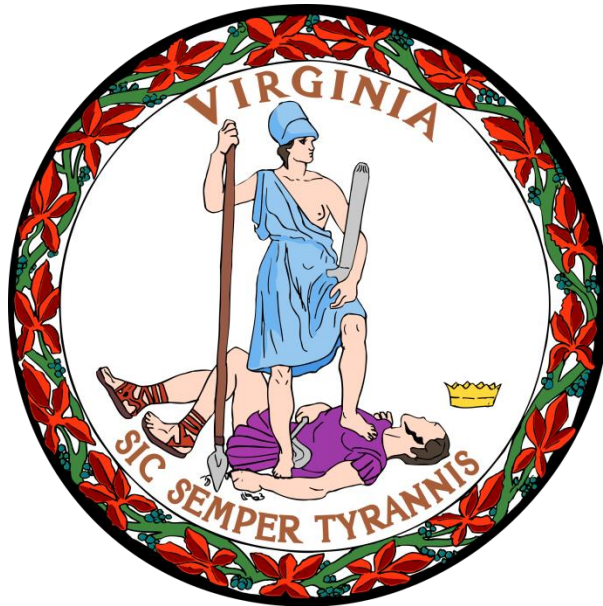


# Virginia Military Advisory Council 2016 Annual Report



Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs  
January 2017

# VMAC 2016 Annual Report

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**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) 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, encourage regular communication on continued military facility viability, and encourage the exploration of privatization opportunities and issues affecting preparedness, public safety, and security.

In 2016, the VMAC, led by the Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs, John C. Harvey, Jr., was composed of thirty-two (32) military officers representing military commands and installation in the Commonwealth. The House of Delegates and Senate of Virginia each appointed members to serve on the VMAC during 2016. Governor Terence R. McAuliffe appointed five (5) individuals, including the Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs, the Adjutant General of Virginia, and three (3) appointments, all with significant backgrounds dealing with the military and the quality of life for military families. Through the normal rotation of installation commanders there were twelve (12) new members in 2016. Additionally, (1) new command was added to the VMAC, Coast Guard Training Center Yorktown. Although this command is not new to Virginia, this commanding officer chose to participate with the VMAC along with his peers.

Under the leadership of the Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs, the focus of the VMAC in 2016 was on continuing efforts to make the Commonwealth of Virginia the most military-friendly state in the Nation. As the military draws down its forces, Virginia has taken steps to find employment for those service members and families who are leaving active duty in order to keep this valuable resource within the Commonwealth. As illustrated below, one will have a better understanding of what Virginia is doing for our military.

## **ACCOMPLISHMENTS:**

The 2016 VMAC met twice during the year; however, a significant amount of additional work by staff, working with the military community, was conducted throughout the year. In addition to the two meetings, the Governor hosted a holiday reception for all military leaders at the Governor's Mansion.

**April 2016 Meeting** – During this meeting there were several briefings to address progress being made to enhance the military presence in the Commonwealth and support the service members and their families.

Secretary Harvey kicked off the meeting with a presentation on what the Commonwealth is doing to develop programs which will lead to meaningful employment for transitioning service members (TSMs). The Secretariat prepared a request for proposal for services that will enable

## VMAC 2016 Annual Report

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the job placement of veterans, members of the National Guard/Reserves, and transitioning service members across the Commonwealth. Services will include identifying employers and their workforce and labor needs and matching the labor pool to current employment opportunities across the Commonwealth. This request is in support of the effort started in 2015 at the regional level whereby communities are developing regional approaches to placing TSMs in meaningful careers to meet employment demands of the area.

The Matrix Design Group provided an update to the effort to “Grow the Military Mission in Virginia.” Of most importance to the military installations was a discussion on identifying opportunities for partnerships with the military and localities as a way to stretch operations and leverage funding from all sources. As a result of that presentation, the Secretariat and the consulting team met with Joint Base Langley-Eustis on several partnership proposals they have developed. One proposal is to partner with the railroad industry to use the rail yard at Ft. Eustis. In addition, the team met with representatives of the Charlottesville Chamber of Commerce and military community at Rivanna Station to discuss additional missions which may be considered for that installation. Early in 2017, the team will begin working with the Navy installations and Fort Lee to address these opportunities and steps the Commonwealth can take to move forward.

As requested by the military, a focal point during this meeting was how to engage the community and military leaders to work together to help military school-aged children. Dr. Steven Staples, the Virginia Superintendent of Public Instruction, was invited to discuss how the Commonwealth is working to support the military families and the extra steps Virginia will be taking to care for military school-aged children.

Dr. Staples mentioned that the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) is still working hard to increase the quality of the reporting on the military child identifier. Reporting has improved over time; however, the accuracy of the data still needs to be improved.

The Superintendent reported the VDOE will be filling a new position that will be dedicated immediately responding to questions from military families dealing with school-aged children and the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunities for Military Children. The new hire will work closely with all the Military School Liaison Officers (SLOs) in the Commonwealth. This position, along with the new web page which provides a great deal of information specific to military school-aged children, goes a long way toward addressing the needs of families moving to Virginia and enrolling their children in schools.

Each SLO was provided an opportunity to address the Council. The liaisons requested, and the Secretary agreed, to host a SLO Summit to address best practices and identify areas where the Commonwealth can help with military school-aged children. A summit was held in October 2016. Recommendations included:

- Have the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), and the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) work together on the collection process for military children so that families do not have to complete two different forms for reporting to the federal government.
- Develop a consistent state policy allowing students from military families moving into the area and living in temporary housing (i.e. base hotel or awaiting a home to be built or purchased) to enroll in the school zone of their permanent housing. The issue is that

## VMAC 2016 Annual Report

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military families are often placed in temporary housing, while they wait for their permanent housing to be finalized. Military students enroll in the schools zoned for their temporary housing and then, a couple of weeks later, have to enroll in the school for their permanent housing. These children have already endured several transitions during the school year, and this additional transition is unnecessary and burdensome.

- Develop a statewide review of spaces allocated for transitioning students, recognizing their needs/interests in enrolling into academies, International Baccalaureate (IB) Programs, Magnet Programs, etc., such that the military children are not excluded. The cut-offs vary by division, but many programs require applications by late winter – well before military families have moved to the new school division.
- Consider providing annual Military Culture Training for teachers, counselors, and staff that work or interact with military families and students to give them a better understanding of the unique educational requirements that military-connected youth face and how those challenges can impact their academic lives. The training should emphasize the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children.

**October 2016 Meeting** - During the second meeting of the year, there were briefings by the Director of the, McGuire VA Medical Center on how the VA is supporting the military community, and by the Roosevelt Group on the “Federal Budget Process.” There were also updates by the four regions created to address employment for transitioning service members (detail of their reports is shown below under Other Accomplishments) and by the Virginia Department of Veterans Services, which provided an overview of the Military Medics and Corpsmen (MMAC) Program. The MMAC program, created as a result of legislation passed by the 2016 Virginia General Assembly, is an initiative to allow former military medics and corpsmen to work in Virginia health systems, even if they do not have a civilian license or credential.

### ***Quality of Life:***

The United States Secretary of Defense annually distributes a list of Ten Key Quality of Life Issues. See the attachment, *Key Personnel and Readiness Issues Supporting Service Members and Families; 2016*. These issues surrounding quality of life and family well-being can best be addressed by states. Virginia has addressed all of the 2016 issues except one which pertains to requiring local agencies to notify and work with the military on confirmed or alleged child neglect involving a service member. The Governor’s legislative package for the 2017 session includes a bill to address this issue.

Virginia continues to be a leader among the states on quality of life initiatives to support the military; we continue to work on several of the Secretary of Defense’s key issues. During the 2016 General Assembly session, the most important legislation passed to support the military was regarding the creation of the MMAC pilot program. The MMAC Program provides service members with specialized medical training an opportunity for employment at six Virginia healthcare systems, a pathway to licensure and long-term medical careers, and a solution to acute healthcare staffing shortages in Virginia's healthcare industry. Virginia is the first state in the nation to create such a pathway for those leaving the service to fill critical shortages in the medical field.

# VMAC 2016 Annual Report

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## *Other Accomplishments:*

In 2015, the VMAC recommended the Secretary provide support to transitioning service members seeking careers in Virginia. The Regional Local Planning Groups (LPGs) provided updates to address their concepts. After a year of work, the four regions (Northern Virginia, Central Virginia, the Peninsula, and Southside Hampton Roads) provided the VMAC with their regional plans to support the service members and their families in finding careers post-military service.

- The Northern Virginia LPG recognizes there is a “sea of good will” in the area with a lot of different organizations wanting to provide support, not that there is a lack of services. As such, the region is conversing with the Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF) at Syracuse University to utilize the America Serves model to address the issues. The regional focus will be on the 66% of transitioning service members who are planning to stay in the area, or are not sure where they will relocate, and work with employers and the many organizations to help the TSMs navigate the “sea of good will.”
- The Central LPG is led by the Commonwealth Center for Advance Logistics (CCALS), an applied research group of academia and government. They are working closely with CASCOM at Fort Lee, which is a member organization of CCALS, and the Community College Workforce Alliance (CCWA), which is the workforce development partnership between John Tyler Community College and Reynolds Community College serving the economic development and workforce needs of Central Virginia, to implement an assessment tool for all TSMs. This assessment tool, which is used by a large number of businesses in the region to identify skills of prospective employees, is the initial link for service members interested in remaining in the region after separation.
- The Peninsula LPG is led by the Virginia Peninsula Chamber of Commerce and is working with the Peninsula Council for Workforce Development. This LPG has four different services and a joint-base culture which, from a local standpoint, creates nuances. The region recognizes finding employment for separating service members is a community responsibility, not a military responsibility. The region is best served if the region can create programs and interfaces with installations to meet the needs of the service members. The Peninsula LPG approach is to utilize the great one-stop centers in the region that are on the community college campuses. Thus the biggest challenge is to bring everyone together and focus on TSMs and to improve the handoff from the installation to the community. Challenge the region faces are small businesses and the aging ownership of these small businesses. There are approximately 300 businesses on the Peninsula side that employ more than 50 employees.
- The Southside LPG is led by the Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce and is working closely with Opportunity Inc., the local workforce development board for the region. This region also recognizes there is not a lack of services, but with so many it is difficult for the TSMs to navigate the systems. The region wants to bring together and one central location where the TSMs can be in touch with all services. In addition, they want to establish a place the TSMs can come and have an easy hand-off to the civilian community. The region wants to connect them to careers in high-demand sectors: logistics, healthcare, advanced manufacturing, etc. The Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce is taking the lead in securing funding for this center from localities and

## VMAC 2016 Annual Report

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businesses. The LPG is finalizing the plan and performance metrics. The region is setting up strong data system in order to ensure they are putting measures of success in place that will demonstrate they are meeting the needs of TSMs, veterans, and their families.

### **Conclusion**

Over the past year, the VMAC focused most of its efforts to support the many service members who are transitioning out of the military and seeking civilian employment. The VMAC continues to foster a collaborative working environment with military leadership, the Commonwealth, and the Office of the Governor. Over the years, the benefits to the military community have excelled and have remained extremely valuable. As potential future cuts to the Department of Defense may negatively impact the Commonwealth, it is critical to maintain this valuable line of communication and cooperation with military leaders in the state.