

## Veterans Agenda

On the 75th anniversary of Pearl Harbor, if you ask most of our 430,000 veterans they'd say Maryland needs to be more veteran friendly.

"Veteran Friendly" means different things to different people. There are hundreds of veteran groups and they all have their top priority. But the veteran community has never spoken in a single voice. What we need is a Veteran's Agenda for Maryland. We had to find the veteran groups, draft a starting list of issues, categorize them, and figure out what's already in law.



## So what are doing about it?

We invited 150 veteran groups to the Veterans Summit in Annapolis on November 7, and 50 showed up to be the voice of their veteran community. We reviewed every veteran bill passed in every one of the other 49 states during 2016, distilled down to 135 distinct ideas in five groups: Health, Education, Jobs, Taxes, and Personal Matters.

We broke the vets into work groups to identify the top issues in each area. Work groups used the other states issues as a starting point from which to add or subtract from, then prioritize.

Each issue was considered for impact on every member of the veteran family, including National Guard, Reserve, Active Duty, spouses, children, disabled, senior, retired and the honorably discharged.

The final result is a Veterans Agenda for Maryland - about 35 issues including suicide prevention, transition assistance, retraining, local resource centers and tax exemptions.



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The veteran community finally spoke with one voice to the legislature. Legislators are genuinely excited about this in Annapolis, and on Tuesday I presented it to state legislators nationwide. If we're lucky, dozens of other legislators will use it to file bills with people they don't often work with, across party lines and between the House and Senate - *in many states*.

My hope is the Veterans Agenda will form the core of the Veterans Caucus mission for years to come, and make Maryland the most Veteran Friendly state in the Union. I want to give our Veterans a strong voice in Maryland.

Semper Fidelis,

Steve Waugh