

Honoring Virginia: Supporting Virginia's Military Families

Brian understands that we have a duty to respect the sacred bond between our government and those who protect this nation. In Virginia, we have a special relationship with our military. There are over a million Virginians who are military or Department of Defense personnel living in Virginia, veterans, or members of the Virginia Army National Guard or Virginia Air National Guard. There are more than 813,900 veterans living in Virginia.¹ Six of the ten United States cities with the largest population of veterans are in Virginia: Hampton (27%), Virginia Beach (22%), Norfolk (20%), Newport News (20%), Chesapeake (19%), and Portsmouth (18%).² Additionally, Virginia is the home of 245,525 military and Department of Defense civilians.³

More than anywhere else in this country, we all have connections to service members and veterans through our families, schools and places of worship. From the Pentagon to the Norfolk Naval Base, Virginia plays a critical role in protecting our country. Brian fundamentally respects Virginia's proud military tradition and vows to work tirelessly to give our military personnel and our veterans the support they deserve.

As a friend of our men and women in uniform, Brian Moran understands that in our commonwealth and our country, our Armed Forces are under tremendous strain. From a new generation of combat veterans to an over-worked National Guard, Virginia faces tremendous challenges. There are 7,700 Soldiers in the Virginia Army National Guard and 1,200 Airmen of the Virginia Air National Guard. Since September 11, 2001, over 7,028 Soldiers of the Virginia Army National Guard and 2,130 Airmen of the Virginia Air National Guard have entered active federal service in support of Operation Noble Eagle, Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Air Expeditionary Force operations.⁴ These brave Virginians have served a grateful commonwealth and a grateful nation, and this Honoring Virginia Plan is for them.

I. Supporting Virginia's Military Families

Veterans shouldn't have to sacrifice their jobs, health care, or homes in order to serve their commonwealth and their country. That is why, as a legislative leader, Brian fought for a Veterans' and Military Personnel's Bill of Rights to support our military families. As governor, he will keep fighting for a Veterans' and Military Personnel's Bill of Rights and will propose it every year until it passes. This legislation will include:

Ensure State Employees Don't Have to Take A Pay Cut to Serve Overseas. Require state government to make up the pay difference for state employees

¹ "Virginia Wounded Warrior Program," *Virginia Department of Veterans Services*.
<http://www.dvs.virginia.gov/woundedwarrior/pdf/VWWPflyer409.pdf>

² "Veterans: 2000," *US Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce, Census 2000 Brief*, May 2003.

³ Press Release: Office of Governor Tim Kaine, "Governor Kaine Signs Legislation on Military and Veterans Issues," April 2, 2008.

<http://www.governor.virginia.gov/mediarelations/newsreleases/viewRelease.cfm?id=636>.

⁴ "Facts About The Virginia National Guard," *Public Affairs Office, Virginia National Guard*. October 1, 2007.

called up on active military duty and whose military pay would be less than their state salaries.

Allow Virginia National Guard Members to Buy Into the State Life Insurance Program. Allow any member of the Virginia Guard to augment their federal benefits by participating in the group life, accidental death and dismemberment policy administered by the Virginia Retirement System.

Provide Credit Protection for Military Families. Allows Virginia members of the armed services and their spouses to freeze access to their credit reports to help protect from identify theft and financial fraud.

Protect Homeownership for Virginia's Military Families. Virginia should go the extra mile to protect homeownership for our military families. That is why, as governor, Brian Moran will freeze the foreclosure process for military families until 90 days after they have returned from their deployment.

Save Money for Virginia's Military Families. We should be incentivizing military families to move to Virginia, not to move out. That's why, as governor, Brian Moran will push to exempt Virginia's military personnel from paying state income taxes for the income they earn while they are overseas on active duty.

Support Military Families. Military families at home bear a special burden while their loved ones are serving over seas. We must look out for them too. That's why, as governor, Brian will increase the outreach, awareness and responsiveness of state assistance programs that can help military families manage this special challenge. He will also provide a special gesture of thanks to Virginia's military families by granting a free one-year family pass to Virginia's state parks.

II. Ensuring That Virginia's Veterans Get the Care They Deserve

Too often, today's veterans are not getting the health care they deserve. There are gaps in the treatment availability of federal programs for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and polytrauma. In view of these gaps at the federal level, Virginia must lead to ensure that our veterans receive the care they need.

Currently, between 23 percent and 40 percent of those in need of mental health services actually seek care.⁵ Military personnel returning from the war theaters in Afghanistan and Iraq are at significant risk for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and traumatic brain injury (TBI). A recent RAND report estimated that a third of service members deployed for Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) or Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) experience PTSD, TBI or major depression.⁶

⁵ Hoge, et al., "Combat duty in Iraq and Afghanistan, mental health problems and barriers to care," *New England Journal of Medicine*. Vol. 351, No. 1, 2003.

⁶ Lisa H. Jaycox and Terri Tanieliani, "Invisible Wounds of War: Psychological and Cognitive Injuries, Their Consequences, and Services to Assist Recovery," RAND. 2008.

Brian knows that our commitment to the brave men and women who serve must continue beyond active duty. That is why he helped create a Wounded Warrior Program for Virginia veterans with traumatic brain injury, post-traumatic stress disorder, and other injuries. He has also supported efforts to increase access for veterans to state universities and expand the Virginia War Memorial. As governor, Brian will continue efforts to strengthen veterans' services.

Valor Initiative. As governor, Brian Moran will create the Valor Initiative to make Virginia a leader in treatment and research for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury (TBI) and polytrauma for the Virginia National Guard, veterans and active military personnel residing in Virginia. On his first day in office, Brian will direct his staff, the Department of Health and the Department of Veterans Services to work together with stakeholders to develop a plan for establishing a statewide network of Virginia institutions, health care providers, and religious leaders, colleges, universities and research centers to conduct research and improve care for our veterans. The Valor initiative will be funded through a combination of state, federal and private investment and will focus on treatment and research.

The treatment aspect of the initiative will create zones of confidentiality and privacy where soldiers can go to receive treatment without concern about stigma. It will also allow caretakers to find support for our veterans, help provide care, and organize much-needed information about what treatment works for PTSD, TBI and polytrauma. The Valor initiative will benefit from existing networks of providers, community health centers and volunteer providers.

In addition to a treatment network, the Valor initiative will coordinate a leading research agenda in the two primary treatment methods: pharmaceuticals and psychotherapy. Researchers believe that "the medical science for treating combat-related traumatic brain injury is in its infancy."⁷ In a Moran Administration, the Commonwealth of Virginia will drive a research-based medical and science agenda specifically targeted at PTSD, TBI and polytrauma to create innovations and advances in these areas.

This state-directed PTSD, TBI and polytrauma initiative will be one of the first of its kind in the country. In a Moran Administration, the highest executive office in the Commonwealth will stand behind all present and past military personnel struggling with PTSD, TBI or polytrauma. Brian will achieve these goals by building partnerships with organizations like Virginia's Wounded Warrior Program (which Brian championed while in the legislature), the Brain Injury Association of Virginia, the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations, the Virginia National Guard, religious and faith-based institutions, Virginia's network of community health clinics (CHCs) and Virginia's universities. Governor Kaine laid the groundwork for the Valor initiative with Executive Order 19, which called for provision of behavioral healthcare services by state resources for Wounded Warriors, a dedicated Veterans medical resource at the

⁷ *Id.*

Department of Health (DOH), and Veteran-specific research.⁸ Brian Moran will build on these first steps to make Virginia a leader in treatment and research that will protect our brave men and women and help them reintegrate into our commonwealth when they return home.

III. Providing Economic Opportunities for Virginia's Veterans

Transition Warriors to Work. As Governor, Brian Moran will create a Warriors to Work initiative that puts our veterans to work strengthening Virginia. This program will connect individuals recovering from severe injuries received on active duty with the support and resources they need to build a career in the civilian workforce. The Governor's office will partner with employers, trade and contractor associations, and labor unions to put our veterans and wounded warriors at the top of the lists to enter qualified apprenticeship programs. Veterans should not return from being deployed overseas only to be unemployed at home. When our veterans return from posts across the world, including Iraq and Afghanistan, no one will be a stronger advocate to help them secure good jobs here at home than Brian.

Once registered, Warriors to Work participants would be given credit for training and experience they gained while serving in the military. Jobs available through this program will cover the entire gamut of the construction trades industry; from manual jobs like carpenters, electricians, plumbers and bricklayers, to technical careers such as civil engineers and project managers. This program will also identify posts that match the skills of disabled veterans.

Connect Veterans to State Procurement. While the federal government includes preferences for veterans, Virginia state government does not. That will change when Brian Moran is governor. He will make sure that those who serve on the front lines abroad will go to the front of the line when they come home.

Train Veterans for the Green Jobs of the Future. We will work with Virginia's community colleges to guarantee admission to green jobs training programs. Virginia's veterans have led on the front lines abroad, and they can help lead Virginia toward a green energy future at home.

Create a Warrior Fellowship. As Governor, Brian Moran will create a Warrior Fellowship Program that offers experience in state legislative and executive offices for veterans and wounded warriors. Those selected for the program are given the opportunity to rotate into various positions and potentially transition into full-time employment. He will spearhead both training veterans and wounded warriors for new areas of work and also in placement into good jobs here at home.

⁸ "Executive Order 19: Serving Virginia's Veterans," *Vincent M. Burgess, Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Veterans Services, Report to Governor Timothy Kaine*. April 30, 2007.