

Ranking of Proposed 2020 Joint Leadership Council Initiatives

Rank	Bill No.	Patron	Initiative
1			2nd Resolution of Personal Property Tax Relief for Certain Disabled Veterans Objective: To create a unified, cohesive system for personal property tax relief to certain disabled veterans in the Commonwealth.
2			Counting Military Absentee Ballots After Election Day Objective: To ensure the continued commitment of the Commonwealth to fully support our military servicemen and women who are serving overseas by enabling returned overseas military ballots to be counted when received after the polls close and before 5:00 p. on the second day before the State Board of Elections meets to certify the election results.
3			Income Tax Subtraction for Certain Low-Income 100% Disabled Veterans Objective: To allow individual income tax subtraction for the amount of annual retirement compensation received for service as a member of the U. S. Armed Forces, or the Virginia National Guard, for 100% service-connected disabled veterans with a federal adjusted gross income not to exceed 150% of the federal poverty level for a four person household.
4			Virginia National Guard Emergency Response Pay Objective: To ensure Virginia's continued commitment to the men and women of the Virginia National Guard through raising the minimum National Guard Emergency Response Pay (ERP) to equal the currently used Department of Defense pay table plus a 2-10% increased adjustment, depending on rank.
5			Tax Credits for Employers Who Hire Virginia National Guard and Reserves Objective: To ensure individual and corporate income tax credit; employers of National Guard and Reserve members and self-employed National Guard.
6			Microloans for Veterans Programs (MVP) Objective: To establish the Microloans for Veterans Program through the Virginia Small Business Financing Authority's system of microloans available solely to Virginia veteran entrepreneurs establishing business ventures based in Virginia.

ATTACHMENT6



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Virginia National Guard Association
Women Marines Association

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

Summary of PROPOSED 2020 JLC Policy Initiatives

NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION BEYOND THE JLC
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Initiative	Recommendation
JLC 2020-XX <i>Counting Military Service as Credit in Teacher Salaries</i>	That the General Assembly and Governor appropriate funds sufficient to enact reforms for Virginia veterans to enter the teaching profession and be paid commensurate with their experience.
JLC 2020-XX <i>JLC Supports Commonwealth Connect - Universal Broadband Access for Virginians</i>	That the Governor and General Assembly appropriate the full \$50M for VATI to help Virginia's progress towards universal broadband access.
JLC 2020-XX <i>Counting Military Absentee Ballots After Election Day</i>	That the General Assembly enact and the Governor sign legislation that directs Virginia registrars receive and count military overseas absentee ballots postmarked on or before election day and which arrive by 5:00 p.m. on the second business day before the State Board of Elections meets to certify the results of the election.
JLC 2020-XX <i>Microloans for Veterans Program (MVP)</i>	That the Governor and General Assembly provide an appropriation in the amount of \$1,000,000 in FY20 and \$1,000,000 in FY21 for the Microloan for Veterans Program fund.
JLC 2020-XX <i>Tax Credits for Employers who Hire VNG and Reserves.</i>	That the Governor and General Assembly approve Tax credits for employers of National Guard members and self-employed National Guard members.
JLC 2020-XX <i>Virginia National Guard Emergency Response Pay</i>	That the Governor and General Assembly appropriate budget and legislative support to ensure that all Virginia National Guardsmen are paid at least at the E6 rate when they are called to SAD in emergency situations.
JLC 2020-XX <i>Virginia National Guard Scholarship</i>	That the Governor and General Assembly appropriate budget and legislative support for a Virginia National Guard Scholarship program to fully cover Guardsmen seeking a degree or certification.

JLC 2020-XX <i>Phased-in System for Partial State Tax Exemption for Military Retirement Income</i>	That the Governor and General Assembly support changes to the current Virginia tax laws for a phased in system to reduce state tax on military retirement income up to \$40,000, for retirees 65 years of age or older.
JLC 2020-XX <i>Income Tax Subtraction for Certain Low-Income 100% Disabled Veterans</i>	That the Governor and General Assembly approve an individual income tax subtraction for 100% service-connected disabled veterans with a federally adjusted gross income, not exceeding 150% of the federal poverty level for a four-person household, who have not already claimed another exemption.
JLC 2020-XX <i>2nd Resolution – Personal Property Tax Exemption</i>	That the Governor and General Assembly approve legislation, and send to the voters via ballot initiative, creating a standardized, statewide personal property tax exemption for one vehicle for 100% service-connected, total and permanent disabled veterans.



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Position Paper 2020-xx Counting Military Service as Credit in Teacher Salaries

OBJECTIVE: That every military transitioning service member and veteran who enters the teaching field in Virginia should be given credit for their service up to six years, and veterans with a Masters should be given an additional \$10,000 per year.

BACKGROUND:

- Currently, a service member at the rate of E-5 with 4 years of service earns \$2,804/mo. and receives a housing allowance of \$1,533/mo., and does not pay insurance, which equals a salary of \$4,337 a month.
- A teacher with 5 years teaching credit for the 2018-19 school year in Virginia, and a Masters' degree is paid an average of \$3,939.18/mo.
- If that veteran with a Masters received 4 years of military service as teaching credit, their salary would raise \$166/mo. to \$4,105.40 a month.
- However, this is still less than what they made in the military, or could make in other states. For example, in Ohio, a teacher with the above experience and Masters will earn \$1,600 more per month than their veteran counterpart in Virginia.

DISCUSSION:

- Nearly 940 teaching positions went unfilled in Virginia at the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year, not including those lost to neighboring states.
- This proposal is a fiscally responsible first step, making teaching a competitive, viable profession and a financial possibility to veterans, over the current pay rates and steps.
- This is one more way to be both veteran-friendly and ensure enlisted military personnel with valuable skills remain in Virginia, and education-friendly by providing highly skilled teachers for our children.
- For taxable years beginning on and after January 1, 2020, compensation packages to new and current teachers in Virginia who are veterans of the U.S. armed forces should accurately reflect their education and experience in the military, with credit for their years of service, up to six years.
- Additionally, funding should be appropriated so that veterans with a Masters degree in the field of study, or similar to, the subject they will teach, then they would receive an additional \$10,000 in pay per year.

RECOMMENDATION: That the General Assembly and Governor appropriate funds sufficient to enact reforms for Virginia veterans to enter the teaching profession and be paid commensurate with their experience.

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COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

Position Paper 2020-xx Counting Military Absentee Ballots After Election Day

OBJECTIVE: To ensure the continued commitment of the Commonwealth of Virginia to fully support of our military servicemen and women who are serving overseas, by enabling returned overseas military ballots to be counted when received after the polls close and before 5:00 p.m. on the second day before the State Board of Elections meets to certify the election results.

BACKGROUND:

- Currently, absentee ballots received by the local registrar after 7:00 p.m. on Election Day are not counted.
- In 2017, over 50 overseas absentee ballots arrived for the 28th House of Delegates race the morning after the election – but they were not counted. Even though the margin was razor thin and a recount was called, those ballots were never counted.
- While federal law allows the military to register to vote and request a ballot by electronic means, in Virginia those voted ballots cannot be returned electronically, but must be returned via “snail mail.”
- Mail delays are common, especially for those servicemembers in remote or hostile areas. The Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act requires that all [absentee] ballots be mailed to service members not less than 45 days before an election, however, at least 36 days may be needed to transmit the ballots – and that is without shipping delays.

DISCUSSION:

- In 2018, Senator Surovell patroned SB771 to solve this problem, but it did not make it out of committee.
- After the November 2018 election, the State Board of Elections (SBE), reported over 6,770 absentee ballots were returned after polls closed and were not counted.
- The JLC has been working to find a solution to the disenfranchisement of Virginia military men and women since 2013. This is a sensible solution that addresses the privacy concerns brought up by Verified Voters.
- This solution is low-tech, cost effective and easily implemented by the localities to ensure the enfranchisement of our deployed military.

RECOMMENDATION: That the General Assembly enact and the Governor sign legislation that directs Virginia registrars receive and count military overseas absentee ballots postmarked on or before election day and which arrive by 5:00 p.m. on the second business day before the State Board of Elections meets to certify the results of the election.

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COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

Position Paper 2020-xx

JLC Support of the Governor's Commonwealth Connect Plan - Universal Broadband Access for Virginians

OBJECTIVE: To assure veterans in rural Virginia have reliable access to telehealth services, as well as education and business opportunities through universal broadband.

BACKGROUND:

- In 2019, the Governor created the Commonwealth Connect Coalition – broadband providers, localities, Fortune 500 companies, VSOs and other diverse organizations – with the goal of universal coverage and supporting the Virginia Telecommunication Initiative (VATI).
- VATI supports broadband expansion to unserved communities by partnering with localities and private sector providers, and the Governor sought to increase funding for VATI to \$50 million, from the \$4 million budgeted.
- As of June 2019, there were 92 members of the Commonwealth Connect Coalition, including several VSOs represented on the JLC.
- In the final budget, the GA appropriated \$19 million in FY20 funds for VATI.

DISCUSSION:

- The JLC believes all 725,000 Virginia veterans deserve access to quality broadband and the opportunity to fully participate in modern American life, not just those in the "Eastern Crescent."
- The Northam Administration estimates there are 600,000 Virginians without access to the internet. This number includes at least 150,000 veterans.
- Rural veterans are substantially more likely to enroll in the VA health care system than urban veterans, but live further from medical facilities, thereby needing reliable internet service to access VA telehealth services.
- A report by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and Amazon, *Unlocking the Digital Potential of Rural America*, estimates that for Virginia, the increased access to digital tools would result in \$452M in annual wages, and \$1.29B added overall to the state GDP per year.
- Universal broadband service will provide veterans in rural areas with more opportunities to take advantage of their GI Bill benefits through online education programs.
- Universal broadband service will provide veterans the opportunity to become entrepreneurs and start up small businesses in small towns and rural communities, adding to the New Virginia Economy.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Governor and General Assembly appropriate the full \$50M for VATI to help Virginia's progress towards universal broadband access.

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COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

Position Paper 2020-xx Tax Credits for Employers who Hire National Guard and Reserves

OBJECTIVE: To ensure Individual and corporate income tax credit; employers of National Guard members and self-employed National Guard.

BACKGROUND:

- Provides for taxable years 2019 through 2023 a non-refundable tax credit against individual and corporate income taxes for wages paid by an employer to an employee who is a Virginia National Guard member or Reserves.
- Income of a self-employed National Guard member or Reservist attributable to his business would also qualify for a non-refundable tax credit against individual and corporate income taxes for wages paid for taxable years 2020 through 2024.
- For taxable years beginning on and after January 1, 2020, but before January 1, 2025, a self-employed National Guard member shall be allowed a credit against the tax levied pursuant to § 58.1-320 or 58.1-400 for income attributable to his trade or business during the taxable year.

DISCUSSION:

- The amount of the credit shall be:
 - 25%, if such member was in a military pay status for 65 days or more during such taxable year; or
 - 15% if such member was in a military pay status for 45 days or more during such taxable year.
- The credit should not be allowed if such member was in a military pay status for less than 45 days during such taxable year.
- The taxpayer should be allowed to carry unused credits over for up to five taxable years within the taxable years of 2024 to 2028.
- The amount of the credit claimed shall not exceed the total amount of tax imposed pursuant to § 58.1-320 or 58.1-400 upon the employer for the taxable year.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Governor and General Assembly approve Tax credits for employers of National Guard members and self-employed National Guard members.

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COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

Position Paper 2020-xx Microloans for Veterans Program (MVP)

OBJECTIVE: To establish the Microloans for Veterans Program, through the Virginia Small Business Financing Authority's system of microloans, available solely to Virginia veteran entrepreneurs establishing business ventures based in Virginia.

BACKGROUND:

- Entrepreneurship is the "third leg of the stool," (along with Education and Employment) for Virginia veterans. It is a key for veterans and the New Virginia Economy.
- Current programs, such as the U.S. Small Business Administration's (SBA) Boots to Business program, Bunker Labs, Capital Post, and the Arsenal are focused on training and mentorship and businesses that are established and can provide proof of revenue. SBA loans can be almost impossible for veteran start-ups to access.
- The Virginia Small Business Financing Authority (VSBFA) is Virginia's business and economic development financing arm, providing financing for small businesses and economic growth in Virginia. The VSBFA already has the authority to administer microloan programs and are willing to administer a microloan for veteran entrepreneurs.

DISCUSSION:

- MVP would place veteran entrepreneurs on a more equal footing with civilian entrepreneurs and encourage the growth of small businesses in Virginia.
- MVP sets up a public-private partnership between VSBFA, DVS, Virginia Community College System and private banks to assist veterans and incentivize veterans to complete financial education and business planning classes with lower interest rates (1-2% below market rate) and extended payback periods.
- The program would have two tiers –
 - a) Tier 1: Loan amounts up to \$10,000 through VSBFA; Requirements: Honorably discharged, minimum credit credentials, repayment and interest rate terms set by VSBFA, and a willingness to sign on to education and mentorship requirements, unless comparable credentials can be produced.
 - b) Tier 2: Loan amounts up to \$50,000 through Virginia banking institutions (such as V3 partners); Requirements: Successfully completed all education and mentorship requirements of Tier 1 and paid back the loan early or on time.
- The two tiered system minimizes risk, keeps state funds circulating more quickly and promotes successful small businesses in Virginia by providing a wide range of educational and support tools to the veterans.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Governor and General Assembly provide an appropriation in the amount of \$1,000,000 in FY20 and \$1,000,000 in FY21 for the Microloan for Veterans Program fund.

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COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

Position Paper 2020-xx Virginia National Guard Scholarship Program

OBJECTIVE: To ensure the continued commitment of the Commonwealth to the Virginia National Guard through a scholarship program covering tuition costs for accredited Virginia colleges and universities, certification programs, community colleges and trade schools.

BACKGROUND:

- The Virginia National Guard (VNG) may miss end-strength goals for the first time in over a decade. National Guard leadership in Washington, D.C. made it clear that states who fail to meet strength goals will lose force structure.
- Loss of force structure equals loss of equipment, facilities, and personnel dollars to the Commonwealth, and lost opportunity to pursue increased force structure, which is a current priority for The Adjutant General.
- VNG is losing recruits and current Virginia Guardsmen to surrounding states offering free college tuition for members and assistance to family members, including: Tennessee and Pennsylvania.
- Current VNG tuition assistance benefit comes with a 2-year service obligation and the benefit fluctuates year-to-year depending on several factors.

DISCUSSION:

- VNG is the tip of the spear with cutting edge weapons systems and force structure, and cannot grow without meeting end-strength goals.
- Increased tuition incentives serve as strong recruiting and retention tools to help reach end strength goals
- Increased tuition incentives provides stability to Guardsmen and their families, and strengthen the VNG and their communities by furthering their education.
- Investing in a scholarship program brings additional funds to Virginia institutions of higher education, increased salaries (higher tax brackets), and most importantly—skilled workers participating in Virginia's economy.
- Guardsmen are less transient than active duty, and more likely to settle permanently in Virginia and use the tuition assistance at Virginia's institutions of higher learning – in person or online, as well as shop, buy homes and enjoy leisure activities within the Commonwealth.
- A wider variety of education incentives to the only Soldiers and Airmen in the nation who serve the Commonwealth directly, will propel Virginia toward our goal of becoming the most Veteran friendly state in the nation.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Governor and General Assembly appropriate budget and legislative support for a Virginia National Guard Scholarship program to fully cover Guardsmen seeking a degree or certification.

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COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

Position Paper 2020-xx Virginia National Guard Emergency Response Pay

OBJECTIVE: To ensure the continued commitment of the Commonwealth of Virginia to the men and women of the Virginia National Guard through raising the minimum Emergency Response Pay (ERP) to the equivalent of a service member with the rank of E-6 (Staff Sergeant) with 18 years of service, which is currently just over \$125 per day.

BACKGROUND:

- During state emergencies when the Governor calls up the National Guard, Guardsmen are brought on as temporary state employees at a very low payband.
- Guardsmen often lose pay while on state active duty. Guardsmen often are forced to use vacation time or take leave without pay. Most employers do not supplement the pay difference.
- Other state employees involved in emergency response work overtime and go home or to a hotel, however, Guardsmen on SAD are not eligible for overtime pay, put in 12-18 hours per day, and are typically quartered in austere conditions such as an armory or tent.
- Since January 2014, the VNG has mobilized nearly 2,570 personnel on state active duty to respond to hurricanes, winter storms and flooding. Guardsmen are often given only 12 hours to report for SAD.

DISCUSSION:

- During the Charlottesville "Unite the Right" Protests in August 2017, Guardsmen stood side-by-side to Virginia State Police in extremely stressful and challenging conditions, and were woefully undercompensated compared to the state police.
- SAD pay amounts are determined by DOD pay tables. An E-1 VNG Soldier/Airman earns about \$89.75 per day, before taxes, which on a 12-hour shift equals \$7.48 per hour – less than the federal minimum wage.
- It is essential that Guardsmen are compensated at a reasonable rate, at least comparable to minimum wage, with a set pay floor.
- It is essential to promote a positive work environment when conducting SAD missions to send the message to Guardsmen that their efforts are valued equally to other emergency response agencies.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Governor and General Assembly appropriate budget and legislative support to ensure that all Virginia National Guardsmen are paid at least at the E6 rate when they are called to SAD in emergency situations.

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Position Paper 2020-xx

2nd Resolution of Personal Property Tax Relief for Certain Disabled Veterans

OBJECTIVE: To create a unified, cohesive system for personal property tax relief to certain disabled veterans in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

BACKGROUND:

- Virginia's counties and independent cities currently have a patchwork system of personal property tax relief for veterans. Most offer no exemption, but among those that do offer something, how much relief – partial or full – and which veterans qualify varies widely.
- This creates confusion and distress among veterans who move from a locality with personal property tax relief to a new locality that does not.
- The Disabled American Veterans (DAV), Department of Virginia has passed resolutions at the past two state conferences (Res 10, Res 19) calling for personal property tax exemption for one vehicle for veterans who qualify for the real property tax exemption.
- Vehicles such as SUVs and vans that are retrofitted to accommodate disabilities can have high value and therefore high personal property tax rates.

DISCUSSION:

- As a Commonwealth, there is supposed to be uniform policies and tax exemptions.
- The Commissioners of the Revenue and other assessing officials are supportive of personal property tax exemption on one vehicle with the same requirements as the real property tax exemption.
- This would allow veterans who are 100% service-connected, total and permanently disabled, as rated by the U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs, and therefore qualified for the real property tax exemption to also qualify for exemption on one vehicle.
- This is another way to support low-income veterans, many of whom often risk losing their vehicle due to late payments and fines.
- Localities would still be able to keep existing partial or full exemptions for other veterans in place, if desired.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Governor and General Assembly approve the 2nd resolution and corresponding legislation creating a standardized, statewide personal property tax exemption for one vehicle for 100% service-connected, total and permanent disabled veterans and send it to the voters on November 3, 2020.

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DATE, 2020

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COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

Position Paper 2020

Phased-in System for Partial State Tax Exemption for Military Retirement Income

OBJECTIVE: To reform the Virginia state tax law, creating a phased in system to exempt a portion of military retirement income beginning in 2020.

BACKGROUND:

- Currently Virginia does not exempt military retirement income, while three of Virginia's neighbors (NC, WV, MD) have some level of state tax exemption on military retirement income.
- The personal income tax laws of over half the states provides various exclusions from gross income in determining tax liability, including an exclusion for combat-related special compensation and death benefit payments received by a surviving spouse or other beneficiary designated by a military veteran.

DISCUSSION:

- Non-military income, including all income derived from federal or military contracts, consulting or full-time employment will be taxed at the full gross income percentages.
- The qualifying retirement income must be received as a result of an honorable discharge and retirement from full-time, active-duty service in the armed forces of the United States, or reserve components thereof, including the National Guard.
- For each taxable year beginning on or after January 1, 2020 gross income shall not include a percentage of qualified military retirement income for retirees who are 65 years of age or older and qualified taxpayers.
- The phased in system would:
 - Beginning in 2020: A military retiree may subtract \$10,000 of their military retirement income from federally adjusted gross income before determining Virginia tax.
 - Beginning in 2021: A military retiree may subtract \$20,000 of their military retirement income from federally adjusted gross income before determining Virginia tax.
 - Beginning in 2022: A military retiree may subtract \$30,000 of their military retirement income from federally adjusted gross income before determining Virginia tax.
 - Beginning in 2023: A military retiree may subtract \$40,000 of their military retirement income from federally adjusted gross income before determining Virginia tax.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Governor and General Assembly support changes to the current Virginia tax laws for a phased in system to reduce state tax on military

THE 25 ORGANIZATIONS OF THE JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL HAVE MORE THAN 250,000 MEMBERS



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF
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*Air Force Association
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Association of the United
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of America
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
Navy Mutual Aid Association
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 Army/Air National
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Virginia National Guard
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DATE, 2020

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Position Paper 2020-xx

Income Tax Subtraction for Certain Low-Income 100% Disabled Veterans

OBJECTIVE: To allow individual income tax subtraction for the amount of annual retirement compensation received for service as a member of the U.S. Armed Forces, or the Virginia National Guard, for 100% service-connected disabled veterans with a federal adjusted gross income not exceeding 150% of the federal poverty level for a four-person household.

BACKGROUND:

- Virginia currently allows qualifying taxpayers to claim a subtraction for up to \$20,000 of disability income. Disabled veterans who already claim this subtraction would not qualify for the new program or would have to drop this subtraction and claim the new one.
- D.C. and Maryland offer exemptions ranging from \$3,000 to \$5,000.
 - North Carolina offers a full exemption for retirees with five years of service as of August 12, 1989; otherwise, retirees may claim a deduction of up to \$4,000.
 - Kentucky offers exemptions of \$41,110 and West Virginia \$20,000.

DISCUSSION:

- While Combat-Related Special Compensation (CRSC) is not subject to federal or Virginia taxation, Concurrent Retirement and Disability Payments (CRDP) are generally subject to both federal and Virginia taxation.
- Available reports do not provide specific data on the exact number of 100% service-connected disabled veterans in Virginia, however, the VA has given a reasonable estimate of 1,371 disabled Virginia veterans who would qualify for this benefit.
- Department of Taxation considers implementation of this bill as routine, and does not require additional funding.
- No subtraction would be permitted if another Virginia subtraction or deduction for such service has been claimed.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Governor and General Assembly approve an individual income tax subtraction for 100% service-connected disabled veterans with a federal adjusted gross income, not exceeding 150% of the federal poverty level for a four-person household, who have not already claimed another exemption.

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