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**SENATE BILL NO. 113**

Offered January 10, 2024

Prefiled January 3, 2024

A *BILL to amend the Code of Virginia by adding a section numbered 2.2-2001.7, relating to Department of Veterans Services; Veteran's Fellowship for State Government Pilot Program.*

Patrons—Reeves and Durant

Referred to Committee on General Laws and Technology

**Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**

**1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding a section numbered 2.2-2001.7 as follows:**

**§ 2.2-2001.7. Veteran's Fellowship for State Government Pilot Program.**

A. For the purposes of this section, "veteran" means any veteran of the United States Armed Forces, including the National Guard and Reserves, who is otherwise eligible for admission to Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU).

B. There is hereby established the Veteran's Fellowship for State Government Pilot Program (the Program) within the existing structure of the Department of Veterans Services. The purpose of the Program is to encourage and assist veterans to transition to employment with the Commonwealth and to increase the Commonwealth's employment of skilled workers.

C. The goals of the Program include (i) encouraging veterans to choose to reside within the Commonwealth, (ii) increasing the number of skilled workers with military service employed by the Commonwealth, (iii) providing veterans with educational pathways to employment with the Commonwealth, and (iv) utilizing VCU's L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs (VCU's Wilder School) to encourage veterans to graduate with bachelor's degrees in homeland security and emergency preparedness.

D. The Department shall collaborate with VCU in implementing the goals of the Program, which shall include recruiting veterans to participate in both the undergraduate-level and graduate-level cohorts described in subsection E.

E. 1. There shall be an undergraduate-level cohort within the Program, through which, participating veterans shall pursue three years of leadership development experience through the VCU Wilder School's Student Ambassador & Advisory Council program, a bachelor's degree in homeland security and emergency preparedness through the VCU Wilder School's partnership with Virginia Union University, mentorship from a veteran or service member who is employed full time with the Commonwealth, participation in the Virginia Capitol Semester internship program, and admittance to one of the VCU Wilder School's leadership training programs.

2. There shall be a graduate-level cohort within the Program, through which participating veterans shall pursue three years of full-time state employment and benefits with the VCU Wilder School and another state agency, a Master of Public Administration through the VCU Wilder School, mentorship from a veteran or service member who is employed full time with the Commonwealth, experience observing Virginia General Assembly sessions, and admittance to one of the VCU Wilder School's leadership training programs.

F. Participants shall remain in good academic standing and receive at least the minimum annual or semester performance evaluation rating throughout the course of the Program. Participants shall continue to be employed with the Commonwealth or localities within the Commonwealth for two years after completing the Program, for a total of five years of service.

G. The Department shall report to the General Assembly annually by November 1 regarding the progress of the participants, the return on investment for the Commonwealth, and recommendations for Program enhancements.

**2. That the provisions of this act shall expire on July 1, 2027.**

INTRODUCED

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