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RICHMOND, VA 23219

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
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Korean War Veterans
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U.S., Inc.
Marine Corps League
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Purple Heart
Military Officers
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National Association for
Uniformed Services
Navy Seabee Veterans of
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Officers Association
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Reserve Officers
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Roanoke Valley Veterans
Council
Veterans of Foreign Wars
Vietnam Veterans of
America
Virginia National Guard
Association
Women Marines
Association*

2011 POSITION PAPER State Veterans Cemeteries

1. **OBJECTIVE:** To ensure that state veterans cemeteries operate in a safe, efficient manner and meet national shrine standards by filling vacant positions, replacing worn out equipment, and purchasing necessary supplies.
2. **BACKGROUND:**
 - Funding for the state veterans cemeteries in the past has not kept up with their growth in burial numbers and gravesite/headstone maintenance requirements. That load is expected to increase as the projected number of veterans aged 65 and older increases from 247,173 from 2009 to more than 295,000 by 2017 and federal veterans' cemeteries increasingly are not accepting new burials.
 - The cemetery total annual operating budget is about \$811,000, which has not increased over the past several years. These funds came primarily from two sources: approximately two thirds is state general funds (GF), about one third is from non-general fund (NGF) veterans burial plot allowances received from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (\$300 for each veterans burial).
 - The cemeteries largest single operating expense is employees pay and benefits. However, three positions are vacant and need to be filled.
 - Operational equipment replacement funding is needed for 12 year old and more recently obtained equipment that is worn out or starting to wear out.
 - Directional signage and grounds supplies (grass seed, fertilizer, etc.) are needed to maintain the cemeteries at National Shrine Standards and as the number of burials increase, the need for supplies increase.
3. **DISCUSSION:**
 - Funding is required for two authorized unfilled employee positions at the Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery (Suffolk) and one unfilled position at the Virginia Veterans Cemetery (Amelia). Cost: GF \$101,500 (FY12 and ongoing).
 - Funding is required to make up shortfall in operating budget for Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery (Dublin). Cost: GF \$85,000 and one additional position (FY12 and ongoing).
 - Funding is required for 12 year old equipment replacement at Amelia and equipment wearing out at Suffolk. Cost: GF \$60,000 and \$20,000 respectively (FY12 and ongoing to a lesser degree).
 - Funding is required for installation of road/highway directional signage posting in both directions on one major interstate, two roadways and four ramps at Dublin. Suffolk and Amelia need signage upgrading. Cost: GF \$32,000, \$26,000, and \$13,000 respectively (FY12).
 - Funding is required for grass seed/fertilizer. Cost: GF \$16,000 (FY12 and ongoing).
 - Funding is required for an employee overtime fund to have an employee available in each cemetery on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays throughout the year to assist families with locating grave sites, assist with the placement of flowers, handling cemetery flags. It would include having full staff available to support holiday recognition events. Cost: \$33,600 (FY2012 and ongoing).
4. **RECOMMENDATION:** That the Governor and General Assembly provide additional funding of \$387,100 in FY12 to operate Virginia's Veterans Cemeteries.

September 28, 2010