



# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Office of the Governor

Terrie L. Suit  
Secretary of Veterans Affairs  
and Homeland Security

January 17, 2012

## MEMORANDUM

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

The Honorable Walter A. Stosch  
President Pro Tempore  
Virginia State Senate

**FROM:** The Honorable Terrie L. Suit

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Terrie L. Suit", written over the "FROM:" line.

**SUBJECT:** 2011 Annual Report on the Virginia Military Advisory Council

In accordance with §2.2-2666.1 of the *Code of Virginia*, the attached is an executive summary of activity and work of the Virginia Military Advisory Council (VMAC) for 2011.

Attachment

**Preface:** The Virginia Military Advisory Council was created by the *Code of Virginia* through §2.2-2666.1. The legislation requires an annual executive summary of interim activity and work of the Council to be submitted to the Governor and General Assembly.

#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

The Virginia Military Advisory Council (VMAC) is 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.

The VMAC is composed of 27 members representing military, legislators, private partners and executive leadership from the Commonwealth. As a result of changes in the normal rotation of installation commanders, seven new members were additions to VMAC in 2011. The Chairman is selected by the Council among its membership. The Council has three subcommittees to focus and devote resources to major issues pertaining to that subcommittee. The subcommittees include Quality of Life, Oceana/Fentress Advisory Council, and Military – Civil Mutual Aid.

Major General Karl Horst, Commander of the U.S. Army Military District of Washington and Joint Force Headquarters National Capital Region served as the VMAC Chairman until he was reassigned in June 2011. At the September 2011 meeting, Rear Admiral Townsend G. Alexander, Commander, Navy Region Mid-Atlantic, was unanimously elected as the Chairman.

#### **QUALITY OF LIFE KEY ISSUES**

Each year the Secretary of Defense provides to every state a list of 10 Key Quality of Life Issues supporting service members and their families. These issues surrounding quality of life and family well-being can best be addressed by states. The Department of Defense-State Liaison Office has worked with the VMAC to educate state policymakers, and other state leaders about the needs of military members and their families. The goal is to work together to remove unnecessary barriers, and significantly improve the quality of life for military families.

The VMAC continue to work on several of the Secretary of Defense's Key Issues and supported the following approved legislation from the 2011 General Assembly session to improve the quality of life for our military community.

- 1) **Created the Office of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and Homeland Security.** The Secretary of Veterans Affairs and Homeland Security serves as the Vice Chair of the VMAC. Having military issues addressed at the Secretariat level increases the visibility of these issues within the Governor's office and provides a strong voice to work with the General Assembly to ensure they are



well informed on the issues related to quality of life matters for service members and their families.

- 2) **In-state tuition for veterans and spouses of service members.** There were two separate bills passed during the 2011 General Assembly regarding in-state tuition. One was to increase the educational opportunity for veterans by waiving the one-year residency requirement needed to qualify for in-state tuition rates. This encourages service members retiring or leaving the service to consider moving to Virginia thus developing a strong desirable workforce of personnel with a military background. The second bill provided that a Virginia domiciled military spouse does not forfeit domicile status for in-state tuition due to accompanying the active duty service member while stationed outside Virginia.
- 3) **Professional licenses for spouses of service members.** Extends the expiration of certain licenses, certifications, registrations or other documents held by the spouse of a service member when stationed overseas. This change will assist employment and career options for frequently relocating military spouses who may be unable to maintain their license while stationed overseas.
- 4) **Service members and veterans courts.** Provides for the program established by the Department of Veterans Services to monitor and coordinate mental health and rehabilitative services support for Virginia veterans to cooperate with localities that may establish special treatment procedures for veterans and active military service members in the criminal justice system. The bill further provided that to facilitate local involvement and flexibility in responding to the problem of crime in local communities and to effectively treat, counsel, rehabilitate, and supervise veterans and active military service members who are offenders or defendants in the criminal justice system that any city, county, or combination thereof may develop, establish, and maintain policies, procedures, and treatment services for all such offenders who are convicted and sentenced for misdemeanors or felonies that are not felony acts of violence.
- 5) **Elections; clarifications related to absentee voting and identification required for certain first-time voters.** The passage of this legislation provides certain voter registrations remain valid until the next November general election or federal general election, whichever is later, rather than for 365 days or a federal election cycle. The bill also requires absentee ballots to be available 45 days prior to the election or three business days after receipt of the completed application, whichever is later. These enhancements will provide service members deployed or serving overseas a greater opportunity to have their vote cast and counted.
- 6) **Military parents; delegation of visitation rights.** Provides that in cases involving a parent who is a member of the military and who has been deployed on active duty, a court may enter an order (i) delegating the deploying parent's visitation rights with a child to a family member of the deploying parent or (ii) awarding visitation rights to a family member of the deploying parent if the parent

had physical custody of the child prior to the deployment and physical custody is awarded to the non-deploying parent or his family during the deployment. Written notice of the return of the deployed parent or guardian and the termination of the delegated visitation shall be provided by the previously deployed parent or guardian to any family member whose visitation is thereby terminated.

- 7) **Increase access to quality, affordable child care for military families.** In 2010, Virginia was chosen by the Department of Defense as one of the 13 pilot states in the Child Care Expansion Initiative based on the Governor's strong interest in supporting military families. In 2011, the VMAC continues to work with the Department of Defense's Child Care Liaison assigned to Virginia to offer support and assistance to advance this initiative.

### **QUALITY OF LIFE**

This year, the Quality of Life Subcommittee partnered with the First Lady's *Serving Our Service Members Family (SOS)* Program to assist in supporting Virginia's service members and their families. Through the SOS website, service members who were either wounded in combat or killed in action received meal donations, house cleaning services and season passes at Virginia theme parks through the donations of participating Commonwealth organizations and/or businesses. Installation representatives played a pivotal role in ensuring the SOS Program was well publicized and encouraged families to seek support from those companies and organizations willing to help.

### **OCEANA/FENTRESS ADVISORY COUNCIL**

The Oceana/Fentress Advisory Council met after the General Assembly session to update members on activities surrounding Naval Air Station Oceana and Fentress Field. The City of Virginia Beach provided a progress report on the Commonwealth grant used to support the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Agreement with the Navy to reduce encroachment around Oceana. The Council was updated on the decision by the Secretary of the Navy to stop work on the Outlying Landing Field (OLF) Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) until the East Coast Navy Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) basing and training requirements are better defined. The East Coast Navy JSF Basing EIS will begin no earlier than 2014.

Since October 2010, the Navy and the City of Franklin were in negotiations for the use of Franklin Municipal Airport to conduct touch-and-go flights with E-2-C Hawkeye and C-2 Greyhound aircraft. The flights, known as Field Carrier Landing Practice, are designed to replicate what it is like to land on an aircraft carrier at sea. However, in February 2011 the Franklin City Council voted to stop negotiations with the Navy. The Navy is now completing an EIS that will consider Emporia as well as Wallops Island as potential partner sites for the propeller plane's carrier landing practice.

### **OTHER ACTIVITIES**

The Governor hosted the second annual reception for VMAC members and other Senior Commanders, or civilian equivalents, to express the gratitude the Commonwealth has for the military community.



On numerous occasions installation commanders requested VMAC support to address issues with state agencies.

- a. The VMAC was able to help resolve a billing and permitting issue between Fort Belvoir and the Albemarle County Service Authority to ensure new entry gate security building at Rivanna Station could be fully operational.
- b. The VAMC assisted Fort A. P. Hill with a water permit issue to ensure a new training facility to support the Explosive Ordinance Disposal School was available to accept soldiers for training.

The VMAC Vice-Chair and her staff participated in 32 official events at military installations which vary from office calls with senior military leaders to attendance at official meetings or events. These visits and events reinforce the constructive relationships which have developed over the years with the Commonwealth and the military community.

Listed below is a summary of presentations at this year's VMAC meetings:

- a. The Department of Health briefed members on the *Coordinated Medical Surge and Countermeasure Distribution*. The purpose of the briefing was to inform the installation commanders the role the Department of Health plays in providing medicines from the strategic national stockpile to all citizens of the Commonwealth including the military.
- b. A briefing by Virginia Propane Gas Association alerted the commanders of free training for those on the installations dealing with propane. The training involves technical support, safety training and consumer information.
- c. As motorcycle accidents increased within the Department of Defense in recent years, there is a greater awareness for motorcycle safety. The VMAC requested a briefing from the Rider Alert Program. This program is designed to save the lives of injured motorcyclists. It provides free identification data cards (Rider Alert cards), that will help first responders provide rapid and accurate medical assistance to riders involved in accidents.
- d. The Commissioner of the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) made a presentation on the DMV Mobile Unit. The mobile customer service center, which provides all DMV services, can be moved to a military installation to provide service to members of the military and their families. For example, active duty military members may have questions about proving Virginia residency, titling vehicles in Virginia vs. their home state, or extending the validity of their driver's licenses or vehicle registrations while stationed outside Virginia. Fort Lee took advantage of this service and had the unit parked on the

installation for two days. As a result of this presentation several other installations are working with DMV to host the mobile unit.

- e. To support military communities there was a briefing by TroopSwap which is an east coast-based company that has developed the first national marketplace exclusively for the military. Their goal is to serve the military community by sourcing deals from premium brands that offer national shipping or have outlets across the country. TroopSwap only hires military spouses in the local markets they serve in order to fight high underemployment within the military spouse community.
- f. There was a presentation by the President and Founder of Wounded Wear, a former Navy SEAL and U. S. Army Ranger severely injured in Iraq, who created Wounded Wear to promote awareness throughout the country of the sacrifices that wounded service members have made in the name of freedom; and to foster a sense of camaraderie, determination, and strength of purpose, amongst the wounded and their families on their road to recovery.

## **CONCLUSION**

Over the past year, the VMAC assisted on numerous pieces of legislation and other quality of life issues that benefited service members and their families. The Council continues to foster a collaborative working environment with the military leadership and the Office of the Governor. Over the years, the benefits to the military community have been extremely valuable. As potential Department of Defense cuts for the future may negatively impact the Commonwealth, it is critical to maintain this valuable line of communication with military leaders in the Commonwealth.