



*THE LEGISLATIVE BOZZ*

Welcome to the New Year 2012 and a wish to each of you for a very happy, healthy and prosperous one. Speaking of the New Year 2012, there are challenges on the horizon. The first, of course, are the Legislative Objectives (now called Initiatives); and "Storming the Hill" which will take place on Monday, January 23<sup>rd</sup>. These new initiations have the unanimous support of the 23 Veterans Service Organizations represented on the JLC; additionally where we had five or six Objectives in previous years, the JLC has made the decision to also promote the objectives identified by the Board of Veteran Services (BVS). The ten new Legislative Objectives are:

\* Unclaimed Cremated Remains of Veterans: Facilitate the honorable burial of the unclaimed cremated remains (cremains) of Virginia veterans in a state veteran's cemetery by requiring funeral homes to provide the names of unclaimed cremains to the Department of Veterans Services (DVS). DVS can screen the names to identify those belonging to a veteran and determine if he/she is eligible for burial in a state veteran's cemetery.

\* Sales and Use Tax Exemption for Veterans Service Organizations: Recognize the community service and philanthropic contributions of Virginia's Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) by establishing an exemption for VSOs from state and local Sales or Use Taxes.

\* Voting Status of ex officio Members of the Board of Veterans Services: Strengthen the capacity of the Board of Veterans Services to fulfill the Powers and Duties set forth in the Code of Virginia by granting voting privileges to all ex officio members.

\* Additional Citizen Board Members: Strengthen the capacity of the Board of Veterans Services to fulfill the Powers and Duties set forth in the Code of Virginia by increasing the number of citizen board members from 11 to 15.

\* Delivery of Benefit Services: Improve delivery of benefit services to Virginia veterans by (i) changing the ratio of Dept. of Veterans Services (DVS) claims agents to veterans to one claims agent for every 23,000 veterans; and (ii) providing an additional four GF positions and \$350,000 (GF) to meet the new Code requirement and address other shortfalls.

\* Homeless Veterans: Reduce and prevent veteran's homelessness in Virginia by implementing as many strategies identified in the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) 2010 study as state fiscal resources will allow.

\* Education Services Staffing: Ensure that the Education Services Section of the Department of Veterans Services has the necessary resources to meet its new mission under the Post 9/11 GI Bill Improvement Act by providing two additional NGF positions.

\* Care Center Staffing: Ensure that state veterans care centers have the resources to deliver quality care to residents by providing an additional 51 NGF positions and \$2,700,000 additional NGF appropriation in FY13, to reflect the opening of the 40-bed addition to the Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center.

\* Hampton Veterans Care Center Pre-Planning Study: Ensure that a viable and appropriate site is selected for the construction of the Hampton Roads Veterans Care Center by re-appropriating up to \$300,000 (GF) from FY11 to FY12 for a pre-planning study.

\* Veterans Identification: Provide a simple, ready means of identification of veterans status for Virginia's veterans by creating a Virginia Veterans Identification Card or by adding a veterans indicator to the Virginia Driver's License/ID Card.

We look forward to a rewarding New Year and invite everyone's support of your Executive Board and the Legislative Committee in achieving our objectives for 2012.

*Stan Gorrell, LTC, USA (Ret.) Legislative Chair 757-258-9442  
Stan is taking a medical Leave of Absence Jan through March 2012*