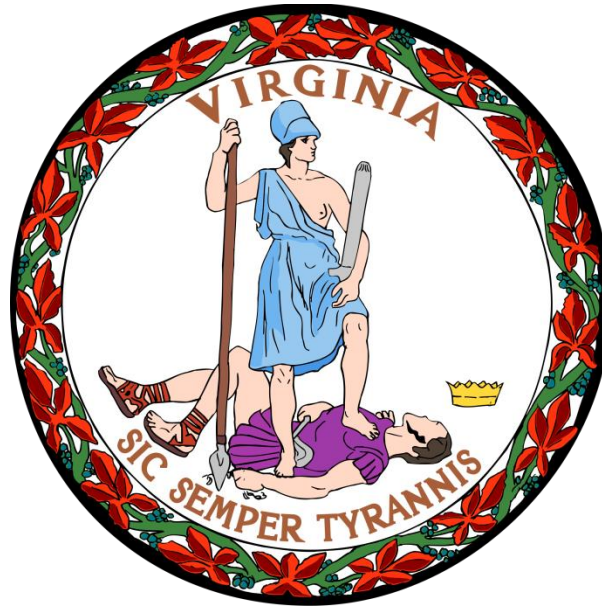


# Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs Virginia Military Advisory Council 2023 Annual Report



Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs

# 2023 VMAC 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 General Assembly established the Virginia Military Advisory Council (VMAC) 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.

Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs, Craig Crenshaw, served as the VMAC chair. The remainder of the council was composed of 10 members as follows: the Lieutenant Governor, the Attorney General, the Adjutant General, a member from the Senate, member from the House of Delegates, and five Gubernatorial citizen appointments. Over 30 representatives of the major military commands and installations located in the Commonwealth complemented the appointed council.

Under the Secretary's leadership, the VMAC focused on information and discussion in the development of actionable initiatives to advance Virginia's prosperity through investment in competitive military value. The VMAC addressed military installation and defense community issues of compatibility, resilience, and quality of life improvements to ensure best competitiveness for future military investments. Compatibility centered on ensuring that shared space, relationships, and advocacy to meet military needs for modern mission sustainment and growth. Resilience focused mutual energy, climate, and security challenges for shared solutions. Quality of life addressed childcare, spouse employment, education, housing, health care, and safe communities for our military members and defense communities.

## **ACCOMPLISHMENTS:**

The VMAC met three times in 2023; March, July, and November.

**Sentinel Landscapes:** With VMAC advice and support, Virginia pursued federal designation as a Sentinel Landscape. The Sentinel Landscape Partnership is a coalition of federal agencies, state and local governments, and non-governmental organizations that work with willing landowners and land managers to advance sustainable land use practices around military installations and ranges. There are thirteen designated landscapes nation-wide, Virginia was granted two in July 2023. The Virginia Sentinel Landscape includes 12 military installations and is called the Virginia Security Corridor. It reaches from Marine Corps Base Quantico to the North Carolina border, East to the Atlantic, and West to Petersburg. The northerly landscape is designated Potomac, the southerly Tidewater. Virginia's inclusion as a Sentinel Landscape partner provides distinct access and scoring advantages in competing for federal funding to address compatibility and resilience initiatives that will improve military value and increase military investment in the Commonwealth. The partnership provides two federal coordinators who will work under the State Forester. The hiring process is underway with expected position fills by March 2024.

**Inter-governmental Service Agreements:** The VMAC endorsed acceleration and expansion of inter-governmental service agreements (IGSA). IGSA are agreements between the military and a state or local

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government that serve the best interests of both parties. As demands increase and available resources decrease for our military installations and supporting defense communities, IGSA are ideal instruments to share cost, resourcing, and administration of services. Through cooperation and economies of scale, IGSA increase efficiency and lower costs for the military and supporting localities. The commitment to leveraging IGSA opportunities was affirmed by VMAC stakeholders. 2024 will emphasize coordination of military, state, and local partnerships and contracting vehicles to maximize IGSA opportunities.

**Right Help. Right Now:** The VMAC addressed the shared threat of mental health for all Virginians as well as active-duty service member, veterans, and families. Embracing the Governor’s Right Help. Right Now campaign, the VMAC collaborated with the commissioner of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services and the Commissioner of Veteran Services to understand and advise solutions. Of particular note, the VMAC supported the expansion of Warriors Heart in Virginia. Warriors Heart is a Texas based privately funded treatment center serving active military, veterans, first responders, and active members from across the United States who belong to organizations that protect and serve the citizens of the United States. With VMAC support and advice, Veterans and Defense Affairs was instrumental in facilitating Warriors Heart expansion to Milford Virginia in September 2023, directly supporting the Governor’s Right Help. Right Now Campaign.

**Strategy to Action:** The VMAC participated in Secretary Crenshaw’s 2023 Strategy to Action Campaign centered on increasing Virginia’s military value. Over the final two quarters of 2023 SWOT workshops (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) were conducted aboard Virginia’s military installations and with our defense communities to develop locally driven and state supported solutions that improve Virginia’s military value through compatibility, resilience, and quality of life. The resultant strategy is published and prioritized for action in 2024.

**Quality of Life:** The VMAC addressed and advised quality of life issues associated with military active-duty members and families. Those issues included childcare, spouse employment, education, housing, health care, and safe communities. Of note, VMAC support and advice contributed to direct representation of our military installations in the Governor’s Building Blocks for Virginia Families campaign.

**Energy Resilience:** A resounding challenge discovered in the Secretary’s strategy to action campaign is energy resilience. Reflective of the Governor’s “all of the above” energy resilience campaign, the VMAC addressed energy resilience challenges for our military installations and defense communities. The VMAC convened representatives from industry, federal and state government—including the Virginia Director of the Department of Energy to address energy resilience with a focus on nuclear solutions. The effort delivered partner perspectives valuable to understanding and implementing nuclear power solutions. New relationships were forged and avenues of cooperation were established to complement the Governor’s energy strategy through military, defense community, and industry cooperation.

### Conclusion

The VMAC remains a vital advisory council. In 2023, continued focus on addressing actionable issues that increase Virginia’s military value and make Virginia the best place for military members to live, work, and raise a family contributed directly to increased federal funding awards, more resilient and adaptable defense communities, and improved quality of life for our military and defense community members. Each of those elements increase Virginia’s military value and improve our competitiveness for increased military investment and will continue in 2024.