



VIRGINIA STATE POLICE ASSOCIATION

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PRESENTATION TO THE SENATE FINANCE
GENERAL GOVERNMENT SUBCOMMITTEE
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“TO BE MUTUALLY HELPFUL TO ONE ANOTHER”

- I. Pay Increases – The Virginia State Police Association was disappointed to learn that a pay increase for state employees was not included in the first year of the Governor's budget. State employees have not recovered from Fiscal Years 02 & 03 when they did not receive increases. If allowed to stand we fear our members will fall even further behind, morale will again fall and earlier than anticipated retirements and resignations will occur. The Department of State Police currently estimates it costs \$105,000 to recruit, train and equip a new Trooper. As such when a Trooper resigns the Commonwealth not only loses the initial investment of \$105,000 but also loses the value of additional specialized training and the experience that Trooper has gained. To make matters worse we now have to spend another \$105,000 to fund the recruiting, training and equipping of a new Trooper. Finally, once vacated it can take up to 2 years before a position is once again productive.

We concur with the recommendations of the Virginia Governmental Employees Association that:

- Pay Increases be provided for state employees in both years of the 2008-2010 biennial budget. The increases should at the very least match the Consumer Price Index and cover the anticipated increases in health insurance premiums that will take effect July 1, 2008.
- State agencies receive an amount equal to 1% of payroll so that they can continue to address issues relating to retention and pay compression.

- II. Bi-annual Inspection Proposal – The VSPA strongly opposes the proposal to change Virginia's annual inspection program to a bi-annual program. Furthermore, we oppose moving 25 of the 56 Trooper positions from the Inspection Program. The Virginia State Inspection Program is one of the best of its kind in the nation and our vehicle fleet one of the safest. In 2007 highway fatalities surpassed 1,000 for the first time in many years. We do not believe that now is the time to dilute this program. We believe that citizens would end up paying more in the long run as the undetected need for repairs delayed for another year would cost more to repair. Additionally, the 56 Troopers currently assigned to this program supervise 4,000 inspection stations, 13,000 inspectors and over 7,000,000 inspections a year. Currently each station is visited at least every 45 days. To remove almost half of these Troopers and require only semi-annual visits, which is being discussed, we believe would lead to a very unorganized and ineffective program.

- III. We strongly support an increase in the current health care credit for retirees from its current level of \$4 per year to at least \$6 per year. A retired state employee and their spouse are currently paying about \$700 a month for their health care. If they have a dependent at home they are paying almost \$1,200 per month and it is anticipated that both of these amounts will increase in July. So severe has this problem become for retirees that in a letter retirees receive around June of each year advising them of the increases to their health care premium they are reminded that for some retirees the increase in their health care premium means that the amount of their annuity no longer covers the cost of their health care and for them they will begin receiving a monthly bill for the difference. Imagine

working for the state, retiring and at some point during your retirement you no longer receive an annuity, just a bill.

- IV. In 2005, the most recent year for which information is available, State Police Officers earned 148,032 hours of compensatory leave and 24,687 hours of overtime leave. This equates to 172, 719 hours of leave, or stated another way, 21, 590 days of service to the Commonwealth that will potentially be taken off. Comp time must be used within a year of the day it is earned or it is lost. If lost, which frequently occurs, those hours lost, were worked for free by State Police Officers. Given the current demands on the State Police, supervisors, in an attempt to manage this problem, must require Troopers to be off, whether they want to or not. Even doing this however the problem isn't completely remedied because events like Virginia Tech and the Queen's visit require so many hundreds of hours of overtime that it cannot all be used within a year. Furthermore, if a Trooper is required to be off, the "hole" that results from his/her absence is filled by another Trooper who then accrues Comp Time because they are working shorthanded. SB269, offered by Senator Deeds and a similar measure offered by Delegate Kirk Cox would appropriate \$6.8 million to just pay these State Police Officers for the extra hours they work. If paid, the Commonwealth would realize the equivalent of 96 new Trooper positions at a fraction of the cost of creating new positions and the 96 positions are already available to work thereby eliminating the almost 24 months it takes to make a new position productive. The VSPA strongly supports the aforementioned initiatives offered by Senator Deeds and Delegate Cox as we view this as a WIN - WIN solution to this problem in that the Commonwealth realizes almost 100 new Trooper positions immediately at a fraction of the cost to create new positions and the State Police Officers are guaranteed compensation for all of the hours they work.
- V. Variable Housing Allowance – Unlike most other state and local employees State Police Officers are compelled to live within certain geographical area. The military realized long ago that the base pay scale received by military personnel would not allow those personnel and their families to enjoy a similar quality of life depending upon where they are assigned. Troopers starting pay is approximately \$32,500 per year. Only the State Police Officers assigned to parts of Northern Virginia currently receive a "cost of living differential". New Troopers assigned to Norfolk receive the base salary of \$32,500, as do new Troopers assigned to Craig County. By the way, a military person assigned to Norfolk receives a housing allowance of approximately \$1031 per month which is in addition to their base salary. Obviously the cost of living varies greatly in these areas. As such, we are proposing a military style "variable housing allowance" similar to the military model. SB682, offered by Senator Stolle and HB846 offered by Delegate Beverly Sherwood create such an allowance. The State Police Officer would receive a variable housing allowance as long as they are assigned to a certain area. If they transfer they would then receive the allowance for their new area. The requirement to live in certain geographical areas is an operational necessity given the role and expectations of the State Police. Therefore we feel such an allowance is fair and long overdue.

There are other issues of concern to our members however these are certainly our top priorities. On behalf of our 2,100 members I would like to thank you for the opportunity to share our concerns with you.