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REPORT TO THE JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL September 9, 2021

The Board of Veterans Services (BVS) met in person at the Virginia War Memorial on August 25. Due to the pandemic, this was our first in-person meeting since November 2019. Although not every member was able to attend, it was good to be back together again.

During our meeting, VDVS Commissioner John Maxwell provided an operational update and presented a briefing on efforts to achieve the department's strategic priorities. He discussed the Compact with Virginia's Veterans and discussed the lines of effort, within each objective, leading toward established goals. The lines of effort included suicide prevention, technological improvements, capacity to meet increasing numbers of veterans and family members requiring services, agency infrastructure needs, and strategic communication improvements. As a key stakeholder in the VDVS Strategic Plan, the Board will form a working group to assist VDVS in developing metrics to measure agency progress in achieving objectives.

The JLC Acting Chair, Ms. Denice Williams, presented the ten JLC proposed initiatives for consideration and feedback by the Board. Members received the initiatives as read-ahead material and came prepared to offer input. The Board members hailed the initiative related to suicide prevention as a critical effort for the Commonwealth. The Board is also in favor of the recommendation of funding to cover the cost of the spousal burial fee at Virginia state cemeteries. Other input by Board members addressed ways to improve or clarify the recommended actions within the proposals. The Board looks forward to reviewing the final drafts along with the recommended priorities of the adopted initiatives.

Finally, the Board held elections for the position of Chair and Vice-Chair. It is my honor to announce our new Vice Chair, Ms. Thuraya Kent. Ms. Kent is serving in her first term as a Board member. She is a retired Navy Captain and will provide tremendous leadership for the Board. I was also humbled and honored to accept the Board's nomination and vote for continued service as Chairman for my second term. I look forward to working with the JLC to advocate for Virginia's Veterans and their families during the upcoming 2022 General Assembly session.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Dick
Chairman