

JLC Position Paper

Veterans Identification

1. **OBJECTIVE:** To provide a simple, ready means of identification for Virginia's veterans.

2. **BACKGROUND:**

- Retired service personnel, including those that are medically retired, receive a United States Uniformed Services Identification Card (DD Form 2 (Retired)).
- All other veterans who have served in the active military, naval, or air service and who have been released there from under conditions other than dishonorable receive a Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty (DD Form 214) as evidence of their service and a Discharge Certificate. Neither of these documents are suitable substitutes for an identification card.
- Veterans who receive medical care through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs receive a veterans identification card. However, only 15% of Virginia's veterans qualify for USDVA medical care.

3. **DISCUSSION:**

- Those veterans who wish to prove veterans status, but who lack government-issued identification (ID) cards, are obligated to produce their DD 214 or other discharge papers, which are not documents that conveniently can be carried on a daily basis.
- A method of honoring Virginia's veterans and providing them with a convenient ID would be to create a Virginia Veterans Identification Card or to add their veterans service status to their Virginia Drivers License or to their state-issued ID if the veteran so requests. Other states have implemented the driver's license feature, most recently North Carolina and Utah.
- Each time a Virginia veteran uses a Virginia Veterans ID Card or driver's license/state ID with veterans indicator, the veteran's honorable service to Virginia and the Nation would be easily and immediately recognized.
- A separate veterans identification card or indicator on a driver's license or state ID would help qualify for commercial discounts (restaurants and other stores) or other cost saving features (such as free access to Virginia's parks or reduced fishing license fees).
- Having a veterans identifier could help law enforcement when officers come across a veteran in a tense situation where the veteran may be suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder and other emotional battle scars. The knowledge can be used by law enforcement to decrease the volatility of a potentially dangerous situation.
- Veterans requesting an ID Card or license designation would need to show their DD-214 as evidence of their service and their discharge. Active Duty, Retired, or members of the National Guard or Reserve would present their current military ID.

4. **RECOMMENDATION:** The JLC recommends that the Governor and General Assembly support the creation of a Virginia Veterans ID Card or driver's license designator.