

**Virginia Values Veterans  
Conference Remarks  
Frank Finelli  
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Commissioner Galanti, Commissioner of the Department of Veteran Services, serving Soldiers, Sailors, Airman, Marines, and Coast Guardsmen, fellow Veterans and other dignitaries, "Good Morning"; I am so honored to be with you.

I am delighted to be with you to speak as a Veteran myself, as the Father of a soldier, as a businessman who is honored to be with veterans in the workplace, and as a Virginian, so proud of the Veteran Services Foundation (VSF) and the Virginia Values Vets (V3) program. I would also like to introduce Rich Schollmann, Chairman of the Veteran Services Foundation, and Jack Hilgers, our Executive Director.  
(Ranger Joke)

Governor McDonnell has made Virginia a very special place for Veterans. We want to be the most Vet-friendly state in the nation. The Governor's and the State Legislature's support of the Department of Veteran Services (DVS), the (VSF) and V3 is unparalleled across the country in the way it creates a framework to leverage the best of the public sector, with the best of the private sector to provide a home and livelihood for Veterans, whether that is part of the:

- Virginia Wounded Warrior Program
- Virginia's Veteran Care Centers
- Virginia's Veteran Cemeteries
- or in the workplace with the V3 program – what we are here to celebrate today – and I would like to add my congratulations to all the V3 Certified companies, which received their awards this morning.

Look around this room and you see an amazing group of folks: leaders in our communities, our companies, and our military that are dedicated to making the most of our Veterans.

Our V3 objective is elegantly simple, yet powerful: *help Virginia Businesses recapitalize their workforce by hiring and retaining engaged teammates transitioning out of military service.* You are a part of the nearly 100 Virginia companies, who pledged to hire 4,000 Veterans, in the first year of the V3 program. How exciting is that! And the V3

program has significant objectives for Virginia's FY14, starting in just a few weeks to accelerate the growth of this program across the Commonwealth.

There are lots of Veteran employment programs out there, but V3 distinguishes itself by teaching Virginia's employers how to recruit, hire, train, and retain Veterans . . . and now the important part – One Employer, One Veteran, One Job at a time.

The Center of Gravity of this program is you – the CEOs and the Operating Managers, and the Human Resource Managers of Companies – you are the key to making this work. My biggest challenge in getting companies to embrace hiring Veterans is that corporate leadership puts it in the too tough box.

But as you all know, hiring Veterans is not too hard. Rather, it is a huge competitive advantage. We have to thank Joe Barto and the team from TMG, who have put their blood, sweat, and tears into building this very special process that has given Virginia's companies great confidence and Virginia's Veterans great opportunity.

As you all know, Veterans are very special folks. They have volunteered to serve, in harm's way, to support and defend the Constitution of the United States of America – and this post- 9/11 generation signed up with full knowledge that they were going to war and that they may have to make the ultimate sacrifice, like Army First Lieutenant RJ Hess.

If you have not been to the Virginia War Memorial, you must go and see the Wall of Honor; where you will see a plaque for RJ, who was killed by indirect fire in Afghanistan on April 23, 2013. RJ was a gifted helicopter pilot, like his father, COL Bob Hess, and was the co-captain of the Robinson High School Virginia State Champion swimming team in 2005, along with my son, 1LT Paul Finelli, who returned from a tough year in Afghanistan late January.

Our veterans have many outstanding qualities. They have excelled in working as part of a team. They know how to communicate – both transmit and receive. They are respectful of authority and their role within an organization. They motivate themselves and others to accomplish the mission. They have a highly developed sense of ethics. Lastly, they have the ability to operate effectively under intense pressure. When you put all this together you get an individual, who is mature, who is loyal, who is dedicated, and who knows how to get the job done right.

You are part of the growing group of leaders that understand how to put these desirable qualities of Veterans to good work as a competitive advantage for your

companies -- companies that are growing technical skills, companies that are increasing productivity, and companies that are enjoying higher retention rates because of the positive impact of Veterans.

America is starting to understand the opportunity provided by our Veterans. There are more organizations getting involved to advise Veterans and more companies with Veteran programs. We have seen some recent data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics that Veteran employment is improving – and that is a good thing.

But there are big storm clouds on the horizon, with a significant reduction in military endstrength unfolding in conjunction with the Budget Control Act that cuts over \$1T from the defense budget over the next 10 years, in combination with our withdrawal from Afghanistan. Hundreds of thousands of Veterans will be hitting the streets over the next several years and we have to be ready for them – to put them to work, to give them the opportunities to grow, to give our companies a chance to improve.

In many respects, we are just in the early innings of a long ballgame to transition a big group of America's Veterans – active and reserve component -- to effective civilian life. But this is no game! These Veterans are the folks, who have done amazing service to protect America's vital interests on the battlefields of Afghanistan, Iraq, and earlier in Bosnia, Panama, Grenada, and VietNam. We need you to stand steadfast in your commitment, on behalf of America, to these Veterans.

As Delegate Kirk Cox mentioned earlier, it will take increasing resources to support the V3 program, so it can scale to meet the opportunity with Veterans in Virginia. I am grateful to have been able to make a personal donation for the V3 program through the Veteran Services Foundation and wish to express my personal appreciation for the many others who have also contributed to this great cause.

I have been so blessed to have served in the military – and it was somewhat by mistake. I went to West Point to swim on the swim team – what a dumb idea! My Dad was a Navy radarman on an LST in Pacific during World War II, who then became a research scientist. I had no clue what I was getting into with the military. But the military gave me incredible opportunities that I would have never otherwise had -- tremendous opportunities to grow academically, professionally, and in leadership – and I am very grateful for everything the military did for me.

The military paved my way with marvelous mentors, who made a difference in my life, and I challenge each of you to make a difference in the life of at least one Veteran.

Think for a second about that person, who has been the most effective mentor in your life. Now, think about how you can become the most effective mentor in the life of a single Veteran – and go out and find him / her.

My prayer is that we all can make a difference in One Veteran's Life, and then watch this goodness unfold over generations. Thank you all for being a part of this very special Virginia Values Veterans program as we celebrate our first year and look forward to countless more, going forward.