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HOUSE BILL NO. 1377

AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE

(Proposed by the Senate Committee on Finance and Appropriations
on March 9, 2026)

(Patron Prior to Substitute—Delegate Helmer)

A BILL to establish a task force to examine higher education at Virginia Military Institute; 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, the goal of the Confederacy in the American Civil War was to preserve the institution of slavery and, after the war, the romantic mythology of the Lost Cause was developed to glorify the Confederacy, and nowhere was that mythology more celebrated in the past than at VMI; 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 VMI's responsiveness to the recommendations provided in the 2021 report commissioned by SCHEV. The task force will further explore and recommend other changes that should be made by VMI to distance itself from the Lost Cause narrative, foster an inclusive environment, and address any other concerns 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; four 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. *Determine the quality of VMI graduates as reflected in graduation rates, any data related to the performance of graduates during initial or advanced officer training, and any data related to the performance of graduates in the Armed Forces of the United States;*

2. *Evaluate (i) the rigor of current academic curriculum offerings at VMI as compared to other public institutions of higher education in the Commonwealth, (ii) the extent at which current academic offerings at VMI meet the defense and non-defense needs of the Commonwealth, and (iii) whether additional academic program offerings should be approved by SCHEV and provided to students enrolled at VMI;*

60 3. Thoroughly audit any actions taken by the leadership of VMI following the release of the 2021 special
61 investigative report to SCHEV to determine if VMI (i) has initiated any substantial changes to its policies,
62 values, and preventative, investigative, and disciplinary procedures to reduce acts within its student body that
63 could be perceived or classified as racist, sexist, or misogynistic or as an act of sexual harassment or sexual
64 assault; (ii) has actively made efforts to distance itself from the Lost Cause narrative or other celebrations or
65 promotions of the Confederacy in the American Civil War; (iii) has successfully made progress on these
66 efforts and has a plan to address any remaining gaps; and (iv) possesses the capacity as an institution to end
67 celebration of the Confederacy;

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

71 5. Based on these analyses and evaluations, provide recommendations for any actions that should be
72 undertaken by VMI as a state-sponsored institution of higher education, and any recommendations for
73 legislation or amendments to the budget, to ensure that VMI meets the higher education needs of the
74 Commonwealth.

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

78 § 5. Unless otherwise prohibited by law, current and former members of the Board of Visitors of VMI and
79 all current and former leadership, administrators, and educators of VMI shall make available all documents
80 or records, including working papers or related unofficial communications, when requested by the task force.
81 The task force shall be permitted to conduct interviews of enrolled or former students and any individuals
82 currently providing education instruction, serving in an administrative role, serving in a leadership role, or
83 serving on the Board of Visitors of VMI, or any individuals otherwise currently employed at VMI, and any
84 individuals who previously provided such instruction, served in such roles, or were otherwise previously
85 employed at VMI, and such individuals shall make themselves available for interview upon request of the task
86 force.

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