



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Department of Veterans Services Office of the Commissioner

Vincent M. Burgess
Commissioner

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August 3, 2006

Memorandum

To: Heads of all Executive Branch Agencies

From: Vincent M. Burgess

Re: Executive Order 19

Executive Order 19 (EO19), signed by Governor Kaine on June 16, sets forth the Commonwealth's policy for improving services to Virginia's veterans. We owe a great debt to the brave men and women who defended our great nation at home and abroad. EO19 is a fantastic opportunity for state government to show that it is committed to ensuring that our veterans and their families receive the benefits, support, quality care, and recognition they have earned through service and sacrifice.

Considered as a whole, veterans have a great impact on our Commonwealth. Veterans make up 10% of the state's population; if spouses and dependents are included, the number approaches 20%. Veterans add immeasurably to the well-being and social fabric of our communities through their dedication, work ethic, patriotism, and spirit of service. Economically, veterans account for almost \$6 billion per year in direct federal spending; you might say that veterans are a \$6 billion per year "clean industry." Improving veterans' services will make Virginia an even more attractive location for veterans and military retirees.

Each of your agencies impacts the daily lives of our veterans, in ways both large and small. When citizens look to the state to provide "veterans' services," they look first – and oftentimes, only – to the Department of Veterans Services (DVS). Virginia veterans are often unaware of the many key state veterans services provided outside of DVS. EO19 will give all of us the opportunity to showcase current programs and services, identify ways to improve current services, and to identify opportunities for new or expanded services. EO19 gives us the opportunity to think of veterans' benefits and veterans' services in a new light – as a broad-based and integrated system of service-delivery – thereby making Virginia's system a model for the delivery of benefits at the state level.

As we work together to implement EO19, we must first set a baseline – where are we now, and what do we offer? This is also the time to identify ways to improve on current services. I've been tasked to submit an interim report to the Governor by October 15, with a final report to be submitted by April 30, 2007.

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

To establish this baseline and to prepare the interim report, I request that you:

- **By August 8:** Designate a senior-level official as your agency contact for veterans' issues. This person will be the "go to" person on veterans issues as we work together to meet the requirements set out in EO19
- **By September 15:** Identify the programs and services provided by your agency that are either offered exclusively to veterans or are tailored to the specific needs of veterans
 - If applicable, please be sure to differentiate between services provided to all veterans and services provided only to certain veterans (for example, aged veterans, disabled veterans, minority veterans, etc.)
 - Please include the name of the program, the type of service(s) offered, the resources dedicated to carrying out the program (personnel and fiscal), and the office(s) or division(s) in your agency tasked with implementing the program
- **By September 30:** Identify opportunities for improving current services either offered exclusively to veterans or tailored to the specific needs of veterans

After we've established a baseline, we'll be well-positioned to identify opportunities for us to work together to offer new, expanded, or customized services that meet the educational, health care, and social service needs of Virginia's veterans. This is most exciting, for it gives us the chance to do what we do best – harnessing the talent and creativity of our agencies to redefine how we serve our veterans. In my mind, nothing is off the table. I know the phrase has almost become cliché, but I hope you will "think outside the box" regarding ways to serve our veterans.

If your agency is like mine, spare resources are few and far between. It is not my intention, nor do I believe it is the Governor's, to divert resources from serving your other customers. Accordingly, EO19 tasks us to identify the additional resources required to implement the new, expanded, or customized services. To meet the April 30, 2007 deadline, I request that you:

- **By December 31:** Identify opportunities to partner with DVS on ways to offer new, expanded, or customized services that meet the educational, health care, and social service needs of Virginia's veterans
- **By April 30, 2007:** Identify the resources required to implement the new, expanded, or customized services for veterans

I've tasked Steve Combs, DVS Director of Policy and Planning, to take the lead in coordinating DVS efforts in support of EO19. He may be reached at 786-0294, or at Steven.Combs@dvs.virginia.gov. I will send periodic updates on our progress, and Steve Combs will also be in contact with your agency POC on a more frequent basis.

Thank you for consideration of this request. I look forward to establish an on-going relationship with you and your agency team as we work together to make the goals of EO19 a reality.

Cc: The Honorable William H. Leighty
Chief of Staff

The Honorable John W. Marshall
Secretary of Public Safety

Commander Paul E. Galanti, USN (Ret)
Chairman, Board of Veterans Services