



MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS AGENDA



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Ed Gillespie



SUMMARY

Virginia is home to nearly 800,000 veterans, meaning roughly 1 in 10 Virginians is a veteran. Our nation is what it is today because of their service and sacrifice. We owe our active duty and former military, reservists, National Guard and their families our sincere gratitude, respect and support. The Gillespie-Vogel-Adams ticket will honor our military community and work to support them every single day once in office.

In 2010, Delegate Scott Lingamfelter (Col, USA, Ret) successfully passed legislation to state that Virginia's public policy goal is to make Virginia America's most veteran-friendly state. Through this plan, Ed Gillespie renews that promise to our veterans and military families.

Ed is dedicated to improving career opportunities for our veterans, giving our military and veterans a greater voice in our state government, leading the Virginia National Guard with pride, and supporting our veterans, military and their families.

The establishment of the Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs position was an important step forward for our military and veterans. Through the leadership of Speaker-designee Kirk Cox and our Republican General Assembly, the Commonwealth also stepped up by prioritizing the construction of new veterans care centers in Hampton Roads and Northern Virginia. This initiative will significantly improve veterans' access to care in the Commonwealth. But our work to support veterans is far from complete. We can and must do more to ensure that our veterans and military community have the support they need and a voice in our state government.

Ed's father served in the Army Infantry in World War II, and was a Silver Star recipient. Ed's mother and father are laid to rest in a veterans cemetery. He understands the pride and sacrifice military families endure. As governor, Ed will be a strong supporter of our active duty military, reservists, National Guard, veterans and their families.



IMPROVE CAREER OPPORTUNITIES FOR VETERANS

We want members of our armed forces to stay in Virginia upon separating from their service. In order for Virginia to continue to be an attractive destination, we need to take action to improve career opportunities for veterans.

→ **DOUBLE THE NUMBER OF CERTIFIED VIRGINIA VALUES VETERANS (V3) COMPANIES**

Ed will work tirelessly to grow the number of certified companies enrolled in the Virginia Values Veterans (V3) program. V3 was launched by former Governor Bob McDonnell and codified by legislation carried by Delegate Rich Anderson (Colonel, USAF, Ret) as an attempt to connect their companies with a highly-skilled, well-educated, and easily-trained leadership talent pool: Virginia's Veterans. As governor, Ed will direct his Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs to develop a strategy to grow and improve the V3 program.

→ **IMPROVE THE TRANSFER OF MILITARY TRAINING TO CIVILIAN CERTIFICATION**

The Republican General Assembly recently advanced several measures to improve the conversion of military training to civilian certification. If you served in the military and gained a skill, you should not have to go back to school to be certified for a skill you could likely teach. We can make the government certification process work better to match the credentials earned in the military. As governor, Ed would expand this effort and seek new and improved strategies for ensuring our highly-training veterans are able to fully convert their skills into industry-recognized certification. Virginia should lead the nation in this the conversion of military training to civilian certification.

→ **ENSURE VIRGINIA IS BRAC-READY**

As governor, Ed Gillespie will ensure Virginia is ready to make a compelling case for Virginia's interest to protect what we have and to attract new missions to Virginia. He will lead a proactive and convincing response to anticipated BRAC rounds and be prepared to mitigate against any loss of military installations that are so important -- not only to the Nation's defense, but to Virginia's economy.

Many of Virginia's veterans find meaningful employment in Virginia after they separate from service. Ensuring Virginia is BRAC-ready means protecting employment opportunities for veterans and their families.

ENHANCING MILITARY AND VETERANS VOICE IN OUR GOVERNMENT

Our military and veteran communities deserve to have a strong voice in our state government. From appointments to boards and commissions to voting in our elections, we need a governor who will listen and be responsive to the unique challenges facing our military and veteran populations.

→ **MEET WITH THE JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS ON A QUARTERLY BASIS**

The Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (JLC)¹ provides a vehicle for veterans service organizations to collaborate with the Department of Veterans Services on meeting the needs of Virginia's veterans. The Joint Leadership Council is open to one representative from each qualifying veterans service organization in Virginia that chooses to participate. Additional organizations will be added as certification documents are submitted. All veterans organizations are encouraged to join this initiative to support Virginia's veterans and their families, by contacting the Secretary of the Commonwealth. As governor, Ed will meet with the JLC on a quarterly basis. The JLC provides a clear voice on issues related to veterans services in Virginia, and Ed will be fully engaged in their discussions.

→ **IMPROVE ABSENTEE VOTING PROCESS FOR DEPLOYED SERVICE MEMBERS**

Ed will direct his Secretary of Veterans and Military Affairs to study the establishment of a pilot program for the electronic return of absentee ballots by Virginia's deployed military service members to make their voting participating easier. This is a recommendation from the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations. Virginians should make it easier for those fighting to protect our freedoms are doing all we can to protect theirs.

1 - <https://www.dvs.virginia.gov/dvs/joint-leadership-council-veterans-service-organizations-2/>

LEADING THE VIRGINIA NATIONAL GUARD

The governor serves as the Commander-in-Chief of the Virginia National Guard. As governor, Ed will command the Virginia National Guard with respect and humility. He will provide strong leadership to ensure the Guard receives the support they deserve.



SIGN THE EMPLOYER STATEMENT OF SUPPORT

As chief human resources officer for the Commonwealth of Virginia and Commander-in-Chief of the Virginia National Guard, Ed will sign the employer Statement of Support for the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) program. Further, Ed will work with Virginia's business community to increase the number of Virginia businesses to sign the pledge.

Employers signing a statement of support pledge that:

- *We fully recognize, honor, and comply with the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act.*
- *We will provide our managers and supervisors with the tools they need to effectively manage employees who serve in the Guard and Reserve.*
- *We appreciate the values, leadership, and unique skills Service members bring to the workforce and will encourage opportunities to hire Guardsmen, Reservists, and Veterans.*
- *We will continually recognize and support our country's Service members and their families, in peace, in crises, and in war.*



IN-STATE TUITION FOR ALL MEMBERS OF THE RESERVE COMPONENTS

Ed will work to change the eligibility for in-state tuition to include all members of the Virginia National Guard and the Reserve components, thus recognizing their service to the Commonwealth and treating them equally to the active components and veterans. This is a recommendation from the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations. Virginians should make it easier for those fighting to protect our freedoms are doing all we can to protect theirs.

SUPPORTING OUR MILITARY AND THEIR FAMILIES

Many Virginians serve honorably in our active duty military and reserves in all services. They, along with their families, make enormous sacrifices for our Commonwealth and our nation. From service members stationed at the Pentagon to the Navy Seal in Hampton Roads to the Reservist serving in Southwest Virginia, the Commonwealth owes our active duty, reservists, and their families our unending commitment to serve them as they are serving our nation and Commonwealth.

→ IMPROVE THE VIRGINIA MILITARY SURVIVORS & DEPENDENTS EDUCATION PROGRAM

Ed will work with the General Assembly to remove the requirement that a veteran's disability rating be combat related. Instead, a permanent service-connected disability rating of at least 90%, plus satisfaction of the other requirements currently in the Code, would qualify for the program. The Virginia Military Survivors & Dependents Education Program provides education benefits to spouses and children of military service members killed, missing in action, taken prisoner, or who served in covered military combat and has been rated by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs as totally and permanently disabled or at least 90 percent permanently disabled as a result of such service. This is a recommendation from the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations.

→ DESIGNATE A MILITARY CHILD LEADERSHIP TEAM

Military children contribute mightily to our communities and our nation through their sacrifice. Military children change schools, friends and homes so that their mother or father can serve our nation. We want every child who becomes a Virginian for a short time period or for life, to be welcomed and supported so that they can excel. As governor, Ed will designate a Military Child Coordinating Council to ensure that all functions of state government - from education to social services to military affairs - are working in coordination to serve the children of our military. The Council will be led by the Secretary of Veterans and Military Affairs and will include senior liaisons from Health and Human Resources, Education, Commerce and Trade and Public Safety Secretariats.

CARING FOR OUR VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES

→ SUPPORT VETERANS AND MENTAL HEALTH DOCKETS IN VIRGINIA COURTS

A number of states have adopted veterans mental health dockets to address the unique needs of veterans who come in contact with the criminal justice system. These dockets ensure that veterans and those who suffer from mental illness have access to the services and treatment that are available to them. They balance sanctions with efforts to reduce recidivism for this distinctive community. Some courts in Virginia have adopted these approaches, and Senator John Cosgrove (USN) has worked to expand these court dockets. As governor, Ed will work with the Chief Justice and the judicial branch as well as the General Assembly to broaden the availability of these dockets and ensure appropriate resources are dedicated to them.

→ SUPPORT VIRGINIA'S VETERANS' CARE CENTERS

The Commonwealth fulfilled a commitment to its veterans by funding the establishment of two new veterans care centers. As governor, Ed will work to ensure timely construction of these Virginia veterans' care centers and continue to look for opportunities to increase the number of beds so more veterans can access needed services. Ed will be personally involved in ensuring the timely construction and project delivery, as well as ongoing advocacy to the federal government.

→ BUILD PARTNERSHIPS TO ESTABLISH VETERANS LEGAL AND BENEFITS CLINICS AVAILABLE IN ALL REGIONS

Ed will work with the Attorney General to build permanent partnerships to offer no-cost legal services to veterans in need similar to the Lewis B. Puller, Jr. Veterans Benefits Clinic at the William & Mary Law School. The Puller Clinic provides pro bono assistance to veterans in filing claims for disability compensation. Law schools around the country have replicated this model, and Ed will work to improve access to services such as these so that veterans can get assistance in obtaining disability compensation to which they are entitled.

CARING FOR OUR VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES

→ **SUPPORT THE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TO IMPROVE TAX RELIEF FOR A SURVIVING SPOUSE**

In 2017, the General Assembly approved a resolution (HJ562) for a constitutional amendment to ensure that the real property tax exemption for the surviving spouse of a disabled military veteran continued to apply if the surviving spouse changed primary residences. The constitutional amendment must pass again in the 2018 session before being presented to the voters. As governor, Ed will support action by the 2018 General Assembly to pass such a resolution. This is a recommendation from the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations.

→ **DESIGNATE A VIRGINIA WOMEN VETERANS SERVICES COORDINATOR**

Virginia is home to thousands of female veterans and we should be doing more to ensure that their healthcare needs are attended to in our healthcare system. In recognition of Virginia's female veterans and their contributions, Ed will designate a Virginia Women Veterans Services Coordinator to ensure that our female veterans receive the care and attention they deserve.

→ **SUPPORT THE VIRGINIA WAR MEMORIAL EXPANSION**

The Virginia War Memorial is an important symbol of Virginia's unending appreciation and respect to those who served and gave their lives for our nation. As governor, Ed will ensure the Virginia War Memorial is able to make all necessary capital improvements so it continues to be a place of remembrance, dignity, and honor.

SUPPORTERS

“Ed’s specific policies and focus should be supported by all Virginians who are grateful for the brave members of our military and their families who have served, are and will be serving in the future. From the days of George Washington’s admonitions to keep our promises to those who have served, Virginia should always be a Veterans-friendly State. During my first year as Governor, we settled a long-standing unconstitutional tax treatment of veterans by Virginia. I am proud to endorse Ed’s plan for veterans and military families.”

GOVERNOR GEORGE ALLEN

“Veterans and military families deserve strong leadership from Virginia’s governor. Ed Gillespie will deliver on the Commonwealth’s promise to make Virginia the most veteran-friendly state in the nation. I am proud to endorse Ed’s military and veterans affairs plan.”

SPEAKER-DESIGNEE KIRK COX, CO-CHAIR, POLICY LEADERSHIP TEAM

“Ed is deeply committed to ensuring our veterans receive the care and respect they deserve. In order for Virginia to become the most veteran friendly state in the nation, we need to advance Ed’s policy agenda”

SENATOR MARK OBENSHAIN, CO-CHAIR, POLICY LEADERSHIP TEAM

“I’ve been proud to carry legislation in support of our veterans and our military families. As an Army Veteran, I know firsthand the unique challenges facing Virginia’s veterans. Ed’s plan reflects a seriousness of purpose to honor and care for our veterans and military communities. I am proud to support Ed and his vision for Virginia’s veterans.”

DELEGATE SCOTT LINGAMFELTER (COL, USA, RET.), CO-CHAIR, VETERANS AND MILITARY AFFAIRS WORKING GROUP

“The military and veterans community is the fabric of our community in Hampton Roads. Our neighbors, friends, and family who serve deserve our unending thanks and dedication. Ed Gillespie will be a governor for ALL Virginians and this plan demonstrates his dedication to our military and veterans.”

SENATOR JOHN COSGROVE (USN), CO-CHAIR, VETERANS AND MILITARY AFFAIRS WORKING GROUP

SUPPORTERS

“Ed Gillespie will be the strongest-possible governor for Virginia veterans and our military families. Ed’s policy agenda sends a rock-solid signal that he will be the pro-veteran, pro-military, and pro-family governor that Virginia needs.”

DEL. RICH ANDERSON (COL, USAF, RET), CHAIR, GENERAL ASSEMBLY MILITARY & VETERANS CAUCUS

“Ed Gillespie’s Veterans and Military Affairs plan is the most extensive policy agenda that I have seen from any candidate for governor over the last 20 plus years. The Gillespie-Vogel-Adams ticket will lead a strong, pro-veterans administration in Richmond. I am proud to endorse this plan and their candidacy to make Virginia the best state in the nation for veterans and their families.”

COL. BILL FLANAGAN (COL, USA, RET.)

“My legislation reorganized our Veterans’ services in 2011 to improve accountability and quality but we still have work to do. This detailed plan reflects our ticket’s deep commitment to serving those who served us and making Virginia our nation’s most veteran-friendly state.”

SENATOR JILL VOGEL, REPUBLICAN NOMINEE FOR LT. GOVERNOR

“As a Navy veteran, and son and brother of Army veterans, I know the unique challenges our service men and women, their families, and veterans face. Together, Ed and I will work to ensure Virginia is the best state for those who have served to live, work, and raise a family. Whether it’s access to legal help, protecting against scams, or coordinating across agencies and departments, veterans will be a top priority for us.”

JOHN ADAMS (LT, USN) AND REPUBLICAN NOMINEE FOR ATTORNEY GENERAL