



Commonwealth of Virginia
Office of the Governor

Executive Order

NUMBER TWENTY (2018)

TRANSFER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AFFAIRS TO THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AND DEFENSE AFFAIRS

Importance of the Initiative

The Commonwealth of Virginia is home to many of our nation's most important national defense assets. The Commonwealth takes pride in protecting our defense forces' ability to train for our nation's security while also providing the service members and their families with an unmatched quality of life. By working collaboratively with our military installations, the Commonwealth is able to sustain our current economic infrastructure, while also jointly identifying areas of future advancement. Growing the military mission in the Commonwealth also includes growing the Virginia National Guard. Our Virginia National Guard has seen increased demands on its members with more frequent deployments and longer training periods. Ensuring the Virginia National Guard continues to meet end strength goals and remain a competitive recruiter is more important than ever. In order to achieve these goals, operations and collaboration with the federal government must be as efficient as possible.

The Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs elevates issues and coordinates policy for veterans and transitioning service members in the Commonwealth and serves as the Governor's liaison to the federal defense establishment. As described in § 2.2-231 of the *Code of Virginia*, the Secretary is to "provide active outreach to the U.S. Department of Defense and the defense establishment in Virginia to support the military installations and activities in the Commonwealth..."

Duties of the Department of Military Affairs (DMA), as outlined in § 44-11.1 of the *Code of Virginia*, consist of administering the Virginia Militia and integrating Department of Defense capabilities into state operations. DMA has extensive involvement with federal defense entities, an area where the Office of the Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs is deeply engaged. Transferring DMA to the Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs will streamline communications with federal defense entities on matters directly affecting the Virginia National Guard. More streamlined communications are critical as a significant part of the budget for the Virginia National Guard comes from federal sources.

The Virginia Department of Veterans Services (DVS), another agency under the Office of the Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs, is charged with supporting and enhancing the benefits provided to members of the Guard and their families. When members of the Guard and other service members transition from active service, DVS is there to assist them and their families with their transitions to civilian life, particularly in the areas of employment, education, benefits, housing, and behavioral health and rehabilitative services. Moving DMA under the Office of the Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs will better align resources and missions for our Guardsmen and their families.

The Department of Military Affairs will continue performing all existing duties in accordance with Virginia law, including working with other agencies in disaster preparedness, maintaining order and public safety in coordination with law enforcement, and developing and executing contingency plans for homeland defense.

Transfer of the Agency

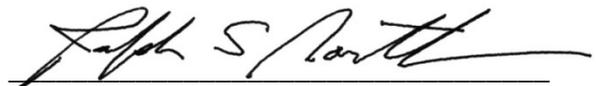
By virtue of the authority vested in me as Governor under § 2.2-230 of the *Code of Virginia*, I hereby authorize the transfer of administrative authority of the Department of Military Affairs from the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security to the Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs.

Effective Date of the Executive Order

This Executive Order shall be effective upon its signing and shall remain in force and effect unless amended or rescinded by further executive order.

Given under my hand and under the Seal of the Commonwealth of Virginia, this 24th day of September, 2018.




Ralph S. Northam, Governor

Attest:


Kelly Thomasson, Secretary of the Commonwealth