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HOUSE BILL NO. 1377

AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE

(Proposed by the House Committee on Rules)

on _____)

(Patron Prior to Substitute—Delegate Helmer)

A BILL to establish a task force to determine whether Virginia Military Institute should continue to be a state-sponsored institution of higher education; report.

Whereas, Virginia Military Institute (VMI), founded in 1839, is a public, four-year military college offering undergraduate bachelor of arts and bachelor of science degrees and the choice of 14 majors and 28 minor academic concentrations in engineering, sciences, and the humanities; and

Whereas, the mission of VMI is to produce educated and honorable men and women who are prepared for the varied work of civil life, are imbued with a love of learning, are confident in the functions and attitudes of leadership, possess a high sense of public service, are advocates of American democracy and the free enterprise system, and are ready as citizen-soldiers to defend the United States in times of national peril; and

Whereas, VMI has produced a number of graduates of character who have contributed to the Commonwealth and to the United States, including Army General George C. Marshall and civil rights martyr Jonathan M. Daniels; over 200 alumni officers have reached the rank of Flag Officer in the United States Armed Forces, and over 300 alumni have given their lives in military service to the United States; and

Whereas, notwithstanding its contributions to the Commonwealth and the United States, VMI has celebrated for over a century its role in committing treason against the United States government as a key instrument of Confederate forces in the Commonwealth, including celebrating the traitor Stonewall Jackson as a martyr, and annually celebrating the role of the VMI Corps of Cadets in violently attacking forces of the United States government at New Market in an effort to preserve the institution of slavery; and

Whereas, the Commission to Survey the Educational System of Virginia in 1928 reported to the General Assembly that there was no educational service rendered at VMI that was not already duplicated or that could not be more advantageously duplicated at a lesser cost to the Commonwealth by other tax-supported institutions of higher education in the Commonwealth; the Commission further recommended that taxpayer-provided assistance to VMI cease and that VMI be operated as a private institution; and

Whereas, as of 2020, VMI provided statistical figures for the 2024 graduating class that included a matriculation rate of 18 percent of students who had an alumni relation or legacy classification; and

Whereas, a 2021 report commissioned by the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) found (i) that racial and gender disparities in how cadets are treated persist at VMI; (ii) that VMI's culture creates and reinforces barriers to addressing such disparities; and (iii) that as a state-funded institution, VMI must be held accountable to taxpayers and the General Assembly; and

Whereas, VMI's Board of Visitors ended the tenure of Retired Major General Cedric Wins after the shortest tenure as Superintendent in VMI history following repeated efforts by the Retired Major General to end racism, discrimination, and sexual assault and harassment at VMI; further, the decision to not renew Retired Major General Cedric Wins' contract took place in the wake of efforts by the Administration of United States President Donald Trump to remove female and non-white Flag Officers, which efforts were deemed reckless by five former U.S. Secretaries of Defense; and

Whereas, as a state-sponsored public institution of higher education, VMI receives significant funding as provided by the General Assembly in the general appropriation act, and should therefore be proactive in evolving its academic programs and institutional priorities to provide the Commonwealth with a return on its public investment of funds by developing a thoughtful, well-informed, culturally competent, and skilled workforce capable of leadership, innovation, and excellence in emerging and advanced fields critical to the Commonwealth's economic and social well-being; now, therefore,

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. § 1. That a task force is hereby established to determine whether VMI should continue to be a state-sponsored institution of higher education.

§ 2. The task force shall consist of four members of the House of Delegates, at least one of whom shall have served in the military, to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Delegates; two members of the Senate of Virginia, at least one of whom shall have served in the military, to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules; a representative of SCHEV; and four civilian members, two of whom shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Delegates, and two of whom shall be appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules, and who shall collectively have subject matter expertise or experience in workforce development, oversight of student welfare at public institutions of higher education, and educational instruction at public institutions of higher education.

§ 3. In conducting its work, the task force shall:

1. Reevaluate the findings of the Commission to Survey the Educational System of Virginia in 1928 to (i)

60 determine whether educational services rendered by VMI are duplicated at other institutions of higher
61 education in the Commonwealth and (ii) evaluate the relative cost to the Commonwealth and taxpayers of
62 those courses of study at VMI and as compared to other public and private institutions of higher education in
63 the Commonwealth;

64 2. Determine (i) the extent by which VMI provides leaders to the Armed Forces of the United States at an
65 advantageous cost or with advanced training and capability as compared to other institutions of higher
66 education or other commissioning sources in the Commonwealth and (ii) the feasibility of expanding
67 programs at other public institutions of higher education to replace the role of VMI in providing taxpayer-
68 funded commissioned officers to the Armed Forces of the United States;

69 3. Evaluate (i) the rigor of current academic curriculum offerings at VMI as compared to other public
70 institutions of higher education in the Commonwealth, (ii) the extent at which current academic offerings at
71 VMI meet the defense and non-defense needs of the Commonwealth, and (iii) whether additional academic
72 program offerings should be approved by SCHEV and provided to students enrolled at VMI, should VMI
73 remain a state-funded institution of higher education;

74 4. Thoroughly audit any actions taken by the leadership of VMI following the release of the 2021 special
75 investigative report to SCHEV to determine if VMI (i) has initiated any substantial changes to its policies,
76 values, and preventative, investigative, and disciplinary procedures to reduce acts within its student body that
77 could be perceived or classified as racist, sexist, or misogynistic or as an act of sexual harassment or sexual
78 assault; (ii) has actively made efforts to distance itself from the lost-cause narrative or other celebrations or
79 promotions of the Confederacy in the American Civil War; and (iii) possesses the capacity as an institution to
80 end celebration of the Confederacy;

81 5. Analyze admissions data for each year of incoming students beginning in 2021 to determine if VMI has
82 been successful in recruiting and admitting a more diverse body of students and if admissions priorities have
83 shifted away from a focus on students with legacy status or other alumni relatives; and

84 6. Based on these analyses and evaluations, provide a recommendation as to whether VMI should
85 continue to receive public funds as a state-sponsored institution of higher education, and include any
86 additional recommendations for actions VMI should take in the future to address any remaining concerns,
87 should it remain a state-sponsored public institution.

88 § 4. The task force shall be authorized to explore any other questions or concerns about VMI that may
89 arise and shall include any such questions or concerns, and the resulting investigations, analyses, and
90 recommendations resulting from or addressing such questions or concerns, in its final report.

91 § 5. Unless otherwise prohibited by law, the Board of Visitors of VMI and all leadership, administrators,
92 and educators of VMI shall make available all documents or records requested by the task force. The task
93 force shall be permitted to conduct interviews of enrolled students and any individuals providing education
94 instruction, serving in an administrative role, serving in a leadership role, serving on the Board of Visitors
95 for VMI, or any individual otherwise employed at VMI, and such individual shall make himself available for
96 interview upon request of the task force.

97 § 6. The task force shall complete its meetings by November 30, 2026, and shall submit to the Governor
98 and the General Assembly an executive summary and a report of its findings and recommendations for
99 publication as a House or Senate document. The executive summary and report shall be submitted as
100 provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative
101 documents and reports no later than the first day of the 2027 Regular Session of the General Assembly and
102 shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.