



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Office of the Governor

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MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable William J. Howell
Speaker of the House
Virginia House of Delegates

The Honorable Charles J. Colgan, Sr.
President Pro Tempore
Virginia State Senate

FROM: Robert P. Crouch, Jr. 

SUBJECT: 2009 Annual Report on the Virginia Military Advisory Council

In accordance with §2.2-2666.1 of the *Code of Virginia*, the following is an executive summary of activity and work of the Virginia Military Advisory Council (VMAC) for 2009.

Background

VMAC was created as an advisory council to maintain a cooperative and constructive relationship between the Commonwealth and the leadership of the Armed Forces of the United States and the military commanders of such Armed Forces stationed in the Commonwealth, and to encourage regular communication on continued military facility viability, the exploration of privatization opportunities and issues affecting preparedness, public safety and security.

VMAC is composed of 27 members representing military, legislators and private partners. The Chairman is selected by the Council among its membership. The Governor's Assistant to Commonwealth Preparedness is the statutorily designated Vice-Chairman. The Council has established three subcommittees to focus and devote

resources to major issues pertaining to that subcommittee. The subcommittees are Homeland Security and Preparedness, Quality of Life and the Oceana/Fentress Military Advisory Council. The Oceana/Fentress subcommittee is mandated by §2.2-2666.3 of the *Code of Virginia*.

Major General James E. Chambers, Commanding General, United States Army Combined Arms Support Command at Fort Lee was unanimously elected by the Council in early 2008 as the VMAC Chairman, succeeding Major General Mitchell Stevenson. The Chairman called to order three meetings in 2009 to discuss key topics and programs. Below is a summary of key initiatives the Council discussed in 2009.

Key Issues:

The following topics are national issues of concern for the military and are echoed by the VMAC in its work for 2009. This is a major focus for the Quality of Life Subcommittee.

- (1) **Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children:** Ten States now participate in an Interstate Compact providing a policy platform for resolving the challenges experienced by military children. At its spring meeting, the VMAC voted unanimously to recommend Virginia participate in the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children. Virginia became a participant in the compact as a result of legislation passed in the 2009 session.
- (2) **Severely injured service members support:** Building support for severely injured service members coming to their states through programs such as the Wounded Warrior (Virginia's participation is described below in more detail).
- (3) **In-state tuition:** Providing access and continuance of in-state tuition rates upon military reassignment. Virginia provides both access and continuance.
- (4) **Spouse employment:** States accommodate the needs of transferring spouses, through compacts and nationally recognized standards for licensure in desirable careers, such as teaching, nursing and real estate and otherwise remove barriers to the transfer of professional licenses and certifications. Virginia allows alternative certifications for teachers and nurses.
- (5) **Spousal unemployment compensation:** Granting unemployment compensation eligibility to trailing spouses. Virginia does not presently authorize unemployment compensation to trailing military spouses.

- (6) **Predatory lending:** The Department of Defense has established a federal statute that limits the terms of payday, vehicle title and tax refund anticipation loans. Outside of federal banks, thrifts and credit unions, payday and vehicle title loans are overseen by state government agencies.
- (7) **Voting:** Coordinated support through electronic means to decrease the time needed to request and submit an absentee ballot. The specific guidelines are 45-day ballot transit time, elimination of the notary requirement, late registration procedures, special state write-in absentee ballot, reference to the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act in the state election code, electronic transmission of election materials, expanded use of the federal write-in absentee ballot, emergency authority for chief election official, and enfranchise citizens who have never resided in the United States. Virginia successfully meets 7 out of the 9 guidelines.
- (8) **Foreign language requirements:** Foreign languages are important to national security and economic competitiveness. States have joined with the Department of Defense to frame a language strategy to develop foreign language skills needed to keep the nation secure and a leader in the global market. Virginia has developed a foreign language plan that optimizes resources from the business, education and community sectors to increase the capacity of foreign languages within the state.
- (9) **Accessible support for military families:** States mobilize every resource (military and civilian) through an integrated team to assist all military families with child care; resources for schools, teachers and youth; and to facilitate easy access to information, services and support. The Governor recognizes initiatives and organizations within the state designed to coordinate and mobilize resources.

The Quality of Life Subcommittee continues to address the concerns of the military and their families including two new emerging issues: (1) taxation of jointly titled personal property and (2) impact of foreclosure rate increase on military families.

Virginia Wounded Warrior Program:

This program is mandated by the *Code of Virginia* §2.2-2001.1 to ensure adequate and timely assessment, treatment and support are available to veterans, service members and affected family members for stress-related injuries and traumatic brain injuries resulting from service in combat areas.

VMAC has partnered with the Department of Veterans Services, Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation, and Substance Abuse Services, Department of Rehabilitative Services, Brain Injury Association of Virginia, Department of Social Services, Virginia National Guard and the Department of Defense to support this worthwhile initiative.

Many VMAC members attended the November 2008 Wounded Warrior Summit. This two-day training program focused on combat stress injuries, working effectively in the military culture, diagnoses, and injury assessment. This training was designed for professionals and volunteers who wanted to learn how to apply their existing clinical, healthcare and helping skills to their work with veterans, including those of Afghanistan and Iraq, and their families.

Veterans Workforce Development Taskforce:

VMAC is working together with the Virginia Veterans Workforce Development Taskforce, who is responsible for the following:

- Match veterans with employers and positions.
- Encourage public and private sector to employ veterans.
- Encourage the employment of veterans with disabilities.
- Develop a more comprehensive technical approach for hiring opportunities.

VMAC will be supporting this initiative by:

- Participating in the collaborative environment proposed by the taskforce.
- Identifying all existing memorandums of agreement among participating entities and develop new agreements as necessary.
- Providing publicity and outreach support for taskforce solutions.

Alcohol Abuse Prevention Program

VMAC has partnered with the Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control on an alcohol abuse prevention program. This program works with military bases to make sure Virginia's alcohol laws are abided. Outreach is continuing on military bases to spread the word on Virginia's drinking age and penalties enforced if laws are broken.

Motorcycle Safety Campaign

Motorcycle deaths and injuries among military personnel have experienced an alarming rise in recent years and are a major military command concern. VMAC and the Governor's Motorcycle Advisory Board are working together on motorcycle safety efforts.

Welcome to Virginia Brochures

The Office of Commonwealth Preparedness published a *second* printing of 5,000 of the Welcome to Virginia brochures for military personnel and their families that lists key resources and information they would need to set up household in the Commonwealth. These brochures are on hand for military bases across the Commonwealth.

Community and Installation Preparedness Coordination

Fort Lee has a best practice program that includes mutual assistance and coordination of first responders, public safety and security efforts.

Virginia Commonwealth University's Partnership for People with Disabilities

Project supporting military families who have children with disabilities.

Lessons Learned for Leading the Casualty Process

Delivering training solutions on how to respond to military loss.

VMAC looks forward to continuing its good work with the military on issues supporting the men and woman who serve our country.