



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

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RICHMOND, VA 23219

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American Legion
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Association of the United
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Fleet Reserve Association
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Navy Seabee Veterans of
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Paralyzed Veterans of
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Reserve Officers Association
Roanoke Valley Veterans
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Veterans of Foreign Wars
Vietnam Veterans of America
Virginia Army/Air National
Guard Enlisted
Association
Virginia National Guard
Association
Women Marines Association*

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Position Paper 2015-02 Virginia Wounded Warrior Program

1. **Objective:** Provide funding to ensure that veterans, Guardsmen, Reservists, and their families have access to a network of community-based services for healthcare, behavioral healthcare, rehabilitative, and other critical support services.
2. **Background:**
 - a. The Department of Veterans Services (DVS) Virginia Wounded Warrior Program (VWWP) was established by the 2008 General Assembly to ensure access to behavioral health treatment and supports for veterans, Guardsmen, Reservists, and their families in all areas of the Commonwealth.
 - b. Virginia is one of just six states nationwide to comprehensively address the behavioral health needs of service members, veterans, and families at the state level.
 - c. VWWP monitors and coordinates statewide access to care through hands-on care coordination services, peer and family support, and dedicated outreach and support to vulnerable veterans including homeless and incarcerated.
 - d. Virginia is home to approximately 800,000 veterans. Included in this population are over 300,000 who served since September 11, 2001. The Virginia National Guard and Reserve components have been called upon as never before to deploy to combat zones.
 - e. The challenges continue as the current conflicts wind down and our Armed Forces down size. Many veterans will transition to civilian life seamlessly, but for those with psychological concerns, the transition can be fraught with challenges.
 - f. Data indicates that 38% of soldiers and 31% of Marines report psychological symptoms. Among members of the National Guard, the figure rises to 49%. Psychological symptoms are significantly higher among those with repeated deployments and symptoms can be delayed for years, necessitating the continued availability of ongoing awareness and access to services.
3. **Discussion:**
 - a. Virginia should do everything in its power to serve those who may need services and community support because of stress related injuries, behavioral health concerns, and/or traumatic brain injuries resulting from military service.
 - b. Proactive wellness support programs such as VWWP help to prevent suicide, homelessness, and incarceration among those who have sacrificed their personal safety and needs to ensure freedom and liberty for all.
 - c. The number of services delivered to veterans and family members by VWWP increased by 240% from FY2010 to FY2014 (from 1,650 to 5,606). The demand for services will continue to rise.
 - d. It is expected that the impact of recent and ongoing conflicts will continue to be felt for decades, just as previous wars have affected the health and well-being of service members and their families. It is critical that Virginia continue to recognize and address these concerns.
4. **Recommendation:** That the Governor and General Assembly support the continued delivery of critical core behavioral health, rehabilitative, and supportive services for Virginia veterans, Guardsmen, Reservists, and family members by appropriating an additional \$281,000 (GF) for the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program in FY2016.