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COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

*Air Force Association
American Ex-Prisoners
of War
American Legion
AMVETS
Association of the United
States Army
Disabled American
Veterans
Fleet Reserve
Association
Korean War Veterans
Association
Legion of Valor of the
U.S., Inc.
Marine Corps League
Military Order of the
Purple Heart
Military Officers
Association of America
Military Order of the
World Wars
National Association for
Uniformed Services
Navy Seabee Veterans of
America
Non-Commissioned
Officers Association
Paralyzed Veterans of
America
Reserve Officers
Association
Roanoke Valley Veterans
Council
Veterans of Foreign Wars
Vietnam Veterans of
America
Virginia National Guard
Association
Women Marines
Association*

2011 Frequently Asked Questions Veterans Lottery

- 1. Q. Won't the Virginia Education Association (VEA) object to veterans taking money that should go to K-12 education?**

A. Perhaps. However, VEA and its supporters should be able to be convinced that the experience of seven other states facing this same issue has proven that is not the case. It turns out that more people play the veterans lottery, so the result is that more revenue is generated overall and the revenues dedicated for education purposes have not suffered. If necessary, legislation could be crafted that would ensure that the amount of revenues from the Virginia Lottery dedicated to education would not be diminished.
- 2. Q. How did other states get a veterans lottery passed through their General Assemblies?**

A. Basically, key legislators convinced their colleagues that the money for education (or other purposes) would not be diminished by a veterans lottery and that given the sacrifices made by our veterans, it was the right thing to do.
- 3. Q. Isn't there some other source of alternate revenues for veteran programs besides the lottery?**

A. Maybe, but so far no one has been able to come up with a reasonable alternative that has the promise of producing the sustained multi-million dollar revenue that is needed.
- 4. Q. Isn't a lottery considered gambling? Isn't that immoral?**

A. It may be "gambling" but a lottery is legal. Some people may consider it "immoral"; however, a lottery for veterans is certainly no more "immoral" than a lottery for "education" or a church bingo.
- 5. Q. If this is done for veterans, won't a lot of other groups also want to do it? How can this be prevented?**

A. This can be prevented by the General Assembly and the rationale is very simple. In light of the fact that we are now engaged in the longest war in American history, we are seeing the effects on our men and women – PTSD affects a large percentage of our veterans, the stress on families and children is enormous, the suicide rate in the Army is at all time high, and the National Guard has become an operational rather than a strategic reserve with multiple deployments. We're fighting the longest war with the smallest wartime force we've ever had. Never have so few been asked to do so much for so many. Thus, it is the veterans that deserve the care that the results of this program can provide.

October 15, 2010

6. Q. How much do veterans programs cost? Isn't the current budget for the DVS adequate?

A. No, the Department of Veterans Services (DVS) budget does not begin to cover the costs of the programs needed to adequately take care of our veterans and their families. Also, the DVS budget has been cut by \$1.4 million in the last two years. Virginia suffers from veterans cemeteries inadequately maintained, insufficient claims agents to assist veterans in obtaining their claims from the VA, lack of funds to adequately support job training programs, and lack of money to combat veteran homelessness. The recent JLARC study indicated that it would take \$3-10 million to make a significant impact on chronic veteran homelessness. Also, the Virginia Tech study (August 5, 2010) reported that *"it was widely suggested that community-based providers (non-VA system) would need enhanced funding to provide many needed services."* The Virginia War Memorial education program of the highly acclaimed *Virginians at War* series had to be discontinued for lack of funds. These and many other needed programs to adequately care for our veterans have simply gone un-funded. Our best estimate is that an annual multi-million dollar funding stream is required.

7. Q. How would the proceeds from the veterans lottery be used?

A. Proceeds from the veterans lottery would support the programs and services provided by the Virginia Department of Veterans Services. The funds would be managed like those designated for K-12 education as set forth in the Code of Virginia.

8. Q. Could the proceeds from a veterans lottery be used for education?

A. Yes, they could. It could be done in several ways.

First, by helping the veteran parents of school age children cope with the stress of repeated deployments and/or PTSD, we would be helping the children to better adjust to the demands of an academic environment. A survey conducted by the RAND Corporation found that children in military families experienced emotional and behavioral difficulties at rates well above the national averages. One third of the children reported symptoms of anxiety, which affected their academic performance, social adjustment and emotional well being. Thus every dollar spent on helping veterans has a huge effect on the education of their children which is priceless.

Second, providing funding to such veteran sponsored educational efforts as the Virginia War Memorial (VWM) Education Center will further the education of not only school children, but of all Virginians. The highly acclaimed series *Virginians at War* shown on PBS was canceled due to lack of funds. The VWM educational effort must be funded in order to continue.

Third, many other states provide funds derived from a veterans lottery to provide scholarships. Some veterans service organizations provide scholarships but more funding is needed. Also, funding for National Guard scholarships would not only improve education but would help keep our Guard strong.

9. Q. How would a "veterans lottery fund" work? Would a certain percentage be taken from the overall lottery profits?

A. No. It would be very similar to what other states with veterans lottery programs are doing. The Virginia Lottery could create a "Veterans Scratch-Off Card" with the profits from that card dedicated to veterans programs.

Some important features of this approach are:

- The profits from all other lottery games would continue to be devoted to education as they are now.
- A veterans lottery scratch-off card would probably be either a \$2 or \$5 card.
- Sales would be targeted and well advertised to begin around Memorial Day, 2011. Also, it would be heavily advertised for Veterans Day 2011.

10. Q. What about just adding 50 cents to each car registration application?

A. It would be seen as a tax and might not be accepted by Virginians. In contrast, a veteran lottery is voluntary, and would be played by Virginians and those from other states.

11. Q. Couldn't there be a check-off on state tax returns to add \$1 per return for veterans' programs?

A. Yes, but experience has shown that tax return check-offs will not generate the amount of funding needed by our veterans. For example, the Military Family Relief Fund receives less than \$50,000 per year from the tax check-off program.

12. Q. Could some proceeds from horse racing in Virginia go to veterans' programs?

A. Yes, but horse racing is an industry that is facing difficulties in Virginia. All the proceeds now go to keeping the industry alive. Attendance has been down 21% in the past two years at Colonial Downs. There are 9 off track betting parlors in Virginia but none are north of Richmond. Off track betting parlors are subject to local restrictions. Senator Norment has had bills for the last three years to allow "instant racing" and for half the proceeds to go to transportation, but the bills have never made it out of committee. In contrast, the Virginia Lottery is already established and has 4,900 outlets across the state.

13. Q. What about using proceeds from NASCAR racing?

A. NASCAR racing is a private enterprise and no other state has a reliable dedicated revenue stream for veterans programs based on NASCAR proceeds.

14. Q. Cannot the Veterans Services Foundation (VSF) raise the money from companies, foundations, and other groups?

A. No. The VSF has not been able to consistently raise sufficient money to support all the needed veterans programs. For example, the VSF has made fundraising in support of the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program its highest priority, and raised about \$113,000 in FY2009 and \$91,500 in FY2010. However, the VSF is not in the position to provide the needed multi-million dollar funding stream on a consistent basis over the long term.

15. Q. Is there any other way to provide an alternative dedicated revenue source for veterans programs?

A. No other way that has a proven track record of providing a multi-million dollar revenue stream has yet been found. As of now, a veterans' lottery is the best, most proven model.