

Governor Kaine Signs Legislation on Military and Veterans Issues – Bills improve veterans services, provides for uniform treatment of military children at state and local level –

RICHMOND – Standing with representatives of the armed services, Governor Timothy M. Kaine today ceremonially signed several General Assembly bills providing assistance to military personnel and their families and honoring the Commonwealth's veterans, demonstrating Virginia's continued bipartisan support for active duty service members, Guardsmen and Reservists, veterans and their families.

"Virginia owes a great debt to our men and women who have served in the military," Governor Kaine said. "These bills take important steps toward improving the lives of those who are currently serving our country, and honoring those who have served in the past."

Among the bills signed today was the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children (HB 1727/Cole). The compact, which has been signed into law in at least 10 other states, will allow for the uniform treatment, at the state and local district level, of military children transferring between school districts and states, and will also address the timely sharing of their educational records. Virginia currently has more school-aged children of active duty military than any state in the nation (76,352).



Other bills signed during today's ceremony provide tuition assistance for members of the National Guard that have a minimum of 2 years remaining on their service requirement, increase the homestead exemption for veterans with a 40% or greater service connected disability rating, and make it easier for military and overseas voters and their families to vote absentee.

Virginia is home to 156,000 active military personnel, as well as 26,000 reservists and 10,000 members of the Virginia National Guard. Additionally, 807,000 veterans call the Commonwealth home, meaning that one out of every ten Virginians is a veteran.

The following legislation was signed today:

Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children

- **HB 1727 (Cole)** Establishes a compact to remove barriers to educational success imposed on children of military families because of frequent moves and deployment of their parents. The compact is currently in effect as at least 10 states have enacted the compact into law.

Election

- **HB 1881 (P. Miller)** Provides that the absentee ballot shall be sent by email to military and overseas voters and their families who are located outside the Commonwealth and who request the ballot be sent by email. However, the voted ballot must be returned by regular mail.
- **SB 993/HB 1712 (J. Miller/Janis)** Removes the requirement that a federal write-in absentee ballot will only be considered valid for purposes of simultaneously satisfying both an absentee ballot application and a completed absentee ballot for federal offices if the envelope contains the signature of a witness and his printed name and address. The bill provides that the envelope need only contain the signature of the witness in order for the ballot to be considered valid. The bill also provides that the ballot must be received no later than the closing of the polls rather than five days before the election and that the federal write-in absentee ballot may serve as a registration application if the voter is eligible to register in Virginia.

Active Duty Military Personnel and Reservists

- **HB 2342 (Amundson)** Provides that notwithstanding the eligibility requirement that a member of the National Guard have a minimum of two years remaining on his service requirement in order to receive a grant, if a member is activated or deployed for federal military service, an additional day, up to 365 days, must be added to the member's eligibility for the grant for each day of federal service. Additional credit, or credit for state duty, may be awarded at the discretion of the Adjutant General.
- **SB 1159 (Saslaw)** Extends from 72 hours to five business days the amount of time a person serving in the armed forces of the U.S. outside Virginia has to get his vehicle inspected upon returning to the Commonwealth.

Veterans

- **HB 1767 (Dance)** Requires that the Board of Education award an honorary high school diploma to veterans of the Vietnam War who, as secondary school students, enlisted or were drafted to serve in any branch of the United States Armed Forces during the war between 1959 and 1975, were subsequently honorably discharged, and were unable to complete their secondary education upon return to civilian life.
- **HB 1667 (Bowling)** Extends the American Former Prisoners of War Memorial Highway (U.S. Route 19) northward from the Russell/Tazewell County line to U.S. Route 460 at Claypool.
- **HB 1875 (Cosgrove/Watts)** Requires the Virginia War Memorial Foundation Board of Trustees to establish criteria for those name and homes of records to be engraved on the War Memorial. The bill specifies the issues that the Board must address in its criteria. The bill requires the Board to report to the Governor and the General Assembly on or before November 1, 2009.
- **HB 2279 (Bowling)** Requires the Commissioner of the Department of Veterans Services to ensure that benefit claims assistance is provided on a regular basis at locations other than established service offices. Current law specifies that the Commissioner shall ensure that the personnel assigned to process benefit claims shall provide these services at locations other than the service office at least one day per week.
- **HB 2401 (Bell)** Designates the following bridges: the U.S. Route 29 bridge over the Rapidan River between Greene and Madison Counties as the "Fallen Heroes Memorial Bridge in honor of Corporal Adam J. Fargo and Private First Class Edwin A. Andino" and the U.S. Route 340 bridge over Overall Run at the Warren County/Page County line as the "Corporal Larry E. Smedley (USMC) Memorial Bridge."
- **HB 2534 (E. Scott/Bell)** Authorizes the issuance of special license plates for veterans of Operation Enduring Freedom.
- **HB 2560 (Johnson)** Increases the value of money or property that a disabled veteran can protect from garnishment, if the veteran has a 40% or greater service-connected disability rating.
- **HB 2639 (Jones)** Exempts from the mandatory disclosure provisions of the Freedom of Information Act (i) personal information contained in the Veterans Care Center Resident Trust Funds concerning residents or patients of the Department of Veterans Services care centers and (ii) certain records maintained in connection with fundraising activities by the Veterans Services Foundation.
- **SB 1116 (Ticer)** Requires health insurers, health care subscription plans, and health maintenance organizations to offer and make available coverage for medically necessary prosthetic devices, their repair, fitting, replacement, and components, to replace a limb.