

VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY -- 2013 SESSION

CHAPTER 151

An Act to amend and reenact § 2.2-231 of the Code of Virginia, relating to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and Homeland Security; powers and duties.

[S 1064]

Approved March 12, 2013

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That § 2.2-231 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 2.2-231. Powers and duties of the Secretary.

Unless the Governor expressly reserves such power to himself, the Secretary shall:

1. Work with and through others, including federal, state, and local officials as well as the private sector, to develop a seamless, coordinated security and preparedness strategy and implementation plan.

2. Serve as the point of contact with the federal Department of Homeland Security.

3. Provide oversight, coordination, and review of all disaster, emergency management, and terrorism management plans for the state and its agencies in coordination with the Virginia Department of Emergency Management and other applicable state agencies.

4. Work with federal officials to obtain additional federal resources and coordinate policy development and information exchange.

5. Work with and through appropriate members of the Governor's Cabinet to coordinate working relationships between state agencies and take all actions necessary to ensure that available federal and state resources are directed toward safeguarding Virginia and its citizens.

6. Designate a Commonwealth Interoperability Coordinator to review all communications-related grant requests from state agencies and localities to ensure federal grants are used to enhance interoperability and conduct the annual review and update of the statewide interoperability strategic plan as required in § 2.2-232. The Commonwealth Interoperability Coordinator shall establish an advisory group consisting of representatives of state and local government and constitutional offices, broadly distributed across the Commonwealth, who are actively engaged in activities and functions related to communications interoperability.

7. Serve as the Governor's representative on regional efforts to develop a coordinated security and preparedness strategy, including the National Capital Region security group organized as part of the federal Urban Areas Security Initiative.

8. Serve as a direct liaison between the Governor and local governments and first responders on issues of emergency prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery.

9. Educate the public on homeland security and overall preparedness issues in coordination with applicable state agencies.

10. Serve as chairman of the Secure Commonwealth Panel.

11. Encourage homeland security volunteer efforts throughout the state.

12. Serve as vice-chairman of the Virginia Military Advisory Council to establish a working relationship with Virginia's active duty military bases.

13. Coordinate the development of an allocation formula for State Homeland Security Grant Program funds to localities and state agencies in compliance with federal grant guidance and constraints. The formula shall be, to the extent permissible under federal constraints, based on actual risk and threat.

14. Work with the appropriate state agencies to ensure that regional working groups are meeting regularly and focusing on regional initiatives in training, equipment, and strategy to ensure ready access to response teams in times of emergency and facilitate testing and training exercises for emergencies and mass casualty preparedness.

15. Provide oversight and review of the Virginia Department of Emergency Management's annual statewide assessment of local and regional capabilities, including equipment, training, personnel, response times, and other factors.

16. Monitor and enhance efforts to provide assistance and support for veterans living in Virginia and members of the Virginia National Guard and Virginia residents in the Armed Forces Reserves not in active federal service in the areas of (i) medical care, (ii) mental health and rehabilitative services, (iii) housing, (iv) homelessness prevention, (v) job creation, and (vi) education.

17. Seek additional federal resources to support veterans services.

18. Monitor efforts to provide services to veterans, those members of the Virginia National Guard, and Virginia residents in the Armed Forces Reserves who qualify for veteran status, and their immediate family members, including the dissemination of relevant materials and the rendering of technical or other advice.

19. Serve as the Governor's liaison and provide active outreach to localities of the Commonwealth

and veterans support organizations in the development, implementation, and review of local veterans services programs as part of the state program.

20. Foster and promote business, technology, transportation, education, economic development, and other efforts in support of the mission, execution, and transformation of the United States government military and national defense activities located in the Commonwealth.

21. Promote the industrial and economic development of localities included in or adjacent to United States government military and other national defense activities and those of the Commonwealth because the success of such activities depends on cooperation between the localities, the Commonwealth, and the United States military and national defense activities.

22. Provide technical assistance and coordination between the Commonwealth, its political subdivisions, and the United States government military and national defense activities located within the Commonwealth.

23. Employ, as needed, consultants, attorneys, architects, engineers, accountants, financial experts, investment bankers, superintendents, managers, and such other employees and agents as may be necessary, and to fix their compensation to be payable from funds made available for that purpose.

24. Receive and accept from any federal or private agency, foundation, corporation, association, or person grants, donations of money, real property, or personal property for the benefit of the Commonwealth and receive and accept from the Commonwealth or any state, any municipality, county, or other political subdivision thereof, and from any other source, aid or contributions of money, property, or other things of value, to be held, used, and applied for the purposes for which such grants and contributions may be made.

25. Receive and accept from any source aid, grants, and contributions of money, property, labor, or other things of value to be held, used, and applied to carry out these requirements subject to the conditions upon which the aid, grants, or contributions are made.

26. Make grants to local governments, state and federal agencies, and private entities with any funds of the Secretary available for such purpose.

27. Take any actions necessary or convenient to the exercise of the powers granted or reasonably implied to this Secretary and not otherwise inconsistent with the law of this Commonwealth.

28. *Work with veterans services organizations and counterparts in other states to monitor and encourage the timely and accurate processing of veterans benefit requests by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, including requests for services connected to health care, mental health care, and disability payments.*