

Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations
Meeting Minutes
June 27, 2024

A meeting of the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (the JLC) was held on June 27, 2024 at 10 a.m. at the Virginia War Memorial.

Members Present

1. Richard Shook, Air Force Association
2. Rich Mansfield, Air Force Sergeants Association
3. William Aramony, American Legion
4. Glenn Yarborough, Association of the United States Army
5. Denice Williams, Disabled American Veterans
6. Thad Jones, Fifth Baptist Church Veterans Ministry
7. Sha'ron D. Martin, Fleet Reserve Association
8. Lance Leshner, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America
9. Jack Hilgers, Legion of Valor
10. Monti Zimmerman, Military Officers Association of America
11. Mark Atchison, Military Order of the Purple Heart
12. Vernon Peters, Military Order of the World Wars
13. Daniel Cortez, National Vet Court Alliance
14. Michelle Ramos Domingue, Navy Mutual Aid Association
15. Preston Curry, Paralyzed Veterans of America
16. Terrence Moore, Reserve Association of America
17. Katherine Martinez, Student Veterans of America
18. Rick Raskin, Veterans of Foreign Wars
19. George Corbett, Vietnam Veterans of America
20. Carl Holcomb, Virginia Army/Air National Guard Enlisted Association
21. Kevin Hoffman, Virginia National Guard Association
22. Scott Davidson, representing the Board of Veterans Services
23. Kayla Arestivo, representing the Virginia Veterans Services Foundation
24. Chuck Zingler, Commissioner, Department of Veterans Services

Members Absent

1. John Clickener, Marine Corps League
2. Ann Crittenden, Women Marines Association
3. Jose Ramos, Wounded Warrior Project

Alternate Members attending, representing their VSO

1. David Jennings, Marine Corps League
2. Patricia Fitzgerald, Women Marines Association
3. Brent Reiffer, Wounded Warrior Project

Alternates Present, not representing their VSO

1. John Cooper, Air Force Sergeants Association
2. Bill Feasanmyer, American Legion
3. Lisa Gregory, Disabled American Veterans
4. Elaine Reed, Fifth Baptist Church Veterans Ministry
5. John Down, Military Officers Association of America
6. David Sitler, Reserve Association of America

Commonwealth of Virginia Officials Present

1. Jordan Stewart, Deputy Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs
2. Joyce Reed, Deputy Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs
3. Corey Fraser, Office of the Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs
4. Monique Brabham, Department of Veterans Services (DVS)
5. Tramaine Carroll-Payne, DVS
6. Steven Combs, DVS
7. Michele Crone, DVS
8. Montwrace Cunningham, DVS (Zoom)
9. Kendra Ellison, DVS
10. Donna Harrison, DVS
11. Eric Johnson, DVS
12. Patrice Jones, DVS (Zoom)
13. Ravi Padma, DVS
14. Angela Porter, DVS
15. Tiffany Woody-Wiggins, DVS
16. Darius McKenney, Virginia Veterans Services Foundation

Guests

1. Ian Berry, Monumental Honor
2. Caitlin Goodale-Porter
3. Mackenzie Heidelberg, Office of Representative Spanberger
4. Robert Pools, veteran
5. Robert Pryor, Student Veterans of America, Office of Representative McClellan (Zoom)
6. Michael Sopko, veteran (Zoom)

Items included in the Agenda Packet

- Draft Agenda
- Draft Minutes of the March 21, 2024 meeting
- Draft Minutes of the May 27, 2024 meeting
- Virginia Department of Veterans Services Update for the JLC
- Board of Veterans Services report to the JLC
- Virginia Veterans Services Foundation report to the JLC
- JLC Statement on the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program
- JLC 2024 Work Plan

Item I. Opening and Pledge of Allegiance

Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (JLC) Chair Kevin Hoffman called the meeting to order at 10. a.m. Vice Chairman Monti Zimmerman led the JLC in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Item II. Opening thoughts and meditation

JLC Chaplain Mark Atchison provided thoughts and meditation.

Item III. Roll Call, Quorum Determination, and Introduction of Guests

The roll was called, and 24 of the 24 Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) represented on the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (the JLC) were recorded as being present, therefore a quorum was determined. The Board of Veterans Services, Veterans Services Foundation, and the Department of Veterans Services were recorded as present.

The names of the state officials and guests who were present are listed above.

Item IV. Approve Agenda

Mr. Mark Atchison made a **motion, seconded** by Mr. Bill Aramony, to approve the meeting agenda as presented. The motion carried by unanimous assent. The approved agenda is attached.

Item V. Approve March 21, 2024 and May 27, 2024 meeting minutes

Mr. Daniel Cortez made a **motion, seconded** by Ms. Katherine Martinez, to approve the minutes of the March 21 and May 27 meetings as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

Item VI. VDVS Operational Update

DVS Commissioner Chuck Zingler delivered the Virginia Department of Veterans Services (VDVS) Operational Update. NOTE: though this was Item VI. on the agenda, Commissioner Zingler delivered the report after Item VIII.

Item VII. Reports

- a. Mr. Scott Davidson, representing the Board of Veterans Services (BVS), delivered the BVS report.
- b. Ms. Kayla Arestivo, representing the Virginia Veterans Services Foundation (VVSF), delivered the VVSF report.
- c. Mr. Monti Zimmerman and Ms. Katherine Martinez gave an update on the Preserving VMSDEP Task Force.

Item VIII. 2025 Legislative Initiatives

JLC Legislative Officer Glenn Yarborough reviewed the process that the JLC would follow for reviewing, adopting, and prioritizing JLC Initiative for the 2025 General Assembly session. Proposals are due to him by July 31, 2025 and will be considered at the September 19 meeting.

Item IX. New Business

- a. Election of Chair and Vice Chair. Mr. Bill Aramony was nominated for the position of JLC Chair. There were no further nominations. Mr. Aramony was elected Chair by unanimous consent. Ms. Katherine Martinez was nominated for the position of JLC Vice Chair. There were no further nominations. Ms. Martinez was elected Vice Chair by unanimous consent
- b. Good of the Order Reports. Chair Kevin Hoffman presented recognition plaques to Monti Zimmerman, Denice Williams, Preston Curry, and Jack Hilgers.

Item X. Public Comment

Mr. John Cooper praised the work done by the VDVS Suicide Prevention and Opioid Addiction Services (SOS) program and recognized SOS Director Angela Porter for her leadership. Mr. Michael Sopko spoke about the repeal of retroactivity of the disabled veteran real estate tax exemption.

Item XI. Adjourn

Chair Hoffman adjourned the meeting at 12 p.m. and handed the gavel to new JLC Chair Bill Aramony.

APPROVED AGENDA

Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations

June 27, 2024

10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Virginia War Memorial

621 S. Belvidere Street, Richmond

- I. Opening, Meeting Notes, and Pledge of Allegiance – *Kevin Hoffman, JLC Chair* (10:00 – 10:05)
- II. Opening Thoughts & Meditation, *Mark Atchison, JLC Chaplain* (10:05 – 10:08)
- III. Roll call, quorum determination, and introduction of guests – *Kevin Hoffman, JLC Chair* (10:08 – 10:15)
- IV. Approve Agenda – *Kevin Hoffman, JLC Chair* (10:15 – 10:16)
- V. Approve March 21, 2024 and May 27, 2024 meeting minutes – *Kevin Hoffman, JLC Chair* (10:16 – 10:17)
- VI. VDVS Operational Update – *Chuck Zingler, VDVS Commissioner* (10:17 -10:32)
- VII. Reports (10:32 – 11:00)
 - a. Board of Veterans Services (BVS) – *Carl Bedell, BVS Chairman*
 - b. Virginia Veterans Services Foundation (VSF) – *Brad Williamson, VVSF Chairman*
 - c. Preserving VMSDEP Task Force – *Monti Zimmerman and Katherine Martinez*
- VIII. 2025 Legislative Initiatives – *Glenn Yarborough, Legislative Officer* (11:00 – 11:30)
- IX. New Business - *Kevin Hoffman, JLC Chair* (11:30 – 11:45)
 - a. Election of Chair and Vice Chair for 2024-2025, *Kevin Hoffman, JLC Chair*
 - b. “Good of the Order” reports – *JLC members*
- X. Public comment period – *Kevin Hoffman, JLC Chair* (11:45 – 11:55)
- XI. Closing remarks and prepare for next meeting – *new JLC Chair* (11:55 – 12:00)
- XII. Adjourn (12:00)



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Department of Veterans Services

Charles M. Zingler
Commissioner

Telephone: (804) 786-0220
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Virginia Department of Veterans Services Update for the Joint Leadership Council June 27, 2024

Ladies & Gentlemen,

I am grateful for the past five months working with the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (the JLC). It has been a strong start, and we look forward to continuing to grow.

Leadership, consistently strong communication, being prepared and transparent, and demonstrating a strong interest in and commitment to what we're trying to do and understanding our priorities. It's been a model for coordinated action. Thank you.

The Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP) has been much in the news this past month since the approval of the 2024-2026 Appropriation Act on May 13. Governor Youngkin is committed to getting this right for our families. He is leading a strong response through the "Preserving VMSDEP Task Force," which held its first meeting on June 10. I am proud of the family members and veterans response – for sharing their stories of service, sacrifice, and loss; their passion; their heartache; what VMSDEP means to them; and the dreams and goals it is enabling them to achieve – the families and veterans are what this is all about, and they have made a huge difference in all of this.

The Preserving VMSDEP Task Force still has much to do, guided by a commitment to transparency. Next steps including driving working towards better facts and data to arrive on a common understanding that we all can use to make projections. This shared effort will help us have better "fact based" understanding of such items as dependent eligibility year-by-year, future program costs, etc.

A guiding principle of the Task Force is to ensure that the voices our families/survivors and our veterans is heard – and that they continue to be engaged with the Task Force, whether serving as members or attending public meetings. The Task Force will also work to reconcile difference views expressed by family members/veterans, educators, General Assembly members, and others as to whether VMSDEP is an "earned benefit" or an "entitlement."

Governor Youngkin is committed working with the General Assembly to repeal/reverse the changes to VMSDEP. The Task Force is developing its timeline to develop/propose options to preserve and sustain

VMSDEP, which will be presented in advance of the 2025 General Assembly session.

DVS is connected to only a fraction of our service members, veterans, and their families (SMVF). The new Virginia Veterans Network (VVN) will change that, allowing our SMVF population to connect to:

- Thousands of vet-friendly businesses, healthcare providers, and services;
- Programs that honor our history, Servicemen and Women;
- Veteran directed community programs across the Commonwealth;
- Podcasts that explain our programs how you can leverage them for your benefit; and
- Upcoming events at our memorials, cemeteries, and museums.

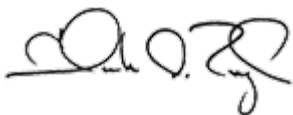
We want our SMVF to know specifics on the new services we are working on, and the new laws and policies our Governor and our General Assembly are working to help our entire military and veteran community. Registering in this new portal will give us the opportunity to do just that while connecting our SMVF to additional statewide resources.

The VVN is on track for delivery of the next phase on November 11. We are working to make VVN a “program of record” with a specific budget line in the FY26 budget for dollars, people, sustainment costs, and continual improvement.

We are using the Strategic Plan developed last year is the “North Star” under this Administration – we are working on budget and legislative recommendations for the 2025 Session to operationalize the goals and objectives outlined in the plan.

My commitment to you is that we will work every day to serve our SMVF. We will listen to understand them and their experience, and especially their frustrations. We will listen to them to measure our successes, but also our areas for improvement. For those who have not been served well, we will work to re-earn their trust. And we will never fail to give our best.

Thank you for your significant service to our Nation and our Commonwealth. I look forward to working with you to serve our service members, veterans, and their families.



Charles (Chuck) Zingler
Commissioner



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA BOARD OF VETERANS SERVICES

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

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Terence McKnight
Matthew Miller
Senator Russet Perry
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Kevin Hoffman,
Chair, Joint
Leadership Council of
Veterans Service
Organizations
Brad Williamson,
Chair, Veterans
Services Foundation
Rick St. John
Chair, Virginia War
Memorial
Foundation
Charles Zingler,
Commissioner, Virginia
Department of
Veterans Services*

REPORT TO THE JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL June 27, 2024

The Board of Veterans Services (BVS) met on May 3 via Zoom and on June 20 at the Virginia War Memorial.

The BVS welcomed new legislative members Senator Jennifer Carroll Foy, Senator Tara Durant, Senator Russet Perry, Delegate Michael Feggans, Delegate Jackie Glass, and Delegate Joshua Thomas. They succeed Senator John Bell, Senator Mamie Locke, Senator Bryce Reeves, Delegate Mike Cherry, Delegate Buddy Fowler, and Delegate Kathleen Murphy – we thank them for their service on the Board and to Virginia’s veterans and family members.

At the May 3 meeting, the BVS reviewed the BVS workgroup process. Soon, the BVS will form workgroups – in essences, mini task forces – to work closely with the Department of Veterans Services (DVS) to operationalize the DVS Strategic Plan and prepare budget and legislative recommendation for the 2025 General Assembly Session. The Board also received a financial process briefing from the Virginia Veterans Services Foundation (VVSF), including how the VVSF works with DVS to prioritize funding requirements, allocate funds to provide supplemental support to DVS programs and services, and set fundraising priorities for the year ahead.

Because we have such a diverse portfolio of duties and responsibilities, BVS members are assigned as “Points of Contact (POCs) for DVS programs and services. BVS POCs serve as “subject matter experts” on various topics. We began our 2024 round of POC reports at the June 20 meeting, and we’ll have more at upcoming meetings. I encourage you to visit the BVS webpage to read current and past POC reports.

June 20 was Michael Dick’s last as a BVS member (term limited) and as Chairman. We thank him for his dedicated service to and leadership of the Board. I was elected BVS Chairman and Scott Davidson the Vice Chairman for the 2024-2025. We thank the JLC for their support of and advocacy for our veterans and families, are excited to learn about your initiatives for the 2025 Session, and look forward to our continued partnership in service to veterans and their families.

Respectfully submitted,

Carl Bedell
Chairman



VIRGINIA VETERANS SERVICE FOUNDATION

Report to the Joint Leadership Council

June 27th, 2024

To Mr. Chairman and the Joint Leadership Council,

The Virginia Veterans Services Foundation (VSF) Board of Trustees held their quarterly meeting on June 13th, 2024 at the Virginia War Memorial in Richmond, Virginia.

We are enthused to announced there have been four new appointees to the Board: Ms. Shannon Spencer-Watson, Mr. Omari Faulkner, Mr. Joel Griffin, and Ms. Brandy Jones. All four of our new Trustees have very accomplished backgrounds and each possesses a passion for supporting our veteran community. We are proud to have them join the Foundation's Board!

The Foundation's focus in this past quarter was on FY25 budget planning, fundraising campaign creation, marketing rebranding, and corporate donor engagement.

In April DVS Commissioner Zingler, along with the Directors, briefed the VSF board for upcoming FY25 financial requests. From there, the VSF finance committee created a proposed budget and took it to the Board to vote upon in the June meeting. From the approved budget, the VSF staff is working to plan campaigns that could raise funds for the prioritized programs/items.

The Foundation continues its rebranding efforts with work on copyrighting a new logo, as well as developing a brand-new website that can better explain the mission, promote fundraising events, and accept online donations.

Lastly, the VSF team and Board of Trustees have been collaborating to identify potential key corporate sponsors. Our donor database continues to expand, and our fundraising strategy is being implemented accordingly. Financially, the Foundation is working to build stronger momentum in our fundraiser initiatives. This past fiscal year's revenue was around \$260k.

During the Foundation's June 13th meeting, the Finance Committee recommended approving the distribution of the \$850,000 to DVS. The Board voted in favor of the distribution as well as in favor of the below recommendations:

- The Finance Committee recommended seeking \$1,402,200 in additional appropriation from the Department of Planning and Budget that will be used for one time funding requests.
- The Finance Committee recommended splitting the cost of the VVN Network with DVS 50/50.
- Lastly, The Finance Committee recommended that items listed under the cemeteries; the three care centers (Sitter-Barfoot, Puller and Jones & Cabacoy); and VETE Laptops will only be funded if the Foundation can raise those funds dedicated for those programs.

The next VSF Board of Trustees meeting is scheduled for September 12th, 2024, at the Virginia War Memorial from 10:00 AM -1:00 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kayla Arestivo
Executive Director
Virginia Veterans Services Foundation



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

101 N. 14TH STREET, 17TH FL.
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*Air Force Association
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Fifth Baptist Veterans
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National Vet Court Alliance
Navy Mutual Aid Association
Paralyzed Veterans of
America
Reserve Organization of
America
Roanoke Valley Veterans
Council
Student Veterans of America
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*

Statement on the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP)

May 29, 2024

The Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (the JLC) met on May 29, 2024.

The JLC members voted unanimously to request that the Governor and General Assembly call a special session to postpone the upcoming changes to the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP) pending study of the premises for the changes and their impact.

Much of the deliberation for these changes occurred without public input or dialogue. This issue is too important to decide behind closed doors.

Executive Directive Seven established a taskforce to review the changes and to help minimize the impact on military and veteran families.

Given the significant impact on our military families, it is crucial that we take the time to reassess these changes thoroughly.

We must act before July 1, 2024 to mitigate the impact on this year's students.

JLC 2024 Work Plan

2024 General Assembly (10 Jan – 28 Feb 2024)

- Attend JLC Day ICW **JLC Meeting 1** (VFW Post 9808 Link-Up)
- Attend Virginia National Guard Reception 17JAN (Optional)
- Attend GAMVC Reception ICW JLC Meeting (Date TBD, Optional)
- Attend GAMVC meeting every Wednesday at 0800 starting 3rd Wednesday
- Implement duty roster to provide coverage during the entire session

First Quarter Meeting (21 March 2024)

- Conduct AAR of 2024 General Assembly actions
- Call for potential 2025 legislation.
- Report of the Constitution and By-Laws Review Committee
- Nominating Committee requests candidates for Chair & Vice Chair

April – June

- Identify potential initiatives
- Research impacts from previous session
- Submit draft proposals for review
- 30 days out – 2025 potential initiatives distributed
- VSOs socialize with their members for feedback and suggestions

Second Quarter Meeting (27 June 2024)

- JLC Sponsors present to the body
- Initiatives are initially accepted or rejected to move forward
- Elections for Chair and Vice-Chair

July – August

- Updated position papers for all 2025 initiatives sent to JLC members and posted on JLC webpage
- JLC Chair submits JLC 2025 Initiatives to VDVS Commissioner

Third Quarter Meeting (19 September 2024)

- Adopt 2025 Initiatives
- Approve Appointed Officers for 2024 - 2025
- Discuss plan for engagement with Executive and Legislative branch officials prior to and during 2025 General Assembly session

November – December

- Distribute list of legislators (and legislators-elect) to JLC members with “contact assignments” for each JLC member to contact 5-7 legislators or legislators-elect about the JLC and its 2025 Initiatives
- Sponsors find and confirm patrons for JLC 2025 initiatives
- Hold VSO legislative forums; participate in legislators’ forums/town halls
- NLT November 30: JLC Chair submits Annual Report to VDVS Commissioner and Board of Veterans Services

Fourth Quarter Meeting (On/around December 12, 2024)

- Review Governor’s Proposed Budget
- Receive DVS Agency proposed budget and legislation
- Review and approve any additional 2025 initiatives
- Review list of potential patrons
- Brief election results and impacts