

Thursday, June 27, 2024 at 08:02:05 Eastern Daylight Time

Subject: VMSDEP Follow up from BOV meeting today
Date: Wednesday, June 26, 2024 at 7:34:59 PM Eastern Daylight Time
From: Friends of VMSDEP
To: BOVSecretary, Adams, John, Edgar, Charles, Fain, Hugh, Garcia, James, Gottwald, Thomas, Inman, James P, 'Jamie', Johnson, Lester, Joustra, James, Lord, Gussie, Marsh, Scot, McKnight, Terence, Mobbs, Meaghan, Phillips, Nancy, Watjen, Thomas, Williams, Allen, Ring, James, Todd, Kate
CC: Kayla Owen
Attachments: VMSDEP_VMI_BOV2.pdf

Dear VMI BOV members,

Thank you for the opportunity to stop by the BOV meeting today. We look forward to watching this issue be raised in the BOV meeting tomorrow and wanted to provide the attached information, some of which has just come in since we met this afternoon. This remains a very urgent issue and we look forward to a positive resolution from VMI.

Respectfully,
Kayla Owen
VMSDEP Co-Founder

June 26, 2024

FROM:

Kayla Owen
VMSDEP Friends

TO:

Virginia Military Institute Board of Visitors
Lexington, Virginia 24450

SUBJECT: Update on VMSDEP Friends request for Virginia Military Institute Board of Visitors Resolution and Action on the Virginia Military Survivors & Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP).

Dear Members of the Board of Visitors:

1. The purpose of this letter is to thank you for the opportunity to attend the Board of Visitors (BOV) Executive session today in Richmond and update you on the status of our efforts before the full BOV takes up our proposed resolution tomorrow.
2. Although we welcomed the opportunity to attend, we were disappointed in our initial reception by BOV Secretary Col. Bill Wyatt's dismissive first comment that our issue "will not be dealt with today." We noted that the BOV Executive Committee made time available to "bring into the open session from the closed session" discussion of a community college program then discussed items not on the published agenda including, the student newspaper. A good amount of time also covered the BOV President's recent injury from his dogs. Unfortunately, you had no time to take on discussion of this serious veterans issue. The BOV secretary was quick to point out that the only time the public is allowed to speak is once a year in April and we missed it. Given the urgency of the resolution of this issue, we were hopeful that an exception would be made.
3. We are extremely grateful the Executive Committee followed the Code of Virginia, VMI BOV By-laws, Statement of Governance to modified the published BOV agenda for June 27th and add our requested resolution. Mr. Watjen's public commitment to take up our resolution in the Executive Session is most welcome and reflects positively on VMI's support to veterans and their families. We trust VMI's reputation of integrity and honor to act on our resolution and not just have the staff present a briefing disputing our request without our involvement or voicing general support for veterans without any actionable result.
4. Your decision to take up our resolution puts VMI in the lead for this important issue - **as it should be**. We're happy update you that as of today 96 of 100 Members of the Virginia House of Delegates have signed [HB6003](#), that calls for a full repeal of the changes made to VMSDEP as we requested VMI support in our proposed resolution. Veterans Services, Police, Fire and other organizations also provided almost unprecedented formal support. These include, but are not limited to, the attached letters from The Fraternal Order of the

Police, Virginia Professional Firefighters, the Joint Leadership Council and a National VSO Letter signed by the leaders of the following organizations; Elizabeth Dole Foundation, Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS), National Military Family Association (NMFA), RallyPoint, Dixon Center for Military and Veteran Services, Jewish War Veterans of the USA, Psycharmor, Independence Fund, Military Spouse Chamber of Commerce, Partners in PROMISE, Spouse of the 19th Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Project Sanctuary, Women in Military Service for America Memorial Foundation, Camp Corral, Code of Support Foundation, No Greater Sacrifice Foundation, Our Military Kids, Blue Star Families, SEALKIDS, Inc, Operation Homefront, Student Veterans of America, Soldiers' Angels, Military Family Advisory Network, Special Forces Shield Maidens, Women Marines Association, Travis Manion Foundation, Navy Seal Foundation, The Green Beret Foundation, Service Women's Action Network, Wounded Warrior Project. Given the continuing deadlock and political maneuvering within and between the various political factions in Richmond, the BOV must act now by passing our proposed resolution.

5. The information provided to us by VMI Alumni and other groups clearly shows that, starting in 1839, VMI operated innovative and valuable programs similar to and including VMSDEP that can be a model not only for VMI but for all schools in Virginia. We can benchmark them as we work together to increase the program's Return on Investment (ROI) while mitigating financial and other impacts.
6. **The actions by the BOV tomorrow on our resolution will be a defining moment for the Institute.** Failure to join the growing coalition of groups and veterans by passing our proposed resolution or delaying it for further study, will amount to VMI denying it.
7. **An empty resolution, deferring it to the September BOV meeting, or merely stating VMI supports veterans without taking the stand to solve the problem is unacceptable.** VMI's history has been one of standing for what is right even if as a singular pillar of honor and moral courage. If the BOV chooses not to act VMI will surely stand-alone. *This time on the wrong side of honor and history.*

Respectfully submitted for action in coordination with, and support from, of The Cadet Foundation,

Kayla Owen, VMSDEP Friends Co-Founder

Enclosures: AS



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

101 N. 14TH STREET, 17TH FL.
RICHMOND VA 23219

*Air Force Association
Air Force Sergeants
Association
American Legion
Association of the United
States Army
Disabled American
Veterans
Fifth Baptist Veterans
Ministry
Fleet Reserve Association
Iraq & Afghanistan Veterans
of America
Legion of Valor of the
U.S., Inc.
Marine Corps League
Military Officers Association
of America
Military Order of the
Purple Heart
Military Order of the
World Wars
National Vet Court Alliance
Navy Mutual Aid Association
Paralyzed Veterans of
America
Reserve Organization of
America
Roanoke Valley Veterans
Council
Student Veterans of America
Veterans of Foreign Wars
Vietnam Veterans of America
Virginia Army/Air National
Guard Enlisted
Association
Virginia National Guard
Association
Women Marines Association
Wounded Warrior Project*

Statement on the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP)

May 29, 2024

The Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (the JLC) met on May 29, 2024.

The JLC members voted unanimously to request that the Governor and General Assembly call a special session to postpone the upcoming changes to the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP) pending study of the premises for the changes and their impact.

Much of the deliberation for these changes occurred without public input or dialogue. This issue is too important to decide behind closed doors.

Executive Directive Seven established a taskforce to review the changes and to help minimize the impact on military and veteran families.

Given the significant impact on our military families, it is crucial that we take the time to reassess these changes thoroughly.

We must act before July 1, 2024 to mitigate the impact on this year's students.

June 26, 2024

Governor Glenn Youngkin
Office of the Governor
Patrick Henry Building, 3rd Floor
1111 East Broad Street
Richmond, VA 223219

Dear Governor Youngkin and Members of the Virginia General Assembly:

As national organizations representing veterans, caregivers, and survivors, we write to you today to strongly urge you to repeal the recent changes to Virginia's Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP). These changes were made "in the dark of night" during the budget process, rather than in the normal course of legislative business, setting a demoralizing national precedent for rolling back veterans' benefits just as the full cost of war hits home.

Prior to the recent changes, VMSDEP offered a full waiver of tuition and mandatory fees for those rated 90% or 100% disabled and the families of those who were killed in action, died on active duty, or who died as a result of their service-connected conditions. It was one of the most generous programs in the country for survivors and dependents, drawing veterans and their families to the Commonwealth and signaling Virginia as a leader among states in supporting veteran families.

Unfortunately, the budget language signed by the Governor greatly reduces this earned benefit, requires burdensome paperwork, and restricts the benefit to undergraduate programs only, and it could result in some families being forced to pay a higher portion of the tuition. As a result, Virginia now has one of the *least generous* education programs for veteran families and survivors anywhere in the nation.

This is a truly shocking development, as Virginia has traditionally been both military and veteran-friendly. In fact, Virginia is home to more than 150,000 active duty service members and their families, more than 700,000 veterans, and the highest percentage of women veterans in the country. Those service members and their families account for more than \$103 billion in total economic impact and 11.3% of Virginia's GDP. Disability payments to Virginia veterans alone account for an additional \$5.6 billion per year.

The decision to go to war is not made at the state level, but states can and do provide a critical part of the safety net that allows our warriors to rest easy, knowing that their families will be taken care of if the worst happens. Virginia's recent changes shift the burden of war's consequences to those who have already paid the most, and those changes must be repealed. The eyes of the nation are upon the Commonwealth.

Sincerely,

Steve Schwab, CEO
Elizabeth Dole Foundation

Bonnie Carroll, President and Founder
Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors(TAPs)

Besa Pinchotti, CEO
National Military Family Association(NMFA)

Dave Gowel, CEO
RallyPoint

Colonel Sam Whitehurst US Army (Ret)
Dixon Center for Military
and Veteran Services

Ken Greenberg, National Executive Director
Jewish War Veterans of the USA

Tina Atherall, DSW, LMSW, CEO
Psycharmor

Sarah Verardo, CEO
Independence Fund

Beth Conlin, Board Chair
Military Spouse Chamber of Commerce

Michelle Norman, Executive Director/Founder
Partners in PROMISE

Mrs. Joseph F. Dunford, Jr.
Spouse of the 19th Chairman of the Joint
Chiefs of Staff

Heather Ehle Ray, CEO and Founder
Project Sanctuary

Phyllis J. Wilson, President
Women in Military Service for America
Memorial Foundation

Phil Kowalczyk, CEO
Camp Corral

Elizabeth El-Nattar, Acting Executive Director
Code of Support Foundation

Rebekah Lovorn, Executive Director
No Greater Sacrifice Foundation

Kara Dallman, Executive Director
Our Military Kids

Kathy Roth-Douquet, CEO
Blue Star Families

Dr. Gretchen McIntosh, Executive Director.
SEALKIDS, Inc.

Brigadier General John I. Pray, Jr. USAF, Retired, CEO
Operation Homefront

Jared Lyon, MPA, President and CEO
Student Veterans of America

Amy Palmer, President and CEO
Soldiers' Angels

Shannon Razsadin, CEO
Military Family Advisory Network

Alexis Moore, Director
Special Forces Shield Maidens

Ann Crittenden, President
Women Marines Association

Ryan Manion, CEO
Travis Manion Foundation

Robin King, CEO
Navy Seal Foundation

Charlie Iacono, President and CEO
The Green Beret Foundation

Elisa Cardnell, President
Service Women's Action Network

LTG Walter E. Piatt, US Army (Ret.), CEO
Wounded Warrior Project

cc: National Governors Association

Fraternal Order of Police of Virginia
5821 Iron Bridge Road
Richmond, VA 23234
(804) 745-6720
Email: vafop@fop.net



June 24, 2024

Members of the Virginia House of Delegates
1000 Bank Street
Richmond, VA 23219

Members of the Virginia House of Delegates,

I am writing you in my role as President of the Fraternal Order of Police of Virginia, Virginia's largest organization of law enforcement personnel, to urge your support for HB 6003, which the House is voting on this Friday, June 28.

HB 6003 restores a critical state program, the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP), which was cut in the May Budget. VMSDEP benefits the sons, daughters, and spouses of killed and disabled service men and women. HB 6003 also *strengthens a similar state program that assists the families of first responders killed in the line of duty.*

We appreciate the hard work of Chairman Luke Torian and the bipartisan group of Chief Patrons and Patrons of HB6003, as well as the support of Speaker Don Scott and Leader Todd Gilbert. Virginia made promises to our military personnel and first responders that should be kept.

Additionally, I hope proponents of "skill" gambling machine legalization will not try to hijack the special session by proposing legalizing these machines. When operational, these "skill" slot machines increase loitering, crime, and money laundering and have caused confusion among Virginia's law enforcement professionals. Legalizing slot machines in convenience stores, restaurants, and bars would be a poor policy decision for the Commonwealth.

This Friday, please keep the focus on assisting grieving sons, daughters, and spouses of fallen and disabled military personnel and first responders and avoid further consideration of convenience store slot machines.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Brad Carruthers
President
Virginia Fraternal Order of Police
Cell: 571-259-4219
bradcarruthersfop@gmail.com

VIRGINIA PROFESSIONAL FIRE FIGHTERS

I.A.F.F - AFL-CIO-CLC

Robert L. Bragg, III
President



Paul J. Hebert
Secretary/Treasurer

VPFF Statement on Military Survivors and Dependent Education Program

The VPFF continues to monitor the changes and upcoming General Assembly schedule regarding the Military Survivors and Dependent Education Program. This previously approved budget action will negatively impact our VPFF members and families beginning July 1st. We want to make it very clear *we will accept nothing less than a clean repeal of the changes made this past session to this budget item.*

As stated before, the language in the adopted state budget was structured in a way that not only impacts Military or Gold Star families, but also survivors and dependents of our fire fighters and other first responders who are disabled or killed in the line of duty. Our brave men and women in the fire service have served their communities proudly and their families have sacrificed immensely. They deserve these education benefits.

Today, on behalf of all 10,000 plus Virginia Professional Fire Fighters across the Commonwealth, *I stand firm in requesting the clean repeal of the changes on this budget language and to restore it to its previous version.* The families of the fallen and disabled fire fighters and ems providers have lost so much already. They should not also lose this critical benefit.

Respectfully,

Robert L. Bragg, III
President, Virginia Professional Fire Fighters