

Virginia's Volunteer Army 1779

CHAPTER IV.

An Act for raising a body of Volunteers for the defence of the commonwealth.

Approved May 1779 by the Virginia General Assembly

WHEREAS it is necessary that the state be at all times provided with a force sufficient to repel any hostile invasion, and it being found that the militia, as it is at present constituted, is not sufficient for that purpose, ***Be it enacted by the General Assembly***, That there be immediately raised for the public service, four thousand five hundred and sixty volunteers, including non-commissioned officers, to serve within this commonwealth for the defence thereof during the present invasion, who are to be regimented, officered, and accoutred, in manner as is herein after directed. That the said four thousand five hundred and sixty volunteers, when raised, be formed into battalions of ten companies, each company to consist of fifty rank and file, to be commanded (except where otherwise directed) by a captain, lieutenant, and ensign, an adjutant and regimental quarter-master, to be appointed from the officers of the regiment, a surgeon, and surgeon's mate, one serjeant major, one drum major, four serjeants, four corporals, one drummer, and one fifer to each company. Each regiment to be commanded by a lieutenant colonel and major, who shall have a company in the regiment, and draw pay as captains also; to each of which companies there shall be an additional lieutenant. That the general officers to command the same, to wit: One manor general and two brigadier generals, be appointed by joint ballot of both houses of assembly, and commissioned by the governour; the lieutenant colonels and majors, captains and subalterns, shall be appointed by the governour, with the advice of the council, and commissioned by the governour; the surgeon, surgeon's mate, adjutant, and regimental quarter-master, the serjeant major and drum major, to be appointed by the lieutenant colonel; the sergeants, corporals, drummers and fifers, by the captain of each company; there shall also be a chaplain to each battalion, who shall be appointed by the lieutenant colonel; that there be provided for each battalion, one field piece, with the necessary implements to fit them for service; that the pay, rations, and forage, of the officers and soldiers be the same as in the continental army; that a complete suit of clothes, to wit: A coat, waistcoat, pair of overalls, and shoes, two shirts, and a hat, be given to each soldier or non commissioned officer, on the first day of November next, or as soon after s they can be procured, provided that such soldier or non-commissioned officer continue in service five months from the time of his enlistment, or an equivalent in money, proportioned to his time of service, if sooner discharged; that blankets and tents also be provided for them, together with necessaries for traveling and camp uses, arms, ammunition, and accoutrements; and if it shall so happen that any soldier who shall be enlisted into the service, shall have it in his power to furnish any of the conveniences and accoutrements which may be necessary, the same may be purchased from him for the publick use, at a reasonable and adequate price.

And for their better accommodation, each officer and soldier shall be furnished, during his service, with spirits and sugar from the publick stores, on the same terms as the continental or state troops, and be subjected to the like rules and discipline; but instead of a gill of spirits to each officer and soldier in

the state, which is now delivered daily, there be allowed only a gill to every officer, soldier, and militiaman, who shall be on duty, until a greater quantity can be procured by the executive for that purpose than at present.

And in order to complete the levy as speedily as may be, each volunteer soldier shall receive a bounty of fifty dollars, to be paid him upon his joining the regiment or company, to which he shall belong; for which purpose the governour, with the advice of the council, is hereby authorized to draw upon the treasurer for the time being for such sum or sums of money, to defray that and the other expenses incurred by this act, as may be sufficient for the same, which the treasurer shall advance out of any public money which may be in his hands. The governour, with the advice of the council, is hereby authorized and directed to proceed immediately to the appointment of the lieutenant colonels, majors, captains, and subaltern officers, and to take proper measures for raising the whole of the said four thousand five hundred and sixty men as speedily as may be, and as the situation of the state seems to require. The said volunteers to be continued in service for the space of one month after the enemy shall have withdrawn themselves from the commonwealth, unless sooner discharged by the governour, with the advice of the council; and if they shall return within that time, it shall be considered as a continuation of the same invasion. The governour, with the advice of the council, is hereby empowered to appoint a lieutenant colonel and major, to command each of the several regiments of militia which shall be embodied for the immediate defence of the state, which militia so to be embodied, shall be commanded by the same general officers as are appointed to command the volunteers.

And for the defence and protection of the western frontiers against the Indian or other enemies, who may commit hostilities in that quarter, ***Be it enacted***, That two battalions of the said volunteers be raised in the counties lying on that side the state, and be officered with fit persons to command on that station; and instead of the clothing, arms, and accoutrements, herein before directed, the said battalions shall be furnished with such clothing, arms, and accoutrements, as are most proper for that service; and if any soldier or noncommissioned officer, enlisted into the said battalions, shall be willing to furnish himself with proper clothing, arms, and accoutrements, the governour, with advice of council, may fix the sum to be paid for the purchase or use of such clothing, arms, and accoutrements, and direct the lieutenant colonel or officer commanding the battalions accordingly, who is to take care that such necessaries, especially the arms, are in proper order and kind, and fit for the service. The said battalions to be posted or garrisoned on the frontiers of this state, at such places as shall, from time to time, appear most convenient; the said battalions shall not be compelled to march out of the commonwealth, unless in case of an expedition against the enemy Indians, or in pursuit of any enemy who shall have invaded the frontier.

And as it is uncertain how long the dangers which at present threaten the western frontier may continue, ***Be it enacted***, That the said battalions shall be continued in the service for the space of nine months, from the tenth day of June next, unless sooner discharged by the governour, with advice of the council; and if the time of their enlistment shall expire, or the battalions be discharged at any considerable distance from the counties where the same were raised, the officers and soldiers shall be allowed pay and provisions for so many days as may be deemed necessary for their return. These battalions to be subject to the rules and discipline as aforesaid.

And be it further enacted, That all volunteers raised under this act, who may be disabled in the service, shall be entitled to receive full pay during life, to commence at the time of their discharge; and if any of them lose their lives in the service, either by sickness or in the field, the same provision shall be made for their wives and indigent parents, as has heretofore been made for others in similar situations.

REF: "The Statutes at Large being a Collection of all the Laws of Virginia", Vol. X, by William Waller Hening, pp.18-21.