

**VT National Guard & Veterans Affairs Caucus Update to General, Housing, & Military Affairs –
5 January 2022**

- Recently completed first full year of existence
- Meets monthly on 2nd Tuesday at 8am to inform Legislators and interested parties of the need for legislation to address emergent issues; Caucus does not exist to propose legislation.
- continued to meet in off-session, with exception of July & August
- Re-branded to VT National Guard & Veterans Affairs Caucus to better reflect mission as a liaison to the Guard for military members, veterans, families, constituents, and legislators
- Held first Public Hearing on October 28, 2021 focused on Veterans Affairs
 - most testimony was centered on the need to exempt military retirement income from taxation; several petitions were presented and read, and more continue to come in to the Caucus
 - heard from USS VT submarine support organization requesting the Caucus to learn about their activities and continue legislative support for crew members
 - heard from veterans about the need for more integrated mental health services and social supports once they are separated from the military
- Co-Chairs met several times with both Co-Chairs of Women's Caucus and/or TAG and staff, as well as with the entire Women's Caucus and subgroups of the Women's Caucus and the NG Caucus to discuss women's issues and how they are addressed by the Guard
- Troops are gradually returning home in staggered groups from deployments
 - caucus will be hearing from family and servicemember support groups at next meeting about mission to assist returning members integrating back to daily life
- Held discussion on selection of TAG:
 - pros and cons for Gubernatorial appointment vs Legislative election
 - consensus around need for vetting/nominating committee for both appointment and election
 - consensus to prioritize TAG qualifications in legislation (without this, there could be disadvantages at the federal level when the VT TAG sits with other state TAGS if they are not of similar rank)
 - H.207 addresses this issue
- Burn Pit Registry is moving slowly – rollout was delayed multiple times due to COVID, and word isn't widely getting out to veterans who separated years ago

Next meeting is 11 January 2022 at 8am – Please join us via Zoom by requesting a link from Rep Birong.

Respectfully Submitted,
Representative Lisa A Hango
Representative Matt Birong
Representative Laura Sibilila
Co-Chairs, VT National Guard & Veterans Affairs Caucus