberg, Office of Congresswoman Spanberger
- Michael Sopko (attending virtually)
- Edie Smith, Gold Star Wives (attending virtually)
- Mark Shockley, Virginia Veterans Memorials, Inc.
- Randy Duvall, Virginia Veterans Memorials, Inc.
- Chris Garcia, Virginia Veterans Memorials, Inc.
- Pat Rinaldo, Legion of Valor
- Jessica Nichols, Virginia National Guard Association

### **Items included in the Agenda Packet**

- Draft Agenda
- Draft Minutes July 14, 2022 meeting
- Board of Veterans Services (BVS) Report to JLC
- Veterans Services Foundation (VSF) Report to JLC
- Department of Veterans Services (DVS) Operations Update
- Summary table of Legislative Initiatives
- Proposals/position papers
  - AL&AUSA-1: Income Tax Subtraction
  - FRA-1: State Veterans Cemeteries – Spouse Burial Fees
  - MOAA/VFW-1: Tax Relief for Surviving Spouses
  - ROA-1: Virginia Disabled Veteran Real Estate Tax Exemption

- VNGA/MOAA-1: Virginia National Guard Income Tax Deduction
- VNGA-2: Virginia National Guard State Park Admission

### **Call to Order**

Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (JLC) Chair Denice Williams called the meeting to order at 10:04 a.m. and led the JLC in the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **Thoughts and meditation**

Chair Williams provided thoughts and meditation.

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

The roll was called, and 20 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.

### **Approval of the Agenda** *(Attachment 1)*

Mr. John Clickener made a **motion, seconded** by Mr. Glenn Yarborough, to approve the meeting agenda as presented. The motion carried by unanimous vote.

### **Approve July 14, 2021 Meeting Minutes**

Mr. Sha'ron Martin made a **motion, seconded** by Mr. John Clickener, to approve the minutes as drafted. The motion carried by unanimous vote.

### **Reports / Updates**

#### **BVS Report** *(Attachment 2)*

Chairman Michael Dick of the Board of Veterans Services (BVS) provided the BVS report. He noted the next meeting is planned for September 22, 2022 at the College of William & Mary. Chairman Dick also recognized the appointment of three new citizen members and the presentation of BVS Point of Contact reports at the August 25 meeting.

#### **VSF Report** *(Attachment 3)*

Mr. Jack Lanier of the Veterans Services (VSF) presented the VSF report. He noted the election/reelection of VSF committee chairs and the approval of the VSF electronic meeting policy.

#### **DVS Operational Update** *(Attachment 4)*

Commissioner Dan Gade thanked the JLC for ongoing collaboration. He highlighted the current status of the Gold Standard Digital Hub, DVS collaboration with Community Veteran Engagement Boards (CVEBs), communications and outreach, and the expected vast increase in DVS workload due to the passage of the PACT ACT. He spoke about the planned budget request for additional Veterans Service Representatives (VSRs) and collaboration (and potential hiring) of claims agents from Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) to meet the demand and serve Virginia's veterans.

### **Proposed Initiatives for 2023 Consideration**

JLC Legislative Officer John Clickener led the discussion of proposed JLC 2023 Initiatives.

JLC members presented six proposals/position papers:

- AL&AUSA-1: Income Tax Subtraction
- FRA-1: State Veterans Cemeteries – Spouse Burial Fees
- MOAA/VFW-1: Tax Relief for Surviving Spouses
- ROA-1: Virginia Disabled Veteran Real Estate Tax Exemption
- VNGA/MOAA-1: Virginia National Guard Income Tax Deduction
- VNGA-2: Virginia National Guard State Park Admission

JLC members, alternates, and guests had the opportunity to ask questions of each sponsor and make recommendations and suggested changes.

All six proposals were approved for inclusion in the JLC 2023 Legislative Initiative Package.

A preliminary ranking identified:

1. MOAA/VFW-1: Tax Relief for Surviving Spouses
2. TBD
3. TBD
4. TBD
5. VNGA/MOAA-1: Virginia National Guard Income Tax Deduction
6. VNGA-2: Virginia National Guard State Park Admission

Final ranking was deferred to the December 15 meeting.

#### **New Business, Open Discussion, and “Good of the Order” reports**

Chair Williams tasked DVS Chief Deputy Commissioner Steven Combs and Director of Policy & Planning Claudia Flores to prepare an Electronic Meeting Policy for the JLC, modeled on the policy approved by the VSF at their last meeting.

Mr. Michael Sopko and Ms. Edie Smith spoke in favor of the American Legion/AUSA and MOAA/VFW proposals.

#### **Public Comment**

Mark Shockley, Chairman of Virginia Veterans Memorials, Inc., spoke about the planned memorial to Iraq War veterans in Huntington Park, Newport News.

#### **Adjourn**

Chairman Williams adjourned the meeting at 12:08 p.m.

The next regular business meeting is December 15, 2022 at 10 a.m. at the Virginia War Memorial.

# **ATTACHMENT 1**

## **Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations**

### **AGENDA**

**September 15, 2022**

**10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.**

### **Virginia War Memorial**

- I. Opening & Pledge of Allegiance – *Denice Williams, JLC Chair* (10:00 – 10:05)
- II. Opening Thoughts & Meditation - *Denice Williams, JLC Chair* (10:05 – 10:10)
- III. Roll call of VSOs, quorum determination, and introduction of guests – *Denice Williams, JLC Chair* (10:10 – 10:15)
- IV. Approve Agenda – *Denice Williams, JLC Chair* (10:15 – 10:17)
- V. Approve July 14, 2022 meeting minutes – *Denice Williams, JLC Chair* (10:17 – 10:20)
- VI. Reports (10:20 – 10:45)
  - a. Board of Veterans Services (BVS) – *Michael Dick, BVS Chairman*
  - b. Veterans Services Foundation (VSF) – *Jack Lanier, VSF 2nd Vice Chairman*
  - c. Virginia Department of Veterans Services (VDVS) – *Daniel Gade, VDVS Commissioner*
- VII. Proposed initiatives for adoption and prioritization, *John Clickener, JLC Legislative Officer* (10:45 – 11:30)
- VIII. New Business, *Denice Williams JLC Chair* (11:30-11:45)
- IX. Public comment period – *Denice Williams JLC Chair* (11:45-11:55)
- X. Closing Remarks – *Denice Williams JLC Chair* (11:55 – 12:00)
- XI. Adjourn (12:00)

## ATTACHMENT 2

### Board of Veterans Services (BVS) Report



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

### COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA BOARD OF VETERANS SERVICES

#### REPORT TO THE JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL SEPTEMBER 15, 2022

*Michael Dick*  
Chairman  
*Thuraya Kent*  
Vice Chair  
*Victor Angry*  
*David Ashe*  
Delegate *Jason Ballard*  
*Carl Bedell*  
Senator *John Bell*  
*Joe Campa*  
Delegate *Mike Cherry*  
*Mario Flores*  
Delegate *Buddy Fowler*  
*Joyce Henderson*  
*Jamie Inman*  
*Carlton Kent*  
*John Lesinski*  
Senator *Mamie Locke*  
Delegate *Kathleen*  
*Murphy*  
*Kathy Owens*  
Senator *Bryce Reeves*  
*Susan Verwaet Riveland*  
*Melissa Watts*  
*Denice Williams*  
Chair, Joint  
Leadership Council of  
Veterans Service  
Organizations  
*Jack Lanier*  
2nd Vice Chair, Veterans  
Services Foundation  
*Rick St. John*  
Vice Chair, Virginia  
War Memorial  
Foundation  
*Daniel M. Gade, PhD,*  
Commissioner, Virginia  
Department of  
Veterans Services

The Board of Veterans Services (BVS) met on August 25, 2022. We honored three outgoing members: James Icenhour served on the BVS from July 1, 2014, through June 30, 2022, and served as Chairman of the BVS; Carl Bess served from July 1, 2018, through June 30, 2022; and Paige Cherry served from December 2, 2016, through June 30, 2022. We greatly appreciated their work on the Board and their faithful service on behalf of Virginia's veterans.

We also welcomed three new BVS members. Joe Campa, who served as the 11<sup>th</sup> Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy, was appointed to the Board, as was Carlton Kent, who served as the 16<sup>th</sup> Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps. We also welcomed Jamie Inman, a retired Army Colonel who served as the Chief of Staff at the Virginia Military Institute. Additionally, the Virginia Speaker of the House of Delegates, C. Todd Gilbert, reappointed Delegate Kathleen J. Murphy and Delegate Hyland F. "Buddy" Fowler to the BVS and appointed two new members: Delegate Jason Ballard and Delegate Mike Cherry. Delegate Ballard currently serves as a Lieutenant Colonel in the U.S. Army Reserve. Delegate Mike Cherry is a veteran of the U.S. Air Force.

During the August meeting, Commissioner Daniel Gade of the Virginia Department of Veterans Services (VDVS) provided the Board with an overview of the draft VDVS Strategic Plan. The Board will review the draft plan and provide feedback per the Board's By-Laws. Additionally, each BVS member serves as a Point of Contact (POC) for a VDVS service line and/or program. The BVS POC becomes the Board's 'subject matter expert' for their assigned service line. In preparation for the August meeting, Board members worked with VDVS Service Line Directors to review the agency's Objectives and Key Results in their assigned respective service line. BVS members then briefed the Board as to their assessments pertaining to their assigned service line. Written VDVS service line POC reports were delivered to Board members during the August meeting and are available on the BVS webpage.

Our next meeting is scheduled for September 22, 2022, at William & Mary. The Board will hear from the Joint Leadership Council on its adopted 2023 legislative initiatives and will provide feedback. We will also consider for adoption the Board's proposed electronic meeting policy.

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  
September 15, 2022**

The Virginia Veterans Services Foundation (VSF) Board of Trustees held their quarterly meeting on September 8, 2022 at the Virginia War Memorial.

VSF welcomed recent Board appointee and Virginia native, Brad Williamson, to the meeting to share his background as a retired Rear Admiral and career Navy surface warfare officer. The Board was delighted to also have Secretary Lohr, Secretary Crenshaw, Assistant Secretary Stewart and Commissioner Gade in attendance for the meeting.

VSF Treasurer, Tammy Davidson, provided a report on the FY 2022 Fourth Quarter Financial Report. The Foundation closed FY 2022 with a total of \$1,963,423.26 in donations, which included the \$1.3 million donation received in June. Total expenditures supporting various DVS programs in FY 2022 were \$784,391.85.

Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry, Matthew Lohr provided an overview to the Board of the Secretariat's purview, and his desire to connect Virginia veterans to agriculture. The Board showed great interest in the Commonwealth's policies surrounding hemp farming, as well as the creation of a state program to merge veterans and farming. It was an enlightening discussion and VSF appreciated Secretary Lohr's time and interest.

Secretary Crenshaw expressed great appreciation for the work of VSF to serve the Commonwealth's veterans and family members, and is standing by to be of steadfast support to the Board's initiatives so the Board can continue to move the needle for growth and success. The Secretary stated that his office is evaluating if any legislation may be needed in the 2023 Legislative Session of the General Assembly.

Commissioner Gade announced a new partnership with Community Veteran Engagement Boards (CVEBs) and is currently working on confirming a meeting in Richmond to include Maryland and North Carolina.

John Leninski, reported on behalf of Board of Veteran Services Chairman Michael Dick and provided an update on the collaboration between VSF and DVS Service Line Directors. VSF Chairman, Paul Haughton shared that VSF Board Members should be matched with a DVS Board Member prior to the upcoming DVS Board Meeting on September 22, 2022 to discuss the 2022 BVS POC Service Line Reports.

The Chairman nominated and the Board approved new FY23 Committee and Assistant Committee Chairs. Mike Coleman will serve as Chair and Paula Buckley as Assistant Chair of the Finance Committee; John Esposito will serve as Chair and Valerie Zimmerman, Assistant Chair of the Development Committee; and Jack Lanier will serve as Chair and Bruce Waxman, Assistant Chair of the Procedures and Policies Committee.

The VSF Board 2023 meeting schedule was approved for the following dates: March 16, 2023, June 22, 2023, September 14, 2023, and December 7, 2023.

Jack Lanier, Procedures and Policies Chair, presented the VSF Electronic Meeting Policy for the Board to consider and approve. The Policy was passed unanimously by the Board and VSF can now begin to use electronic meetings following the regulations that were passed in the 2022 Session of the General Assembly.

The Finance Committee recommendation of expanding the allowance of VSF Executive Director to \$50,000 of unrestricted funds was approved. It should be noted that this would not include donor funds, and would allow for the Foundation to continue its pledge for 100% of donor funds to be used to serve veterans.

The next VSF Board of Trustees meeting is scheduled for December 8, 2022 at a location and time to be determined.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Paul Haughton  
Chairman  
Virginia Veterans Services Foundation

**ATTACHMENT 4**  
**Department of Veterans Services (DVS) Operations Report**



**COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA**

Department of Veterans Services

Daniel M. Gade, PhD  
Commissioner

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

**Virginia Department of Veterans Services (VDVS)  
Operations Update for the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service  
Organizations**

The Virginia Veterans and Family Support (VVFS) team will gain new leadership capacity in suicide prevention and housing and criminal justice services. The new Suicide Prevention Director and Housing and Criminal Justice Services Coordinator positions will start this month. VVFS program staff continue to expand in-person outreach and community training opportunities to reach Service Members, Veterans, and families in need of behavioral health, rehabilitative and supportive services. In August 2022, staff assisted 108 new clients compared to 91 new clients in August 2021. This was an 18% decrease from August 2022. The total number of clients (including new and existing clients) served was slightly lower in August 2022 (385) compared to July 2022 (387) but significantly higher than August 2021 (293). VVFS has seen an increase in complex cases particularly impacted by rising rents and inflation.

VVFS and Benefits staff screened 1,119 service members, veterans and family members (SMVF) for suicide risk. Among those screened, 110 individuals screened at low/medium risk and 4 at high risk for suicide and received critical behavioral health support. Since January 2022, a total of 8,348 SMVF have been screened for suicide risk.

The Military Education & Workforce Initiative (MEWI) issued an additional 50 laptops to Virginia Commonwealth University for a total of 100 computers this year. These laptops are for distribution to service members, veterans, and their spouses to assist them in their academic endeavors.

MEWI will host the Virginia Military Student Veteran Manufacturing Summit, its first sector strategy event on November 4, 2022, at the William H Tally Workforce Center, located at Brightpoint



Community College. The Virginia Chamber Foundation, Community College Workforce Alliance, and Virginia Employment Commission are partners for the event.

The Commonwealth's Patriot Day Ceremony was held September 12, 2022 at the Virginia War Memorial to commemorate the 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon in Northern Virginia and the downing of the jet aircraft in Shanksville, Pennsylvania that occurred on September 11, 2001. Patriot Day is the National Day of Mourning to honor and remember the 2,997 men and women and more than 6,000 who were injured on that day in 2001. The keynote speaker for the 2022 ceremony was former Virginia Governor Jim Gilmore, who was the Commonwealth's Chief Executive on September 11, 2001.

The Commonwealth's Veterans Day Ceremony will be held on November 11, 2022 at 11 a.m. at the Virginia War Memorial. All members are invited to attend in-person, to watch the live broadcast on CBS TV-6 Richmond, or to watch the livestream on the CBS TV-6 Facebook page, the DVS Facebook page, or the Virginia War Memorial Facebook page.

The Virginia War Memorial continues to host in-person and on-line education programs, including virtual programs in September for the birthday of the U.S. Air Force and in honor of National POW/MIA Recognition Day. Visit <https://vawarmemorial.org/events/> to learn more.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA), National Cemetery Administration, Veterans Cemetery Grants Program (VCGP) awards grants to state and tribal governments for the phased expansion of existing state/tribal veterans cemeteries and the establishment of new state/tribal veterans cemeteries. USDVA VCGP has pushed almost all planned Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2022 grants into FFY2023. This will delay the start of phased expansion projects at the Virginia Veterans Cemetery (Amelia) and the Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery (Dublin) to add additional columbarium niches for the above-ground inurnment of cremated remains. Because of the delay, the Amelia cemetery may run out of above-ground niches before additional ones are constructed. If this happens, DVS will work with veterans, families, and funeral homes on other options, which could include the veteran/family electing an in-ground cremated burial, or delaying the memorial service until additional niches are available. DVS will notify veterans, families, and funeral homes if this happens, and will post updates on the DVS website.

DVS submitted a grant application to VCGP to add additional columbarium niches at the Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Cemetery in Suffolk and make other improvement. We'll learn later this year or early next year if the project will be funded in FFY2023.

The state veterans cemeteries in Amelia, Dublin, and Suffolk will display the Avenue of Flags on Veterans Day 2022. Cemetery team members will be on hand to greet visitors and help guide them to gravesites, but the cemetery offices will not be open on November 11.

Wreath ceremonies will be held on December 17 at all three cemeteries in conjunction with local partners. Information will be posted on the DVS website and shared with DVS partners on the cemeteries webpage (<https://www.dvs.virginia.gov/cemeteries>) and in the DVS eNews.

COVID-19 continues to impact operations at the Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center (SBVCC) in Richmond and the Virginia Veterans Care Center (VVCC) in Roanoke. Both care centers have seen spikes in resident and staff positives that track community outbreaks (ex. – for a new variant). Both centers are fully open for visitation, but visitors are highly encouraged to take a COVID test prior to visitation and to wear masks while in the facility.

Mirroring the health care industry at large, staffing continues to be a challenge at both care centers, with several vacancies in the nursing department (registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, and certified nursing assistants). Care centers positions are a mix of full-time and wage (hourly) state positions with competitive salaries/wages and excellent benefits. If you know of anyone looking for a nursing position caring for those who served us, please encourage them to visit the state jobs website at <http://jobs.virginia.gov/>. Other DVS positions are also advertised here.

As with many sectors of our economy, supply chain issues are impacting our veterans care centers, especially the completion of the new care centers in Virginia Beach and Fauquier County.

Unfortunately, this means that “Month 1” (first residents admitted) is pushed back to January 2023 for the Jones & Cabacoy Veterans Care Center (Virginia Beach) and to May 2023 for the Puller Veterans Care Center (Fauquier County). We regret these delays. We’ll post updates on our care centers page at <https://www.dvs.virginia.gov/veterans-care-centers>.

In addition to the construction of the two new veterans care centers, we continue with phased renovation projects at the Richmond and Roanoke centers. The USDVA State Veterans Homes Grants Program (SVHGP) awards grants to states for the renovation of existing state veterans homes (aka veterans care centers) and the construction of new or replacement SVHs. USDVA SVHGP has awarded federal grants for two projects at each center, matched by state construction bond funds. All four projects are in the design stage.

U.S. Navy Veteran William (Bill) Hewitt joined the DVS leadership team as Director of Research, Evaluation, and Partnerships. Expect to hear much from Bill in the months ahead as we work with you and your organizations on collaborative efforts to serve our veterans and their families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Dan Gade", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Daniel Gade, PhD.

## **ATTACHMENT 5**

### **Proposed JLC Initiatives**



101 N. 14<sup>TH</sup> ST., 17<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR  
RICHMOND VA 23219

*Air Force Association  
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Legion of Valor of the  
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Marine Corps League  
Military Officers Association  
of America  
Military Order of the  
Purple Heart  
Military Order of the  
World Wars  
Navy Mutual Aid Association  
Paralyzed Veterans of  
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Reserve Organization of  
America  
Roanoke Valley Veterans  
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Veterans of Foreign Wars  
Vietnam Veterans of America  
Virginia Army/Air National  
Guard Enlisted  
Association  
Virginia National Guard  
Association  
Women Marines Association  
Wounded Warrior Project*

Approved September 15,  
2022

#### COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

#### **Position Paper** **Virginia Disabled Veterans Real Property Tax Exemption** **Effective Date**

#### **OBJECTIVE:**

To amend the Virginia Disabled Veteran Real Property Tax Exemption to end the arbitrary, capricious, and disparate treatment of Virginia's most disabled veterans.

#### **BACKGROUND:**

The Real Property Tax Exemption, contained in Title 58.1, Chapter 32, Articles 2.3 of the Code of Virginia, exempts from the real property tax the principal place of residence owned either individually or jointly, of those Virginians who, in the line of duty, while serving in the Armed Forces of the United States, were injured to the extent that they were rated by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) as having a 100%, service-connected, permanent, and total disability.

Local jurisdictions, not the State, administer the Real Property Tax Exemption. These jurisdictions administer it disparately throughout Virginia. Consequently, similarly situated disabled veterans are treated differently based on where they live. Specifically, three sources of guidance present three divergent theories of retroactivity.

A 2017 Virginia Attorney General Opinion found a jurisdiction is required to provide a veteran the exemption as far back as the veteran is eligible, but not earlier than January 1, 2011, regardless of when the veteran applies.

#### **DISCUSSION:**

- a. There are 8.7 million Virginia residents. Of these, 713,000 are veterans. Of these, the estimate is 19,000 receive the real property tax exemption. This is the cohort that is adversely impacted. Approximately only 1% of the American population served in our Armed Forces
- b. In the 2022 legislative session, HB 1168 was introduced to amend the real property tax exemption to confirm that the 2017 AG Opinion is the true statement of the law. It passed unanimously in the House of Delegates. The

Senate Committee on Finance and Appropriations continued it to the 2023 legislative session.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Amend the Veteran Real Property Tax law to make explicit that local jurisdictions must provide a veteran or surviving spouse the exemption as far back as the veteran or surviving spouse is eligible, but not earlier than January 1, 2011, regardless of when the veteran or surviving spouse applies.



101 N. 14<sup>TH</sup> ST., 17<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR  
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Paralyzed Veterans of  
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Reserve Organization of  
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Roanoke Valley Veterans  
Council  
Veterans of Foreign Wars  
Vietnam Veterans of America  
Virginia Army/Air National  
Guard Enlisted  
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Virginia National Guard  
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Women Marines Association  
Wounded Warrior Project*

Approved September 15,  
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COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA  
JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF  
VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

**Position Paper**  
**Income Tax Subtraction Removal of Age Requirement**

**OBJECTIVE:**

Amend and reenact § 58.1-322.02 of the Code of Virginia to correct and remove 55-year-old age requirement.

**BACKGROUND:**

Beginning in 2023, Virginia veterans under the age of 55 years old will receive partial exemption from State income taxes of their military pensions, an historic step by the General Assembly and Governor. The objective here is remove the age limitation of 55-years old.

**DISCUSSION:**

- a. In 2022, § 58.1-322.02 of the Code of Virginia was amended by the General Assembly and reenacted to exempt from State income tax recipients of such military benefits that are age 55 or older.
- b. Most Virginia veterans work civilian jobs and otherwise produce taxable income, and persons under 55 years old are most likely will be working in civilian jobs. We ask that Virginia sent the message to the veterans in its population that it leads the Country as veteran friendly.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the Governor and General Assembly correct the 55-year limitation on exemption of military retirement income from state tax.



101 N. 14<sup>TH</sup> ST., 17<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR  
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Vietnam Veterans of America  
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Guard Enlisted  
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Virginia National Guard  
Association  
Women Marines Association  
Wounded Warrior Project

Approved September 15,  
2022

## COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

### Position Paper

### Increase GF Support for State Veterans Cemeteries; Eliminate Spouse Burial Fees

**OBJECTIVE:** To provide an additional \$300,000 (GF) per fiscal year to the Virginia Department of Veterans Services so that the spouse burial fee may be eliminated at Virginia's three state veterans cemeteries.

#### **BACKGROUND:**

- National Cemeteries operated by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), such as the ones in Culpeper and Quantico, are 100% federal funded;
  - The VA does not charge a burial fee for Veterans;
  - The VA does not charge a burial fee for spouses.
- The Virginia Department of Veterans Services (VDVS) operates three state veterans cemeteries – in Amelia, Dublin, and Suffolk.
  - VDVS does not charge a burial fee for Veterans. VDVS receives a one-time partial reimbursement (known as a plot allowance) from the VA that covers a portion of VDVS cemetery operations. The remainder is funded by the General Fund.
  - VDVS charges a \$400 spouse burial fee to support cemetery operations and maintenance. The VA does not provide any funding for spouses buried at state veterans cemeteries.
- Operational funding for Virginia's state veterans cemeteries comes from the VA plot allowance (approximately 45%), the Commonwealth's General Fund (approximately 45%), and the spouse burial fee (approximately 10%).

#### **DISCUSSION:**

- A long standing Veterans benefit provided by the VA is a final resting place for eligible Veterans and spouses in National Cemeteries that have space.
- When the National Cemeteries began to run out of space in the 1970s, the VA established a grant program for the construction of state veterans cemeteries, with a goal of placing a National, State, or Tribal veterans cemetery within 75 miles of 95% of the population. Since 1978, many states have established their own Veteran Cemeteries to ensure that this benefit is available to their Veterans.
- VA grants funded the construction of three state veterans cemeteries in Virginia (Amelia, Dublin, and Suffolk), which are operated by the Virginia Department of Veterans Services. VA has also awarded Virginia several grants for phased expansion.
- Between 700-800 spouses per year are buried at Virginia's state veterans cemeteries. The spouse burial fee provides critical funding that directly supports the operations and maintenance of our cemeteries, including salaries for 42 employees (36 full-time, 6 wage).
- There is a disparity between National Veterans Cemeteries in Virginia (no charge for spouse burials) and Virginia State Veterans Cemeteries (\$400 charge).
- The VDVS budget should be increased by \$300,000 (GF) per fiscal year so that this disparity can be eliminated at Virginia's three state veterans cemeteries.
- Virginia should work with its federal elected officials to extend the VA plot allowance to spouses buried at all state veterans cemeteries nationwide.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the Governor and General Assembly appropriate an additional \$300,000 (GF) to the Virginia Department of Veterans Services so that the spouse burial charge may be eliminated at Virginia State Veterans Cemeteries, and that Virginia work with Congress to secure the funding (in the VA budget) to extend the VA plot allowance to spouses at all state veterans cemeteries nationwide.





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## COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

### Position Paper 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.
- Last 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.
- The Department of Conservation and Recreation listed the fiscal impact of this measure to be approximately 10K.

#### **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.

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



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## COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

### Position Paper

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

#### OBJECTIVE:

To reform the Virginia state law, Tax Relief for Surviving Spouse of a Member of the Armed Forces "Killed in Action" through a Virginia Constitutional Amendment to include died on active duty in the section that addresses surviving spouses of members of the armed forces killed in action.

#### BACKGROUND:

The Virginia Code Title 58.1, Chapter 32, section 58-1-3219.9 species the conditions for exemption from taxes on property of surviving spouses of members of the armed forces killed in action.

The Commonwealth of Virginia also 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. This provision would cover the spouse if the veteran were 100% disabled and subsequently died.

If the military member dies before receiving a 100% rating, the surviving spouse is denied the same benefit. In the 2022 Legislative session, HB 957 was signed by the governor on April 5, 2022, that creates a, voluntary by locality, property tax provision for the above category of surviving spouse.

#### DISCUSSION:

- a. This constitutional amendment will equalize the benefit with the other three categories surviving spouses of those killed in action (by enemy), 100% Disabled Veterans, rated Permanent and Total by the Veterans Administration, and the surviving spouses of the 100% disabled veterans that are currently eligible to receive the property tax relief.
- b. Approximately only 1% of the American population served in our Armed Forces
- c. Through a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request, we have found that the number of service members who died on duty, meaning that their spouse received Servicemen's Group Life Insurance for the last three years was as follows:  
2018 – 40, 2019 – 44, 2020 – 31 In the entire the Commonwealth of Virginia per the Department of Defense statistics show 182 surviving spouses (including surviving spouses of those who were killed in action) (DoD Actuarial Report September 2021).
- d. As of September 30, 2021 the Department of Defense Office of Actuary shows a total of 182 surviving spouses of those both killed in action and died on active duty living in Virginia from all periods of service.
- e. These numbers do not let us know how many of the widowed spouses of the service member owned a Virginia home and/ or moved out of state after the death of their spouse.

RECOMMENDATION: Legislation to be introduced in the General Assembly to amend the constitution to equalize this benefit with those by changing the Code of Virginia to change "Killed in Action" to "died on active duty."



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## COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

### **Position Paper** **Tax Exemption for National Guard**

**OBJECTIVE:** To adjust Virginia's current income tax deduction for National Guard Pay from \$3,000 to \$6,000.

**BACKGROUND:**

1. Virginia exempts the first 3,000 of National Guard pay from State Income Taxes.
2. The state eliminates this deduction once a Soldier reaches Captain (O3 pay grade).

**DISCUSSION:**

1. The current exemption of \$3000 has been in place for two decades.
2. If this benefit were indexed to inflation the amount would now equal \$5,000.
3. We consistently compete with our neighboring states to retain and maintain our National Guard forces. Virginia also competes with the compo 1 (Active Duty) for much of the qualified recruits in the state.
4. The role and requirements for the National Guard have steadily increased in the last 20 years resulting in the Commonwealth's greatest OPTEMPO since the second WW for our National Guard Forces.
5. The original exemption dates back to 1994 which was passed by a Democratic house and senate and signed by Republican Governor George Allen.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the Governor and General Assembly adjust increase the amount of income excluded from State Income Tax from \$3,000 to \$6,000 and increase the pay grade eligibility to LTC (O5 pay grade).