

VETERAN STRATEGIC PLAN WORKGROUP PRIORITIES

Nov 20, 2023 _____



PROJECT OVERVIEW – HB1759

Workgroup Responsibilities:

1. Develop a statewide strategic plan to guide legislation and budget decisions for the next five years
2. Determine and identify key performance indicators, quantifiable factors that can be compared with those of other states in determining quality of life for veterans
3. Assess Virginia's current key performance indicators against those of other states
4. Identify legislative and budgetary recommendations
5. Create a scorecard of Virginia's key performance indicators

CHAPTER 407

An Act to direct the Commissioner of the Department of Veterans Services to convene a work group to study and develop recommendations for implementing a statewide strategic plan to make Virginia the best state for veterans; report.

[H 1759]

Approved March 23, 2023

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. § 1. That the Commissioner of the Department of Veterans Services shall convene a work group to study and develop recommendations for implementing a statewide strategic plan to make Virginia the best state for veterans. The work group shall consist of 10 members to be appointed as follows: the Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs or his designee; the Commissioner of the Department of Veterans Services or his designee; the Adjutant General of the Virginia National Guard or his designee; one member from the Board of Veterans Services; one additional member from the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations; two current members of the General Assembly who previously served as members of the General Assembly Military and Veterans Caucus, one to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Delegates and one to be appointed by the Chair of the Senate Committee on Rules; two members who previously served as officers of the General Assembly Military and Veterans Caucus, one to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Delegates and one to be appointed by the Chair of the Senate Committee on Rules; and one member of a veterans organization focused on issues related to women veterans.

The responsibilities of the work group shall include (i) developing a statewide strategic plan that will guide legislation and budget decisions for the next five years; (ii) determining and identifying key performance indicators, quantifiable factors that can be compared with those of other states in determining quality of life for veterans in such states; (iii) assessing Virginia's current key performance indicators against those of other states; (iv) identifying legislative and budgetary recommendations; and (v) creating a scorecard of Virginia's key performance indicators to be presented to the General Assembly Military and Veterans Caucus at the first meeting of each regular session. The Commissioner of the Department of Veterans Services or his designee shall, as applicable, serve as chairman of the work group. As chairman, he shall be responsible for convening meetings, taking and publishing minutes, and reporting the findings and recommendations of the work group in a report to the Governor and the Chairmen of the House Committee on General Laws and the Senate Committee on General Laws and Technology. The work group shall complete its meetings by November 30, 2023 and submit such report by the first day of the 2024 regular session.



Vision Statement



Make Virginia the best state for service members, veterans, and their families to live, work, lead, and raise a family

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Goals

Goal 1: Increase labor force participation rate for transitioning service members, veterans, and their families to maximize economic outcomes.

Goal 2: Make Virginia the easiest state for service members, veterans, and their families to transition, reskill, and upskill.

Goal 3: Attract more transitioning service members, veterans, and their families to move to Virginia through tangible economic incentives

Goal 4: Honor veterans' service, sacrifice, and legacy by promoting and providing high-quality programs and services.

Goal 5: Reduce obstacles to reliable and affordable housing options for transitioning service members, veterans, and their families.

Goal 6: Reduce the rate of homelessness for veterans and their families in Virginia.



Members of HB1759 Strategic Planning Group

Chairman:	Daniel Gade, Commissioner
Adjutant General Designee:	MAJ Andrew Czaplicki, VAANG
JLC Designee:	MAJ Kevin Hoffman
House of Delegates:	Delegate David Reid Delegate Mike Cherry
Senate of Virginia:	Senator Bryce Reeves Senator John Bell
Board of Veterans Services:	Mario Flores
Women Veterans Org.:	Phyllis Wilson
Secretary of VADA Designee:	Jordan Stewart

Various DVS Experts also comprised the "Staff Support Group"

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**Legislative and
Budget
Recommendations**

Year 1



Goal 1: Increase labor force participation rate for transitioning service members, veterans, and their families to maximize economic outcomes.

Action: General Assembly amends the budget appropriation for Veterans Benefit Services to expand the Virginia Values Veterans (V3) grant program eligibility to include veterans and military spouse hires in businesses and nonprofit organizations with 300 or fewer employees and local governments of any size.

- Expanding eligibility to military spouses
 - V3 program currently assists military spouses but only veterans qualify for the grant
- Expanding eligibility to nonprofits
 - Allows nonprofits to financially benefit from focused efforts to hire and retain veterans, current language excludes them
- Expanding eligibility to local governments at any size
 - Opens local governments to financially benefit from hiring and retaining veterans for public safety and other municipal services, current language excludes them



Goal 1: Increase labor force participation rate for transitioning service members, veterans, and their families to maximize economic outcomes.

Action: General Assembly increases the budget appropriation for Veterans Benefit Services to \$500,000 for V3 grant disbursement.

- DVS consistently reaches the \$100,000 limit for the grant and is unable to offer the grant after that point.
- Expanding eligibility for the group mentioned previously will lead to increased usage of the grant funds, thus depleting the current appropriation more quickly.

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Goal 1: Increase labor force participation rate for transitioning service members, veterans, and their families to maximize economic outcomes.

Action: General Assembly authorizes the establishment of the Military and Veterans Legislative Fellowship Program.

- Create a three-year pilot fellowship program for veterans transitioning into the civilian workforce that wish to gain experience in state policy work.
- Objectives
 - Encourage veterans to choose Virginia when they leave service.
 - Address the shortage of skilled workers choosing state government roles.
 - Provide the experience and education for veterans to become state government leaders. (Available to undergraduate and graduate students.)




Goal 2: Make Virginia the easiest state for service members, veterans, and their families to transition, reskill, and upskill.

Action: General Assembly authorizes Virginia to join additional reciprocal credentialing compacts, specifically teacher mobility, cosmetology, physician assistant, dentist and dental hygienist, massage therapists, social work, and any other compacts as they become available.

- This action acknowledges that military spouses often have difficulty transferring professional credentials among states.
- Joining additional compacts can create a easier transition for military spouses to engage in the workforce.
- The list above contains all current compacts that Virginia has not yet joined.





Goal 3: Attract more transitioning service members, veterans, and their families to move to Virginia through tangible economic incentives.

Action: General Assembly approves a Virginia constitutional amendment to standardize property tax waivers for surviving spouses of service members who died in the line of duty.

- Support passing for a second time without changes



Goal 3: Attract more transitioning service members, veterans, and their families to move to Virginia through tangible economic incentives.

Action: General Assembly authorizes the establishment of a Veteran Transition Tax Credit Program to incentivize transitioning service members to move to Virginia at the end of their active-duty service, to include those who join the Virginia Army or Air National Guard and the Virginia-based Reserve Components.

- This would serve as a pull factor for veterans considering a move to Virginia.
- Offering a tax incentive in conjunction with other types of incentives in this plan, e.g. assistance finding employment and pursuing higher education, would help to address more challenges faced by veterans and would strengthen many of Virginia's pull factors for veterans.



Goal 4: Honor veterans' service, sacrifice, and legacy by promoting and providing high-quality programs and services.

Action: General Assembly approves a budget increase for salaries for Veteran Service Representatives (VSRs) to support the retention of VSRs.

- One key discussion point in the workgroup centered on how to best support DVS to provide high-quality services.
- VSR positions have experienced turnover and loss due to pay competitiveness with the private sector.
- Increasing salaries can lead to greater retention, less time in training new hires, and more effective services with well trained consistent VSRs.



Goal 4: Honor veterans' service, sacrifice, and legacy by promoting and providing high-quality programs and services.

Actions: General Assembly directs the Office of Data Governance and Analytics to create and execute a multi-agency data-sharing agreement to share veteran-specific data with DVS in order to support data-informed outreach plans for veterans.

- A recurring theme in workgroup discussions was a need for DVS to have access to veteran-specific data in order to conduct outreach to veterans throughout the commonwealth.
- Directing the establishment of a multi-agency data-sharing agreement would allow DVS to receive the information they need to efficiently use their outreach resources to meet the needs specific subsets of veterans.
- Possible agencies for this agreement are: DOE, DMAS, DOC, DSS, VEC, SBSD, SCHEV, Taxation, SCC



Goal 4: Honor veterans' service, sacrifice, and legacy by promoting and providing high-quality programs and services.

Action: General Assembly approves a DVS budget request for resources for veteran outreach.

- DVS staff shared that many service members, veterans, and their families are not aware of programs and benefits that are available to them.
- Coupled with the multi-agency data-sharing agreement, the budget request for outreach can have a significant impact on promotion and awareness of DVS services.
- Better promotion of DVS programs to transitioning service members and their families could be a pull factor to choosing to stay or move to Virginia.



Goal 5: Reduce obstacles to reliable and affordable housing options for transitioning service members, veterans, and their families.

Action: General Assembly authorizes the establishment of a Veteran First Time Homebuyer Tax Credit Program in which a \$5,000 tax credit is available to military veterans who for the first time purchase a primary home in Virginia.

- This is specifically intended to incentivize homeownership among veteran families and could influence a family transitioning out of the service to stay in or move to Virginia.
- Over 20 states have created veteran specific down payment assistance programs to promote the recruitment and retention of veterans.
- Of these states, only Utah currently offers a first-time home buyer grant to recently separated veterans (\$2,500). Other states emphasize that veterans need not be first-time home buyers.





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Key

- ★ Outperforming All
- ▲ Improvement Needed

Virginia
Border State
Nonborder State



Key Performance Indicator*	Virginia	Kentucky	Maryland	North Carolina	Tennessee	West Virginia	Florida	Texas
Veterans as % of adult population	10.2% ★	7.2%	7.4%	8.0%	8.0%	8.3%	8.2%	6.7%
Veteran Labor Force Participation Rate	59.7% ★	46.9%	55.3%	44.1%	45.7%	46.4%	44.2%	57.0%
% of Veterans Living Above the Poverty Line	95.1% ★	91.5%	95.0%	92.8%	92.4%	91.3%	92.8%	93.4%
Number of Interstate Licensure Compacts Joined	7 ▲	9 ★	7	6	9 ★	8	4	5
Veteran Homeownership Rates	77.6% ▲	77.6%	79.0%	77.9%	80.4%	82.8% ★	80.1%	74.9%
% of Veterans Experiencing Housing Problems**	14.5% ▲	13.4%	15.1%	15.0%	13.2%	10.4% ★	16.9%	16.0%
% of Veterans Experiencing Homelessness	0.06% ★	0.13%	0.09%	0.11%	0.13%	0.10%	0.16%	0.12%

*Datasources: Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, Housing Assistance Council, National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs

**Includes problems of quality, crowding, or cost

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Key

✓	Yes	Virginia
✗	No	Border State
		Nonborder State



Key Performance Indicator	Virginia	Kentucky	Maryland	North Carolina	Tennessee	West Virginia	Florida	Texas
Veteran Dependent Education Benefit	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Veteran gets "Resident" Tuition Rate	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Military Retirement Pay Exemption from State Income Tax	First \$40,000 covered	First \$38,775 covered	\$5K at retirement, \$15K at age 55	Total	Total	Total	No state income tax for any resident	No state income tax for any resident
Veteran Spouse and Dependent Burial at No Cost	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	No State Veteran Cemeteries	✓
National Guard & Reserve (No Active Duty) Eligible for Burial	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	No State Veteran Cemeteries	✗

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