

General Assembly Report – Veterans

It has been the longstanding priority of the House of Delegates to make sure that Virginia remains the most veteran friendly state in the nation. Virginia is home to nearly 800,000 heroes. We are grateful for the dedication and sacrifice they make on behalf of our commonwealth and our country. As the 2015 General Assembly wraps up, I want to provide an update on the issues you may find important to you.

This year, the House of Delegates made it a priority to provide funding for two new veterans care centers – one in Hampton Roads and one in Northern Virginia. Veterans care centers are state of the art, long-term nursing facilities that provide quality care for our servicemen and women. Despite having the seventh highest population of veterans in the nation, Virginia only has two of these care centers. That ranks us 49th in the ratio of beds available to veterans.

The House of Delegates passed two bills to provide the state's share of funding (over \$66 million) to build these facilities. We are on a waiting list for the federal share, but are working closely with the congressional delegation to make these facilities a federal priority.

There have been 32 Bills and 9 Budget Amendments submitted in the House showing strong support for veterans. We are considering bills to expand the Virginia Values Veterans (V3) Program and to clarify the language on the real estate tax exemption to help un-remarried spouses of heroes killed in action.

In addition, The House of Delegates is also working to pass legislation to expand opportunities for returning veterans. The House budget will include additional funding to provide veterans with more career opportunities. HB2354 will make sure veterans can receive the appropriate academic credit for their military training. These are important steps that I am proud to support.

Attached is a list of significant veterans and military-related legislation I fully support.

HB 1275 Hampton Roads Veterans Care Center project. (Patron: Cox, R-66, Co-Patron: LaRock, R-33) Provides for funding of the Hampton Roads Veterans Care Center project through an allocation of the proceeds of \$300 million of Virginia Public Building Authority bonds, which were authorized pursuant to Chapter 1 of the Acts of Assembly of 2014, Special Session I. The bill provides that none of the proceeds of the \$300 million of authorized bonds may be used for any purpose until the state share of the funding requirements of the Hampton Roads Veterans Care Center project and the Northern Virginia Veterans Care Center project have been met in full through an allocation of the proceeds of such bonds. The bill also appropriates \$60.7 million in federal funds to the project. **Status Passed House 99-0, Senate passed substitute 37-0 JLC Priority #6, awaiting Governor's action.**

HB 1276 Northern Virginia Veterans Care Center project. (Patron: Cox – R – 66, Co-Patron: LaRock, R-33) Provides for funding of the Northern Virginia Veterans Care Center project through an allocation of the proceeds of \$300 million of Virginia Public Building Authority bonds, which were authorized pursuant to Chapter 1 of the Acts of Assembly of 2014, Special Session I. The bill provides that none of the proceeds of the \$300 million of authorized bonds may be used for any purpose until the state share of the funding requirements of the Northern Virginia Veterans Care Center project and the Hampton Roads Veterans Care Center project have been met in full through an allocation of the proceeds of such bonds. The bill also appropriates \$60 million in federal funds to the project. The Care Center is authorized up to a 230-bed facility. **Status: Passed House 99-0, Senate passed substitute 37, JLC Priority #6, awaiting Governor's action**

*Current Status, full summary, and exact text of each bill can be found at:

<http://lis.virginia.gov>

HB 1597 Virginia National Guard; non-judicial punishment. (Patron: Anderson - R - 51) Subjects service members of the Virginia National Guard to non-judicial punishment pursuant to the Manual for Courts-Martial. The bill provides that when non-judicial punishment is to be imposed by a commanding officer of the rank of major or above, service members shall not be allowed to demand trial by court-martial in lieu of non-judicial punishment; however, service members shall retain all appeal rights available, and the appeal shall include a review for abuse of discretion and legal sufficiency of the evidence. **Status: Passed House 99-0, Senate: Passed Senate (38-Y 0-N), awaiting Governor's action.**

HB 1630 Problem-Solving Courts; established. (Patron: Lingamfelter – R - 31) Establishes the Problem-Solving Court Act (the Act). The bill allows the establishment of problem-solving courts as specialized court dockets within the existing structure of Virginia's court system, offering judicial monitoring of intensive treatment and supervision of offenders who have special conditions and needs based on military service, mental illness, or societal re-entry. The bill establishes a state problem-solving court docket advisory committee and requires localities intending to establish such courts to establish local advisory committees. The Supreme Court of Virginia is given administrative oversight for the implementation of the Act. The Act is modeled on the Drug Treatment Court Act (§ 18.2-254.1). **Status: Left on Table in House Courts of Justice (Did not pass)**

SB 903 Problem-Solving Dockets; established. (Patron: Puller –D- 36) Establishes the Problem-Solving Docket Act (the Act). The bill allows the establishment of problem-solving courts as specialized court dockets within the existing structure of Virginia's court system, offering judicial monitoring of intensive treatment and supervision of offenders who have special conditions and needs based on military service, mental illness, or societal re-entry. The bill establishes a state problem-solving docket advisory committee and requires localities intending to establish such dockets to establish local advisory committees. The Supreme Court of Virginia is given administrative oversight for the implementation of the Act. The Act is modeled on the Drug Treatment Court Act (§ 18.2-254.1). **Status: Passed the Senate 38-0, Left on Table in House Courts of Justice (Did not pass)**

HB 1641 Virginia Values Veterans Program; certification by state agencies. (Patron: Stolle – R - 83) Provides that all agencies in the executive branch of state government and all public institutions of higher education shall, to the maximum extent possible, be certified in accordance with the Department of Veterans Services as part of its Virginia Values Veterans Program. Such agencies and institutions may request a certification waiver from the Governor if they can demonstrate that (i) the certification is in conflict with the organization's operating directives or (ii) they have in place an alternative program that meets these requirements. **Status: Passed House 96-0, Passed Senate Gen Laws, Senate: Passed Senate (38-Y 0-N), awaiting Governor's action.**

HB 1721 Real property tax exemption; surviving spouses of members of armed forces killed in action. (Patron: Ramadan- R -87) Exempts from taxation the principal residence of a surviving spouse of a member of the armed forces of the United States killed in action regardless of the value of the residence. Pursuant to subdivision (b) of Section 6-A of Article X of the Constitution of Virginia, which was adopted by the voters in 2014, the General Assembly enacted legislation exempting from taxation the principal residence of such surviving spouse, provided that the assessed value of the residence was not in excess of the averaged assessed value of dwellings in the county or city situated on property zoned as single family residential. The bill exempts the principal residence of any such surviving spouse regardless of assessed value. Subdivision (b) of Section 6-A of Article X provides that the exemption will cease if the surviving spouse remarries. **Status: Passed the House 100-0, Passed Senate with substitute (37-Y 0-N), awaiting Governor's action.**

HB 1967 Veterans Services Foundation. (Patron: Taylor – R - 85) Provides that the Veterans Services Foundation may accept revenue from all sources, including private source fundraising, to support its mission. The bill also provides that the identity of donors to the Foundation does not have to be disclosed under the Freedom of Information Act if the donor has requested anonymity in connection with or as a condition of making a pledge or donation. **Status: Passed House 96-0, Passed Senate (38-Y 0-N), awaiting Governor's action.**

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HB 2354 State Board for Community Colleges; policy for the award of academic credit for military training. (Patron: Yancey – R - 94) Requires the State Board for Community Colleges to adopt, no later than December 31, 2015, a policy for the award of academic credit to any student enrolled at a comprehensive community college who has successfully completed a military training course or program as part of his military service that is applicable to the student's certificate of degree requirements and is recommended for academic credit by a national higher education association that provides academic credit recommendations for military training courses or programs, noted on the student's military transcript issued by any of the armed forces of the United States, or otherwise documented in writing by any of the armed forces of the United States. **Status: Passed 99-1, Passed Senate (40-Y 0-N), awaiting Governor's action.**

HB 2373 Uniformed services-connected students; identification. (Patron: Ramadan –R - 87) Requires the Department of Education to establish a process for the identification by local school divisions of newly enrolled students who have a parent in the uniformed services. Local school divisions are required to identify such students in accordance with the process. Non-identifiable, aggregate data collected from the identification of such students shall be made available to local, state, and federal entities for the purposes of eligibility for federal grant funding. **Status: Passed House 96-1, Passed Senate with substitute (40-Y 0-N), awaiting Governor's action.**

HJ 536 Constitutional amendment (first resolution); Lottery Proceeds Fund. (Patron: Lingamfelter – R - 31)

Allows lottery proceeds to be appropriated from the Lottery Proceeds Fund to public institutions of higher education for purposes of providing education and employment training for veterans who have been honorably discharged from an active or reserve component of the United States armed forces or the Virginia National Guard and who are domiciled in the Commonwealth. **Status: Left In House P & E Committee – (Did not pass)**

HJ 557 Study; JLARC to review Department of Veterans Services; Report. (Patron: O'Bannon – R - 73) Directs the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission to review the Department of Veterans Services, including, among other things, the review of programs administered by the Department's agencies and other issues related to the provision of services to veterans. The Commission must report to the Governor and 2017 Session of the General Assembly. **Status: Passed House 92-0, Agreed to by Senate with substitute by voice vote**

SB 992 State Board for Community Colleges; policy for the award of academic credit for military training. (Patron: Dance – D - 16) Requires the State Board for Community Colleges to adopt, no later than December 31, 2015, a policy for the award of academic credit to any student enrolled at a comprehensive community college who has successfully completed a military training course or program as part of his military service that is applicable to the student's certificate of degree requirements and is recommended for academic credit by a national higher education association that provides academic credit recommendations for military training courses or programs, noted on the student's military transcript issued by any of the armed forces of the United States, or otherwise documented in writing by any of the armed forces of the United States. **Status: Incorporated by SB 1335, SB 1335 Passed Senate 38-0, Passed House 97-0, awaiting Governor's action**

SB 979 Special license plates; recipients of Legion of Merit Medal. (Patron: Ruff – R - 15) Authorizes the issuance of special license plates for recipients of the Legion of Merit Medal. **Status: Passed Senate 40-0, In House Transportation Committee**

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Budget Amendments

461 #1h (Patron: Villanueva – R – 21)

Department Of Veterans Services - \$1,000,000 (GF) FY 15-16

This amendment provides funding to establish a new grant program to incentivize businesses to hire Virginia's veterans. The program would go into effect January 1, 2016 and would provide grants of up to \$500 per qualifying business for each veteran it hires, up to a maximum annual grant to \$10,000 per business per fiscal year. **Status: House Approved Budget: \$1M (GF) FY 15-16**

451 #2h (Patron: Stolle – R - 83)

The College Of William and Mary In Virginia - \$245,000 (GF) FY 15-16

This amendment requests funding to support the Lewis B. Puller Veterans Benefits Clinic housed at the William and Mary Law School.

Status: House Approved Budget: \$245,000 (GF) and 2.5 FTEs FY 15-16

Senate Approved Budget: \$245,000 (GF) and 2.5 FTEs FY 15-16

162 #1h (Patron: Anderson – R - 51)

George Mason University - \$153,000 (GF) FY 15-16

This amendment requests additional funding to support the development of a new bachelors program in cybersecurity. As part of the new program, the funding also supports the development of pathways for veterans to apply their military training and experience towards the degree

Status: House Approved Budget: \$153,000 (GF) FY 15-16

162 #2h (Patron: Anderson – R - 51)

George Mason University - \$162,500 (GF) FY15-16

This amendment requests additional funding to support an increase in military veteran enrollment in the nursing bachelors program. The funding also supports the development of pathways for veterans to apply their military training and experience towards the degree

Status: House Approved Budget: \$162,000 (GF) FY 15-16

462 #1h (Patron: O'Bannon – R - 73)

Department Of Veterans Services - \$161,000 for 3 positions (GF) FY 15-16

This amendment Provides \$161,000 from the general fund and 3 FTEs to support the operation and maintenance of the Virginia War Memorial. The \$161,000 represents partial year funding for the 3 positions

Status: House Approved Budget: \$107,333 (GF) and 2 FTEs FY 15-16 JLC #3

461 #1h (Patron: Lingamfelter – R - 31)

Department Of Veterans Services - \$4,500,000 (GF) FY 15-16

This amendment includes \$4.5 million from the general fund in fiscal year 2016 to increase access to supportive services for homeless veterans. The funding would be used to implement an Action Plan developed in the summer of 2014 by the Virginia Coalition to End Homelessness, the Homeless Outcomes Coordinating Council and the Department of Veteran Services

Status: House Approved Budget:

\$500,000 (GF) to DCHD for rapid rehousing of homeless veterans

\$180,000 (GF) & 3 FTEs in DVS to coordinate efforts to reduce veteran homelessness

Senate Approved Budget:

\$180,000 (GF) & 3 FTEs in DVS to coordinate efforts to reduce veteran homelessness

\$500,000 (GF) to DCHD for rapid rehousing – not veteran specific JLC #3

461 #3h (Patron: Lingamfelter – R - 31)

Department Of Veterans Services - \$4,500,000 (GF) FY 15-16

This amendment provides \$4,500,000 the second year from general funds to increase access to supportive services for homeless veterans to help them obtain and maintain stable housing. The Department of Veterans services will award this funding through grants to organizations providing these services

Status: Same as above

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