COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Executive Order No. 55 (2012)

Supporting Virginians with Disabilities in the Commonwealth's Workforce
Importance of Employment for Virginians with Disabilities

Importance of the Issue

The last United States Census concluded that out of 3.6 million Virginia residents who were employed, 154,985 Virginians with disabilities were included in that total. These numbers indicate an under representation of people with disabilities among the gainfully employed. The Commonwealth of Virginia should work to provide a Commonwealth of Opportunity for all Virginians; therefore it is appropriate to initiate steps in order to expand employment opportunities for its citizens who are disabled.

Directives for the Employment of Virginians with Disabilities

By virtue of the authority vested in me as Governor by Article V of the Constitution of Virginia and under the laws of the Commonwealth, including, but not limited to, Section 2.2-103 of the *Code of Virginia*, and in conjunction with Section 51.5-1 of the *Code of Virginia* which states that it is the policy of the Commonwealth to encourage and enable persons with disabilities, including our wounded soldiers, to participate fully and equally in the social and economic life of the Commonwealth and to engage in remunerative employment, *with the goal of enhancing the employment opportunities for Virginians with disabilities.*

I hereby call upon the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services and the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired to increase coordination in the provision of information and support to both public and private sector employers particularly in efforts to use assistive technology to support individuals with disabilities in the Commonwealth's workforce.
I hereby call upon relevant agencies to work together in order to better promote the value and benefit

of employing individuals with disabilities.

I hereby call upon the Departments of Education, Medical Assistance Services, and Behavioral Health and Developmental Services to review all of their programs to assure that vocational opportunities are supported in addition to non vocational programs

I hereby call upon all state agencies to work with the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services and the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired vocational rehabilitation programs to provide a range of career building opportunities for these clients to include, but not be limited to: internships, mentoring opportunities, unpaid work experiences, and situational assessments.

I hereby call upon the Department for Behavioral Health and Developmental Services to build on the findings of the annual *Employment First Summits* promoting Employment First Initiatives which will lead to increased employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities, resulting in immeasurable benefits for individuals, families, employers, and communities across the Commonwealth.

I hereby call upon all state agencies to collaborate with the Virginia Values Veterans Initiative of the Department of Veterans Services in developing and supporting additional employers committed to hiring veterans with disabilities. Veteran specific resources, such as the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program and the DVS Jobs Board, should be utilized to the fullest extent possible.

I hereby call upon the Department of Human Resource Management to publicly disseminate on a periodic basis the guidelines for hiring veterans with a service-connected disability rating. This information should also be displayed on the Department of Human Resource Management website and listing of state job openings.

Within 120 days of the signing of this order, I call upon the Virginia Workforce Council to work in conjunction with the Virginia Employment Commission and with the Workforce Development Services Division of the Virginia Community College system in order to convene a workgroup to identify and develop strategies for expanding the employment of individuals with disabilities in the private sector in the Commonwealth. The workgroup should include representatives of the Departments for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, Blind and Vision Impaired, Veterans Services, Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, and other experts in the employment of persons with disabilities along with decision makers from large, small and mid-sized businesses from throughout the Commonwealth.

Effective Date of the Executive Order

This Executive Order shall be effective November 16, 2012 and shall remain in force and effect unless amended or rescinded by further executive order.

Given under my hand and under the seal of the Commonwealth of Virginia this 16th day of November, 2012.

/s/ Robert F. McDonnell, Governor

Attest:

/s/ Secretary of the Commonwealth