

1 VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY — CHAPTER

2 *An Act to establish a task force to examine higher education at Virginia Military Institute; report.*

3 [H 1377]

4 Approved

5 Whereas, Virginia Military Institute (VMI), founded in 1839, is a public, four-year military college
6 offering undergraduate bachelor of arts and bachelor of science degrees and the choice of 14 majors and 28
7 minor academic concentrations in engineering, sciences, and the humanities; and8 Whereas, the mission of VMI is to produce educated and honorable men and women who are prepared for
9 the varied work of civil life, are imbued with a love of learning, are confident in the functions and attitudes of
10 leadership, possess a high sense of public service, are advocates of American democracy and the free
11 enterprise system, and are ready as citizen-soldiers to defend the United States in times of national peril; and12 Whereas, VMI has produced a number of graduates of character who have contributed to the
13 Commonwealth and to the United States, including Army General George C. Marshall and civil rights martyr
14 Jonathan M. Daniels; over 200 alumni officers have reached the rank of Flag Officer in the United States
15 Armed Forces, and over 300 alumni have given their lives in military service to the United States; and16 Whereas, the goal of the Confederacy in the American Civil War was to preserve the institution of slavery
17 and, after the war, the romantic mythology of the Lost Cause was developed to glorify the Confederacy, and
18 nowhere was that mythology more celebrated in the past than at VMI; and19 Whereas, as of 2020, VMI provided statistical figures for the 2024 graduating class that included a
20 matriculation rate of 18 percent of students who had an alumni relation or legacy classification; and21 Whereas, a 2021 report commissioned by the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV)
22 found (i) that racial and gender disparities in how cadets are treated persist at VMI; (ii) that VMI's culture
23 creates and reinforces barriers to addressing such disparities; and (iii) that as a state-funded institution, VMI
24 must be held accountable to taxpayers and the General Assembly; and25 Whereas, VMI's Board of Visitors ended the tenure of Retired Major General Cedric Wins after the
26 shortest tenure as Superintendent in VMI history following repeated efforts by the Retired Major General to
27 end racism, discrimination, and sexual assault and harassment at VMI; further, the decision to not renew
28 Retired Major General Cedric Wins' contract took place in the wake of efforts by the Administration of
29 United States President Donald Trump to remove female and non-white Flag Officers, which efforts were
30 deemed reckless by five former U.S. Secretaries of Defense; and31 Whereas, as a state-sponsored public institution of higher education, VMI receives significant funding as
32 provided by the General Assembly in the general appropriation act, and should therefore be proactive in
33 evolving its academic programs and institutional priorities to provide the Commonwealth with a return on its
34 public investment of funds by developing a thoughtful, well-informed, culturally competent, and skilled
35 workforce capable of leadership, innovation, and excellence in emerging and advanced fields critical to the
36 Commonwealth's economic and social well-being; now, therefore,37 **Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**38 **1.** *§ 1. That a task force is hereby established to determine VMI's responsiveness to the recommendations*
39 *provided in the 2021 report commissioned by SCHEV. The task force will further explore and recommend*
40 *other changes that should be made by VMI to distance itself from the Lost Cause narrative, foster an*
41 *inclusive environment, and address any other concerns raised by the task force.*42 *§ 2. The task force shall consist of four members of the House of Delegates, at least one of whom shall*
43 *have served in the military, to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Delegates; two members of the*
44 *Senate of Virginia, at least one of whom shall have served in the military, to be appointed by the Senate*
45 *Committee on Rules; a representative of SCHEV; and four civilian members, two of whom shall be appointed*
46 *by the Speaker of the House of Delegates, and two of whom shall be appointed by the Senate Committee on*
47 *Rules, and who shall collectively have subject matter expertise or experience in workforce development,*
48 *oversight of student welfare at public institutions of higher education, and educational instruction at public*
49 *institutions of higher education.*50 *§ 3. In conducting its work, the task force shall:*51 *1. Determine the quality of VMI graduates as reflected in graduation rates, any data related to the*
52 *performance of graduates during initial or advanced officer training, and any data related to the*
53 *performance of graduates in the Armed Forces of the United States;*54 *2. Evaluate (i) the rigor of current academic curriculum offerings at VMI as compared to other public*
55 *institutions of higher education in the Commonwealth, (ii) the extent at which current academic offerings at*
56 *VMI meet the defense and non-defense needs of the Commonwealth, and (iii) whether additional academic*

57 program offerings should be approved by SCHEV and provided to students enrolled at VMI;

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

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

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

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

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

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