

Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations
Meeting Minutes
July 13, 2023

A meeting of the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (the JLC) was held on July 13, 2023 at 10 a.m. at the Virginia ABC Building 7450 Freight Way, Mechanicsville, Virginia.

Members Present

- Richard Shook, Air Force Association
- Rich Mansfield, Air Force Sergeants 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
- Preston Curry, Paralyzed Veterans of America
- Terence Moore, Reserve Organization of America
- Dan Karnes, Roanoke Valley Veterans Council
- Katherine Martinez, Student Veterans of America
- Rick Raskin, Veterans of Foreign Wars
- George Corbett, Vietnam Veterans of America
- Carl Holcomb, Virginia Army/Air National Guard Enlisted Association
- Kevin Hoffman, Virginia National Guard Association
- Ann Crittenden, Women Marines Association
- Melissa Watts, Board of Veterans Services
- Mike Coleman, Veterans Services Foundation
- Daniel Gade, Commissioner, Department of Veterans Services

Alternate Members attending virtually

- Lisa Gregory, Disabled American Veterans
- Jeremy Villanueva, Disabled American Veterans

Members Absent

- Jack Hilgers, Legion of Valor
- Michelle Ramos Domingue, Navy Mutual Aid Association
- Jose Ramos, Wounded Warrior Project

Alternates Present (not representing their VSO)

- John Cooper, Air Force Sergeants Association
- David Jennings, Marine Corps League
- John Down, Military Officers Association of America
- Joanne Smith, Veterans of Foreign Wars
- Jay Marts, Virginia National guard Association
- Matthew Klym, AMVETS

Commonwealth of Virginia Officials Present

- Jordan Stewart, Assistant Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs
- Steven Combs, Department of Veterans Services (DVS)
- Benjamin King, DVS
- Claudia Flores, DVS
- Ravi Padma, DVS
- Angela Porter, DVS
- Vivian Doobay, DVS
- Glendalynn Glover, DVS
- David Wingfield, VADOC

Guests

- Rich Lehmann, DAV
- Michael H. Schoelwer, American Veterans Vote
- Ralph Hensley, AMVETS
- Matt Ogburn, Verizon
- Diane McRae
- Michael Sopko (attending virtually)

Items included in the Agenda Packet

- Draft Agenda
- Draft Minutes December 15, 2022 meeting
- Board of Veterans Services (BVS) Report to JLC
- Veterans Services Foundation (VSF) Report to JLC
- Department of Veterans Services (DVS) Operations Update

Call to Order

Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (JLC) Chair Denice Williams called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and led the JLC in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Thoughts and meditation

Kevin Hoffman provided thoughts and meditation.

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

The roll was called, and 21 of the 24 Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) represented on the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (the JLC) were recorded as being physically present, therefore a quorum was determined. One VSOs participated electronically as recorded. The three *ex officio* members were recorded as present.

Approval of the Agenda (Attachment 1)

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

Approve December 15, 2022 Meeting Minutes

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

Chair Williams recognized Student Veterans of America as a new VSO member on the JLC and asked the representative, Kathyryn Martinez to introduce herself.

DVS Operational Update (Attachment 2)

Commissioner Daniel Gade provided an operational update and discussed legislative concept developments of the strategic planning working group. The strategic planning working group held a meeting on July 12. Priorities for the group center on the mission to keep veterans and their families in Virginia.

BVS Report (Attachment 3)

Melissa Watts of the Board of Veterans Services (BVS) provided the BVS report. Ms. Watts provided an update on the Point of Contact reports by BVS members.

VSF Report (Attachment 4)

Mr. Mike Coleman of the Veterans Services Foundation (VSF) provided the VSF report and reported the budget for supporting Virginia's veterans.

2024 Initiatives

Interim Legislative Officer, Glenn Yarborough, provided guidelines for JLC preparation leading up to the 2024 General Assembly Session. Mr. Yarborough encouraged members to begin preparations early to include contacting legislators in their respective districts. Mr. Yarborough turned the floor over to VSO representatives with proposed initiatives.

Mr. Aramony presented the proposal to remove the 55-year-old age requirement for the military income tax subtraction.

Mr. Zimmerman discussed a technical amendment to add PHS and NOAA to surviving spouse proposed initiative for real property tax relief.

Rick Raskin introduced a proposal to draft a letter to the General Assembly from the JLC that VSO's should be exempt from regulations of proceeds from gaming.

Mr. Atchison from the Military Order of the Purple Heart introduced the need for standardized training at service dog training facilities.

Mr. Hoffman from the Virginia National Guard Association introduced the need to keep members on State Active Duty orders for up to 180 days for the purposes of emergency response medical protection for Guard members.

Mr. Hoffman also introduced a proposal for a tuition waiver for eligible Virginia National Guard service members to attend a state school in the Commonwealth.

New Business

Benjamin King from the Virginia War Memorial discussed the flag audit in the VMI Hall and asked for JLC volunteer effort to support the audit. He also commented on the Hill of Heroes.

Mr. Cooper and Dr. Angela Porter provided a veteran suicide prevention update. Dr. Porter discussed DVS suicide grant efforts. Mr. Cooper provided members with a copy of the Columbia-Suicide Severity Rating Scale and walked members through this screening sheet and encouraged all members to use the screening form when speaking with veterans. Mr. Cooper and Dr. Porter also provided a video presentation on suicide prevention screening.

Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Chair Williams asked for the nominating committee's report and asked the JLC for any additional nominations. After hearing none, Chair Williams asked for a vote to approve Kevin Hoffman as the new Chair of the JLC. Through a unanimous vote, Kevin Hoffman was elected as the new Chair of the JLC.

The two candidates for Vice Chair, Mr. Monti Zimmerman and Mr. Bill Aramony presented themselves to the JLC for consideration of their nomination. Chair Williams then asked Mr. Zimmerman and Mr. Aramony to leave the room while a vote was taken. A roll call vote was taken for the nomination of Mr. Zimmerman. A second roll call vote was taken for the nomination of Mr. Aramony. Results of the two roll call votes resulted in the election of Mr. Zimmerman as the Vice Chair of the JLC.

MR. Zimmerman presented Chair Williams with a plaque to honor her service as the Chair of the JLC.

Public Comment

Matt Ogburn provided information on the American Connectivity program. Ralph Hensley from the American Legion also provided public comments.

Newly elected Chairman Kevin Hoffman addressed the JLC.

Adjourn

Chairman Hoffman adjourned the meeting and JLC members were invited to tour the warehouse of the Virginia ABC building led by Melissa Watts.

ATTACHMENT 1

Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations

**July 13, 2023
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.**

**Virginia ABC Building Hearing Room
7450 Freight Way, Mechanicsville, Virginia**

DRAFT AGENDA

- I. Opening, Meeting Notes, and Pledge of Allegiance – *Denice Williams, JLC Chair* (10:00 – 10:05)
- II. Opening Thoughts & Meditation, *Kevin Hoffman, JLC Chaplain* (10:05 – 10:08)
- III. Roll call, quorum determination, and introduction of guests – *Denice Williams, JLC Chair* (10:08 – 10:15)
- IV. Approve Agenda – *Denice Williams, JLC Chair* (10:15 – 10:16)
- V. Approve May 9, 2023 meeting minutes – *Denice Williams, JLC Chair* (10:16 – 10:17)
- VI. VDVS Operational Update – *Daniel Gade, VDVS Commissioner* (10:17 -10:30)
- VII. Reports (10:30 – 10:40)
 - a. Board of Veterans Services (BVS) – *Michael Dick, BVS Chairman*
 - b. Veterans Services Foundation (VSF) – *Mike Coleman, VSF*
- VIII. 2024 Legislative Initiatives – *Glenn Yarborough, Interim Legislative Officer* (10:40 – 11:15)
- IX. New Business - *Denice Williams, JLC Chair* (11:15 – 11:55)
 - a. Virginia War Memorial – *Benjamin King*
 - b. Update on Suicide Prevention Efforts – *John R. Cooper*
 - c. Election of Officers, *Denice Williams, JLC Chair*
- X. Public comment period –*JLC Chair* (11:55 – 12:00)
- XI. Closing remarks and prepare for next meeting –*JLC Chair* (12:00)
- XII. Adjourn (12:00)

ATTACHMENT 2 VDVS Operations Update



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA *Department of Veterans Services*

Daniel M. Gade, PhD
Commissioner

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

Department of Veterans Services (DVS) Operations Update for the Joint Leadership Council

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The Virginia Veterans and Family Support (VVFS) team continues to build and launch a new grant program for Suicide Prevention and Opioid Addiction Services (SOS) led by Dr. Angela Porter. The SOS team also hired Danielle Rock as the new Suicide Prevention Coordinator (SPC). As SPC, Danielle will provide training and technical assistance to grantees and broader community stakeholders on topics such as suicide prevention, harm reduction, overdose prevention, lethal means safety etc. The SOS team successfully awarded the first cohort of 18 community grants (\$1.9 million). The team is finalizing an additional 6 community contract awards and is reviewing 5 research grant proposals for higher education institutions.

The VVFS team also added a second Veteran Justice Specialist (VJS), Ryan Morris, in the North region. This is the first region to have two VJS positions to work with local law enforcement, veteran treatment dockets, jails, and prisons.

For VVFS direct services delivery in May, there was a 12% increase in clients from May 2022 (134 new clients compared to 117 in May 2022). The total number of services provided including new and existing clients was higher in May 2023 (314) compared to May 2022 (269). In May 2023, veterans and families needed assistance with resource connections for housing needs (35%), benefits assistance (13%), behavioral health support (12%), homeless assistance (9%), and employment (8%).

Since April 2023, the Virginia Values Veterans (V3) Program, which includes employment and transition services, worked closely with the Virginia Chamber of Commerce to host six Hire Vets Now (HVN) networking events. Events were held at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall, Fort Gregg-Adams, Fort Belvoir, and Joint Base Langley-Eustis. Each event had approximately 80-100 service members and military spouses present to engage over 25 V3 Certified Employers and five resource providers.

all TAP participants. In addition, Benefits is working towards standing up a virtual region. The work has begun with Veteran Service Contact Representatives pulling voicemails and returning phone calls for the busiest offices. Long term goal is to stand up a virtual Artificial Intelligence (AI) phone system and staff at headquarters to answer the calls and subsequent questions. Primary objective is when the veteran arrives at the field office for an appointment, preliminary work has been completed and the field Veteran Services Representatives can focus on the veterans and their appointments.

Since April 2023, the Virginia Values Veterans (V3) Program, which includes employment and transition services, worked closely with the Virginia Chamber of Commerce to host six Hire Vets Now (HVN) networking events. Events were held at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall, Fort Gregg-Adams, Fort Belvoir, and Joint Base Langley-Eustis. Each event had approximately 80-100 service members and military spouses present to engage over 25 V3 Certified Employers and five resource providers.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) awarded DVS two grants, totaling \$3.5M, to add additional columbarium niches at the Amelia and Dublin state veterans cemeteries. Construction is underway on both projects, part of the phased expansion of both cemeteries. We expect final USDVA approval of a \$5.85M grant for a similar project at the Suffolk cemetery later this year.

We are ever closer to the “soft opening” of the Puller Veterans Care Center in Fauquier County and the Jones and Cabacoy Veterans Care Center in Virginia Beach. Please plan on joining us for the openings of those new care centers later this year.

DVS hosted the Commonwealth’s Memorial Day Ceremony at the Virginia War Memorial on May 29. Governor Glenn Youngkin was the keynote speaker, with Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs Craig Crenshaw and Major General Timothy Williams, the Adjutant General of Virginia, also speaking. The ceremony was broadcast live on CBS TV-6 Richmond and also livestreamed on the DVS and Virginia War Memorial Facebook pages.

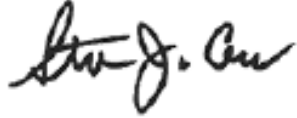
Hundreds attended the Memorial Day Ceremonies at Virginia’s three state veterans cemeteries. Guest speakers at the Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Cemetery in Suffolk were Matthew T. Sullivan, Deputy Under Secretary for Finance and Planning and CFO, National Cemetery Administration and Major General Jerry F. Prochaska (US Army), Deputy Director, Joint Force Development and Design Center, J-7, Joint Staff, Suffolk.

DVS Commissioner Daniel Gade and Colonel Bobby Arnold (US Army, Retired) spoke at the Virginia Veterans Cemetery in Amelia and at the Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery in Dublin, the guest speakers were former Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force Rodney McKinley and former Vietnam War Prisoner of War Major Theodore “Ted” Sienicki (USAF, Retired).

For the fifth consecutive year, the hillsides of the Virginia War Memorial will be awash with the red, white, and blue of twelve thousand American flags during the Memorial’s Hill of Heroes

commemoration, June 23 to July 14. The flags are placed to honor and remember the nearly 12,000 Virginia men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice in military service from World War II to present day and whose names are inscribed on the Memorial's Shrine of Memory.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steven J. Combs". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Steven" and last name "Combs" clearly legible.

Steven J. Combs
Chief Deputy Commissioner

ATTACHMENT 3
Board of Veterans Services (BVS) Report



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

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
BOARD OF VETERANS SERVICES

Michael Dick
Chairman
Tharaya Kent
Vice Chair
Victor Angry
David Ashe
Delegate *Jason Ballard*
Cari Bedell
Senator *John Bell*
Joe R. Campa
Delegate *Mike Cherry*
Mario Flores
Delegate *Buddy Fowler*
Joyce Henderson
James P. Iyman
Carlton Kent
John Lesinski
Senator *Mamie Locke*
Terence E. McKnight
Delegate Kathleen
Murphy
Kathy Owens
Senator *Bryce Reeves*
Melissa Watts
Denise Williams
Chair, Joint
Leadership Council of
Veterans Service
Organizations
Paul Haughton
Chair, Veterans
Services Foundation
Rick St. John
Vice Chair, Virginia
War Memorial
Foundation
Daniel M. Gade, PhD
Commissioner, Virginia
Department of
Veterans Services

REPORT TO THE JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL
July 13, 2023

The Board of Veterans Services (BVS) met on June 22, 2023, at the American Legion Building in Richmond. The Veteran Services Foundation held a meeting in the same location following the BVS meeting, providing an opportunity for members from each Board to meet and learn from one another as we work to support Virginia's veterans and their families.


Commissioner Gade provided an update on DVS operations and, in particular, the strategic planning effort mandated by HB 1759 from the 2023 General Assembly Session. This legislation directed the Commissioner to convene a workgroup to study and develop recommendations for implementing a statewide strategic plan to guide legislation to make Virginia the best state for veterans. The BVS and the JLC are invited to each of the working group meetings as participants in this effort.

We also received Point of Contact (POC) reports during our meeting. Specifically, we received POC reports on the Communications, Behavioral Health and Rehabilitation, and Benefit service lines within the DVS. The three POC reports have been made available to the Strategic Plan Working Group and are posted on the BVS webpage. Other service line POC reports will be reported during the September and December BVS meeting.

The BVS bylaws have been reviewed by Joyce Henderson of the BVS and recommended revisions will be provided to the Board for a planned vote during the September meeting.

The next BVS meeting is scheduled for September 21. We look forward to receiving a report in September on the JLC's 2024 proposed legislative initiatives.

Respectfully submitted,


Michael Dick
Chairman

ATTACHMENT 4 Veterans Services Foundation (VSF) Report



VIRGINIA VETERANS SERVICE FOUNDATION Report to the Joint Leadership Council July 13, 2023

The Virginia Veterans Services Foundation (VSF) Board of Trustees held their quarterly meeting on June 22, 2023, at the American Legion Department Headquarters in Richmond. This meeting was held shortly after the Board of Veterans Services meeting such that members from both Boards could attend both meetings. This is important so that both organizations can better support Virginia's Veterans.

VSF Chair, Paul Haughton welcomed everyone to the meeting and recognized the members from the Board of Veterans Services in attendance. The VSF Board received a briefing on the Fiscal Year 2024 budget and approved with \$768,000 being provide to DVS for the next Fiscal Year starting July 1, 2023. The approved budget was based on input from the Department of Veterans Services Division Directors. Division Directors identified \$1.6 million as the annual need to support Veterans. The budget breakdown is shown below:

- a. Virginia Veterans Care Center - \$45,000
- b. Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center - \$30,000
- c. Jones & Cabacoy Veterans Care Center - \$5,000
- d. Puller Veterans Care Center - \$1,000
- e. Cemeteries - \$12,000 divided evenly among the three cemeteries
- f. Virginia Veteran and Family Support - \$500,000
- g. Virginia Education, Transition & Employment - \$115,000
- h. Veterans Center Petersburg - \$60,000

The Foundation voted to approve a new slate of officers with Paul Haughton, Chair; Brad Williamson, First Vice-Chair; and Paula Buckley, Second Vice-Chair. The Board recognized Dr. Jack Lanier for his service as he completes his second term and cannot be reappointed. However, Dr. Lanier has agreed to continue to serve as an appointed Advisor to the Board.

Financially the VSF is on sound footing with a balance of \$3.3 million as of May 31, 2023. However, of this amount only \$1.0 million is unrestricted which provides the VSF Board flexibility as to which programs the funds can be used. Donations from July 1, 2022, through May 31, 2023, were \$666,292. This is short of what is provided to support Veterans programs, and significantly short of the identified need.

The next VSF Board of Trustees meeting is scheduled for September 2023, at a location to be determined.

Respectfully Submitted,
Paul Haughton
Chairman
Virginia Veterans Services Foundation