



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Cadet Foundation, the Jefferson Council, and the Generals Redoubt Join the Call for an Investigation into Political Intimidation and Free Speech Repression at Virginia Military Institute

**MEDIA ADVISORY
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 20, 2025**

Contact: Bob Morris
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Yorktown, Virginia February 21, 2025 – The Cadet Foundation (www.thecadetfoundation.org) joined by Alumni Free Speech Alliance partners the Jefferson Council for the University of Virginia (TJC) (www.jeffersoncouncil.org) and The Generals Redoubt for Washington and Lee University (TGR) (www.thegeneralsredoubt.us) are sounding the alarm on disturbing efforts by members of the Virginia House and Senate to pressure the Virginia Military Institute (VMI) Board of Visitors into granting Superintendent Maj. Gen. Cedric Wins a new four-year contract, despite serious allegations of impropriety. The Cadet Foundation, TJC and TGR are calling for an independent investigation into the unethical and potentially unlawful actions of those involved.

The Cadet Foundation, TJC and TGR are members of a larger national organization, the Alumni Free Speech Alliance (AFSA) (www.alumnifreespeechalliance.org), comprised of 27 independent alumni groups committed to “Preserving the Pursuit of Truth in American Higher Education”. Over the past several years, several of the 27 AFSA groups, including The Cadet Foundation, TJC, and TGR have repeatedly raised concerns regarding VMI leadership's suppression of free speech and intimidation of dissenting voices. These concerns were formally presented to the Secretary of Education and the VMI Board of Visitors, yet they were dismissed without meaningful action. Empowered by this inaction, the situation continues to deteriorate.

Recently, members of the Virginia Senate and House of Representatives, working in concert, attempted to strong-arm the VMI Board of Visitors into extending the contract for VMI's Superintendent, Maj. Gen. Cedric Wins, through explicit threats to withhold funding from the Institute. This coercion, reported by Congressman Ben Cline in a letter to the clerks of the Virginia House and Senate (attached), directly undermines VMI's institutional integrity and jeopardizes the well-being of cadets by tying essential funding to an administrative decision that should be made independently and in the best interest of VMI's mission.

A Pattern of Intimidation and Retaliation

The concerns surrounding Maj. Gen. Wins' leadership are not new. Under his tenure, *The Cadet*, VMI's award-winning independent student newspaper, has faced repeated attempts at censorship, as documented by warning letters or letters of concern from The Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression (FIRE), The Student Press Law Center (SPLC), and most recently the Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF). Despite these concerns, warnings and public outcry, VMI's administration continued to take retaliatory action against cadets culminating in an egregious memorandum issued by VMI's Chief of Staff designed to isolate cadets from external supporters.

Additionally, the Virginia Senate's recent rejection of six highly qualified gubernatorial appointees to the VMI Board of Visitors suggests a deliberate effort to maintain political control over these institutions. Among those rejected were distinguished leaders committed to transparency, governance, and the preservation of institutional integrity. The exclusion of these individuals raises serious ethical questions about favoritism and undue influence. Moreover, The VMI Administration appears to be defying the Presidential executive Order and Secretary of Defense Directives on DEI claiming they have the authority to force Cadets to attend "military duty" that includes NCAA Sporting Events, DEI training and more under Title 10 U.S.C. – Armed Forces. In light of recent discussions surrounding the extension of Maj. Gen. Cedric Wins' contract as Superintendent of the Virginia Military Institute (VMI), we unequivocally condemn the attempts by members of the House and Senate to threaten withholding funds in exchange for a new contract based solely on race. [Read VMI's Claims and the ADF Letter HERE](#)

Call for an Independent Investigation

Congressman Ben Cline is calling for an immediate ethics investigation into reports that members of the Virginia General Assembly have engaged in political coercion, and threatening to withhold funding if the Virginia Military Institute Board of Visitors does not extend the contract of VMI's superintendent (enclosure).

"The idea that members of the General Assembly would use their positions of power to intimidate VMI Board members by conditioning funding on the extension of the superintendent's contract is not just inappropriate, it is an outright abuse of power," **said Congressman Cline.**

In his letter, Congressman Cline highlighted that one VMI Board member reported that Senator Jennifer Carroll-Foy stated the following:

"I am just trying to help VMI. Cedric is African American. The leadership of the General Assembly is African American. Your board appointments and budget amendments are in peril. You can fix this by giving Cedric a four-year contract extension."

[Read Cline's Letter HERE](#)

VMI cadets themselves called attention to how this situation puts their education and VMI experience at risk but so far are being ignored except by Cline's inquiries.

[READ the Opinion Piece BY CADETS HERE](#)

The Cadet Foundation, TJC, and TGR join Congressman Cline's call for an immediate and thorough investigation into these matters by the **Virginia House and Senate Standards of Conduct Subcommittees** and **The Virginia Attorney General's Office**. If these allegations prove to be true through a fair and impartial investigation, those responsible should face the severest penalties available. As the Cadets on VMI's independent student newspaper so articulately pointed out, Cadets should not be pawns in fights over political ideology. No one should fear the truth a truly open, transparent, objective, and thorough investigation will reveal.

Defending VMI's Legacy and Its Cadets

The Cadet Foundation, TJC, and TGR stand resolutely in defense of free expression, institutional independence, and the cadets who have been subjected to an environment of fear and retaliation.

VMI is at a crossroads. The Board of Visitors must act courageously and independently in making decisions for the institution, free from political interference. Any failure to do so will undermine the very principles VMI seeks to instill in its cadets—honor, integrity, and service.

The Cadet Foundation, TJC, and TJR urge all VMI alumni, supporters, and concerned citizens to contact their legislators, demand accountability, and stand up for the principles upon which VMI was founded. The time for action is now. Further information on VMI and The Cadet Newspaper is available from The Cadet Foundation on its website at: www.thecadetfoundation.org and The Cadet newspaper at: www.cadetnewspaper.com.

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Congressman Ben Cline Calls For Ethics Investigation into Virginia Lawmakers' Threats Against VMI Board

**MEDIA ADVISORY
FOR IMMEDIATE
RELEASE
February 20, 2025**

Contact: Maggie Clemmons
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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Congressman Ben Cline is calling for an immediate ethics investigation into reports that members of the Virginia General Assembly have engaged in political coercion, attempting to strong-arm members of the Virginia Military Institute (VMI) Board by threatening to withhold funding if they do not extend the contract of VMI's superintendent. These disturbing actions reveal a clear and troubling effort to exert undue influence over VMI's governance.

"The idea that members of the General Assembly would use their positions of power to intimidate VMI Board members by conditioning funding on the extension of the superintendent's contract is not just inappropriate, it is an outright abuse of power," **said Congressman Cline.**

VMI, one of the nation's most storied military institutions, has long upheld a tradition of service, leadership, and honor. The men and women who serve on its Board of Visitors should be free to make decisions in the best interest of the school, its cadets, and its mission, without political interference from members of the General Assembly seeking to force ideological conformity.

In his letter, Congressman Cline highlighted that one VMI Board member reported that Senator Jennifer Carroll-Foy stated the following:

"I am just trying to help VMI. Cedric is African American. The leadership of the General Assembly is African American. Your board appointments and budget amendments are in peril. You can fix this by giving Cedric a four-year contract extension."

"These comments, wholly unbecoming of a member of the General Assembly and completely inconsistent with the values of our nation, make plain the leadership of the General Assembly is attempting to exert undue influence on the decisions of the Board in exchange for funding priorities of VMI," **Cline continued.**

Congressman Cline is demanding immediate accountability for those responsible and calling for an ethics investigation into this outrageous abuse of power. He will continue to stand with VMI against political intimidation and ensure that its mission remains intact, free from coercion and political interference.

Read the full letter [here](#).

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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
CHAIR, SUBCOMMITTEE ON RESPONSIVENESS
AND ACCOUNTABILITY TO OVERSIGHT
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET

Congress of the United States House of Representatives

February 18, 2025

Hon. G. Paul Nardo, Clerk of the House
Hon. Susan Clarke Schaar, Clerk of the Senate
Virginia State Capitol
1000 Bank Street
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Mr. Nardo and Mrs. Schaar,

I write to you today to share reports I received regarding conduct of a member of the General Assembly related to the Virginia Military Institute and the employment contract of its Superintendent. The reports I received are deeply troubling and, if accurate, each body of the General Assembly should impanel their respective Standards of Conduct subcommittees to further review these actions.

As Congressman for Virginia's Sixth Congressional District, I am proud to represent the Virginia Military Institute. This storied institution produces outstanding young men and women prepared to serve our nation in many capacities and it is the responsibility of all those who serve Virginia to support and strengthen it. The Institute is also a significant economic driver in this region and many of my constituents earn their livelihoods from the Institute.

Within the last few weeks, members of the General Assembly have attempted to pressure the Board of Visitors to extend the employment contract of VMI's superintendent, General Cedric Wins. These members have suggested they would take official acts as legislators if the General did not receive a lengthy contract extension. These actions, specifically the direct threats made by Senator Jennifer Carroll-Foy, are unbecoming, inappropriate, and ethically questionable.

Senator Carroll-Foy recently spoke to a Board member claiming that certain members of the leadership of the General Assembly had "placed in peril" funding for VMI, and that it could only be rectified if General Wins received a four year contract extension. According to the Board Member, Senator Carroll-Foy said the following:

"I am just trying to help VMI. Cedric is African American. The leadership of the General Assembly is African American. Your board appointments and budget amendments are in peril. You can fix this by giving Cedric a four year contract extension."

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These race-related comments, wholly unbecoming of a member of the General Assembly and completely inconsistent with the values of our nation, make plain the leadership of the General Assembly is attempting to exert undue influence on the decisions of the Board in exchange for funding priorities of VMI.

Contract decisions are the prerogative of the Board of Visitors for each institution, as set out by the Constitution and state law. Attempting to coerce Board members under the threat of taking official acts on state funding is inappropriate and ethically questionable, at best. In my sixteen years of service in the General Assembly, I never witnessed any legislator threaten to take official acts if a Board of Visitors did not accede to their demands related to the contract of a university president.

I respectfully request you forward this letter to the appropriate panels of the House and Senate for additional review.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ben Cline". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ben Cline
Member of Congress