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## HOUSE BILL NO. 1377

## AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE

(Proposed by the House Committee on Rules)

(Patron Prior to Substitute—Delegate Helmer)

House Amendments in [ ] - February 4, 2026

*A BILL to establish a task force to [ determine whether examine higher education at ] 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 VMI's responsiveness to the recommendations of the 2021 SCHEV report. The Task Force shall further explore other changes that should be made at VMI to distance itself from the Lost Cause and foster an inclusive environment as well as any other matter raised by the Task Force ].

*§ 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*

60      *institutions of higher education.*

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

62      1. [ ~~Reevaluate the findings of the Commission to Survey the Educational System of Virginia in 1928 to (i)~~  
63 ~~determine whether educational services rendered by VMI are duplicated at other institutions of higher~~  
64 ~~education in the Commonwealth and (ii) evaluate the relative cost to the Commonwealth and taxpayers of~~  
65 ~~those courses of study at VMI and as compared to other public and private institutions of higher education in~~  
66 ~~the Commonwealth;~~

67      2. ] Determine (i) the extent by which VMI provides leaders to the Armed Forces of the United States at  
68 an advantageous cost or with advanced training and capability as compared to other institutions of higher  
69 education or other commissioning sources in the Commonwealth [ ~~and~~ ; ] (ii) the feasibility of expanding  
70 programs at other public institutions of higher education to replace the role of VMI in providing taxpayer-  
71 funded commissioned officers to the Armed Forces of the United States; [ and (iii) the quality of graduates as  
72 reflected in graduation rates or other data from initial officer and advanced training and performance in the  
73 Armed Forces; ]

74      [ 3 2 ]. Evaluate (i) the rigor of current academic curriculum offerings at VMI as compared to other  
75 public institutions of higher education in the Commonwealth, (ii) the extent at which current academic  
76 offerings at VMI meet the defense and non-defense needs of the Commonwealth, and (iii) whether additional  
77 academic program offerings should be approved by SCHEV and provided to students enrolled at VMI, should  
78 VMI remain a state-funded institution of higher education;

79      [ 4 3 ]. Thoroughly audit any actions taken by the leadership of VMI following the release of the 2021  
80 special investigative report to SCHEV to determine if VMI (i) has initiated any substantial changes to its  
81 policies, values, and preventative, investigative, and disciplinary procedures to reduce acts within its student  
82 body that could be perceived or classified as racist, sexist, or misogynistic or as an act of sexual harassment  
83 or sexual assault; (ii) has actively made efforts to distance itself from the lost-cause narrative or other  
84 celebrations or promotions of the Confederacy in the American Civil War; [ ~~and (iii)~~ (iii) has been able to  
85 successfully make progress on these efforts and remaining gaps to achieve progress; and (iv) ] possesses the  
86 capacity as an institution to end celebration of the Confederacy;

87      [ 5 4 ]. Analyze admissions data for each year of incoming students beginning in 2021 to determine if  
88 VMI has been successful in recruiting and admitting a more diverse body of students and if admissions  
89 priorities have shifted away from a focus on students with legacy status or other alumni relatives; and

90      [ 6 5 ]. Based on these analyses and evaluations, provide a recommendation as to [ ~~whether VMI should~~  
91 ~~continue to receive public funds~~ any actions that should be undertaken by VMI ] as a state-sponsored  
92 institution of higher education [ ; ~~and include any additional recommendations for actions VMI should take in~~  
93 ~~the future to address any remaining concerns, should it remain a state-sponsored public institution~~ as well as  
94 any required legislation or budgetary changes to ensure VMI meets the higher education needs of the  
95 Commonwealth ].

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

99      § 5. Unless otherwise prohibited by law, [ current and former members of ] the Board of Visitors of VMI  
100 and all [ current and former ] leadership, administrators, and educators of VMI shall make available all  
101 documents or records [ , including working papers or related unofficial communications, ] requested by the  
102 task force. The task force shall be permitted to conduct interviews of enrolled [ or former ] students and any  
103 individuals [ currently or previously ] providing education instruction, serving in an administrative role,  
104 serving in a leadership role, serving on the Board of Visitors for VMI, or any individual otherwise employed  
105 at VMI, and such individual shall make himself available for interview upon request of the task force.

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