

February 27, 2025

VMI Board of Visitors
Virginia Military Institute
Lexington, VA 24450

Dear VMI Board of Visitors,

Good evening and I hope all is well. I have not seen any of you since my final board meeting last year. I truly miss my time on the board shaping this great institute and wish things could have turned out differently with regard to my reappointment. I know many alumni went to bat for me, and for that I am greatly appreciative. For all of those board members I had the pleasure of sharing the room with during my time on the board you know I sometimes had very strong feelings. I write today because right now those feelings center around General Cedric Wins and your decision on whether to extend his employment at the school that he loves, that I love, and that you love. I sat in that board room with you and we had the tough conversations. I listened intently to everyone's opinions even if I didn't agree with what was being said, and I felt like my opinions were listened to as well and taken equally as seriously. I put everything I had into listening to both sides of a subject and making an independent conscience decision based on the facts. I always had people I trusted and spoke to when I wanted to bounce things off of someone or get a different perspective, including fellow board members, but at the end of it all I knew I had to make the final decision on what I believed was the best course of action for the institute, what I thought would help us to strengthen and grow in a direction that put us in the best position to continue to produce the best and the brightest citizen soldiers. Even though I am no longer a part of this board because of the toxic political environment we find ourselves in where compromise and diverse thought is unwelcome, I still love VMI and what it is supposed to represent and what it did for me. This is why I hope that the current board will continue to listen to my words and know they come from a place of love for this school just like you. Make an independent conscience decision based on the facts and the merits of General Wins' tenure at the institute up to this point, and don't be swayed by forces that may have agendas that are not your own. Do what you know is right based on sitting in that board room and knowing that General Wins has put everything he had into VMI and listened to our concerns, and literally met or exceeded every challenge he was presented with from the board, some fair and others not so fair. General Wins in my opinion should be celebrated for what he represents. He is the perfect example of the type of young men and women we profess to build at the institute. He was a great student and an exceptional athlete that went on to serve his country honorably. He attained a status that few in the military do which is no small feat, and after that, instead of going and finding some lucrative private sector job to ride out his retirement years he answered the call from his beloved institute. To me this man deserves our respect and reverence and to be treated like one of our own, because he is. If this is a conversation about merit and performance, as it should be, then make a decision on those facts and those facts alone. If it's about something else then be honorable about it and say what that is so everyone can have a full understanding of the why.

Sincerely yours,



Lester Johnson Jr. '95