

Virginia's Defense Growth and Military Talent Strategy: Competing for the Next Decade

The 2026 Virginia Veterans and Military Affairs Executive Forum brings together business, defense, military, and government leaders to explore strategies for attracting defense investment, supporting military-connected talent, advancing innovation, and strengthening Virginia's long-term economic competitiveness.

AGENDA

8:00 AM – 9:00 AM — **NETWORKING & REGISTRATION**

9:00 AM – 9:10 AM — **WELCOME & OPENING REMARKS**

Brad Hall, President & CEO, Virginia Chamber of Commerce

Jennifer Siciliano, Chief External Affairs Officer, UVA Health and Chair, Virginia Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors

John Maxwell, Commissioner, Virginia Department of Veterans Services

9:15 AM – 10:00 AM — **FIRESIDE CHAT: Leading the Nation: Virginia's Commitment to Military Families and Defense**

MODERATOR: Andrew Warren, Senior Policy Advisor & Chief of Staff for Corporate Affairs, Dominion Energy, Inc.

SPEAKERS: Members of the Virginia General Assembly

- **The Honorable Mike Cherry, Virginia House of Delegates**
- **The Honorable Jackie Glass, Virginia House of Delegates**

10:00 AM – 10:45 AM — **MARQUEE PANEL DISCUSSION: Winning the Military Talent Race: Strengthening Virginia's Defense and Economic Advantage**

Defense industry leaders will discuss what makes Virginia a strategic location for growth and investment and how access to military-connected talent supports mission success, drives innovation, and strengthens long-term competitiveness.

MODERATOR: Kathleen T. Jabs, Special Assistant for Military and Veteran Affairs, Office of the President, William & Mary

PANELISTS:

- **VADM (Ret.) James Syring**, CEO, Avio USA
- **Gary Patton**, MG, USA (Retired), Veteran Affairs Leader, CACI International Inc.
- **The Honorable Michael B. Feggans**, Virginia House of Delegates

10:45 AM – 10:50 AM **SPECIAL REMARKS: Paul Skala**
Senior Director, Federal Team Colonel (ret), U.S. Air Force, FACHE, Genentech

10:50 AM – 11:00 AM **NETWORKING BREAK**

11:00 AM – 12:15 PM **INTERACTIVE EMPLOYER BREAKOUT SESSIONS**

Building Virginia's Future Defense Workforce

In concurrent industry sessions, employers will identify workforce challenges, talent gaps, and critical skill needs while exploring practical solutions to support growth across Virginia's high-demand industries.

SESSION 1: Defense Industrial Base & Advanced Manufacturing

MODERATOR: Sultan Camp, Senior Director - Hampton Roads Center for Military and Family Advancement

PANELISTS:
- **Chris Auger,** Chief Leadership Officer, Radian Forge
- **Ish Escobar**, Military & Veteran Recruitment Program Lead, Northrop Grumman
- **Linwood Ham**, Director of Global Engagement & Military Affairs, Boeing

SESSION 2: Cyber, AI & Digital Technologies

MODERATOR: Jeff Carson, USA (Ret.), Military & Veteran Talent Outreach & Partnership Lead, Peraton

PANELISTS:
- **Robert "Weeds" Wedertz**, CDR / USN-Retired, Executive Vice President, National Security, BigBear AI
- **Dave Markle**, Vice President of Integrated Deterrence, LMI
- **Paul Puckett**, Chief Technology Officer, Clarity Innovations

SESSION 3: Expanding Workforce Access: Second-Chance Hiring and Overcoming Employment Barriers

MODERATOR: Jasmine Gore-Crockett, Deputy Director of Transition and Employment Porgrams, Virginia Department of Veterans Services

PANELISTS:
- **Zakari Greene**, Director of Talent Acquisition, Northwestern Mutual
- **Julie Jacobs**, Director Field Services - Vocational Rehabilitation, DARS - Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitation Service
- **James Simpson**, MSgt. USMC (Ret.), Manager of Talent Acquisition and Veteran Affairs, Pike Corporation
- **Caroline Witt**, Director of Human Resources, G2 Ops, Inc.

12:30 PM – 2:00 PM **V3 AWARDS LUNCHEON**
Hosted by the Virginia Department of Veterans Services
Recognizing Virginia employers for their commitment to hiring, supporting, and retaining veterans through the Virginia Values Veterans (V3) Program.

V3 AWARDS LUNCHEON AGENDA

12:30 PM	**WELCOME, LUNCH, & V3 AWARDS INTRODUCTION** **John Maxwell,** Commissioner, Virginia Department of Veterans Services **Greg McQuade**, WTVR CBS 6
1:30 – 1:35 PM	**KEYNOTE ADDRESS** **The Honorable Tim Williams,** Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs
1:35 PM – 1:55 PM	**PRESENTATION OF THE 2026 V3 AWARDS**
1:55 PM – 2:00 PM	**CLOSING REMARKS:** **Greg McQuade,** WTVR CBS 6