



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

101 N. 14TH ST., 17TH FLOOR
RICHMOND VA 23219

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Vietnam Veterans of America
Virginia Army/Air National
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Virginia National Guard
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Women Marines Association
Wounded Warrior Project*

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JLC POC
Jay Marts
540-550-3339
marts.VNGA@gmail.com

JLC Initiative 2025-03 **Virginia National Guard Tuition**

OBJECTIVE: Transition the Virginia National Guard State Tuition Assistance Program (STAP) from its current reimbursement model back to an upfront payment model.

BACKGROUND:

1. The Virginia National State Tuition Assistance Program (STAP) is a long standing benefit for the National Guard Members which provides tuition assistance for members of the Virginia National Guard.
2. In 2021 the STAP program shifted to a reimbursement model, leading to confusion and frustration as substantial costs were transferred to service members, requiring them to pay upfront and seek reimbursement at the end of the semester.

DISCUSSION:

1. The National Guard performs a critical and essential role in both service to the Commonwealth and to the Nation.
2. Virginia competes with neighboring states to attract and retain talented individuals in its National Guard.
3. The competitive landscape also includes civilian employers, many of whom offer substantial educational assistance benefits, making it imperative for the Virginia National Guard to provide equally competitive incentives.
4. The National Guard is an exceptional net-positive contributor to the Commonwealth, leveraging a 26-to-1 federal-to-state dollar ratio. Every state dollar allocated to the Guard results in a 26X return in federal funds, underscoring the Guard's significant economic impact on the state.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Governor and General Assembly revert the STAP program to an upfront payment model, eliminating the current reimbursement requirement and restoring the program's effectiveness as a key benefit for Virginia National Guard members.