

Dear Mr. Prasnicky:

We are members of the Class of 1961 and we are writing to you about a matter which should be of great concern to all VMI Alumni. You are certainly aware that the Board of Visitors of VMI have come under pressure by a Virginia state Senator, Sen. Jennifer Carroll-Foy, to renew the Contract of General Wins for another full term as Superintendent of the Institute. Specifically, according to several sources, Senator Carroll-Foy said, to a member of the Board of Visitors:

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

This brass-knuckle application of political pressure on the Board of Visitors by a state senator is plainly unethical and also actually illegal<sup>1</sup>. Subsequently, Sen. Carroll-Foy, on February 22<sup>nd</sup>, doubled-down by publishing an online diatribe accusing the Board of Visitors of seeking the removal of Gen. Wins because of his race.<sup>2</sup>

That a sitting state senator would publicly assert that consideration by the Board of Visitors of VMI of the reappointment of General Wins is tainted by racism is unacceptable and should draw a public rebuke from the VMI Alumni Association and VMI Alumni Agencies. The Senator’s attack on VMI and its Board of Visitors is made even more keenly damaging because the Senator is, herself, a graduate of VMI. In our view, her remarks are most reprehensible because her threats, if they were to bear fruit, would hurt the members of the corps much more than the intended target of her invective.

Inasmuch as the legislature has adjourned for the 2024-25 session with no more damage than the failure to approve the appointment of two distinguished graduates to the Board of Visitors, VMI should be thankful. However, when composing this letter we were moved to remember that the illustrious General George Patton allegedly said of the VMI graduates of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century “Give me an army of Citadel men and I will win a battle. Give me a few VMI men and I will win a war.” With that encomium in mind, we remind the Board of the Alumni Association of the zeal with which it recently sought the suspension and/or expulsion of certain alumni from the alumni association. It is beyond dispute that their transgressions of the standard to which the Board held these alumni pale in comparison to that of Sen. Carroll-Foy. Accordingly, we request, no we demand, that she be expelled from membership. If the Board is too fearful to take this action and Patton meant what he said, he would roll over in his grave. And, the brave men and women of the Ukrainian army and of the Israeli defense force should thank their God that they are not led in their current struggles by an officer corps constituted by members of the once proud VMI Alumni.

Sincerely,

Salvatore J. Vitale, ‘61

William I. Respass, ‘61

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<sup>1</sup> Virginia Code Section 24.2-233 specifically authorizes removal of an elected official “...for misuse of the office....”

<sup>2</sup> According to Carroll-Foy, “VMI Board of Visitors President, McGuire Woods partner and Republican John Adams called me repeatedly and informed me that the VMI Board of Visitors no longer wants a Black Superintendent.”

