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Media

American Legion to VA: Open Doors to WWII Veterans

(INDIANAPOLIS, October 31, 2019) -- The head of the nation’s largest veterans organization called on the Department of Veterans Affairs to open its health care system to World War II veterans that are not already enrolled.

“Mr. Secretary, The American Legion has confidence that you will not fail or forsake the heroes who literally saved the world three quarters of a century ago. Please act now to open the VA’s great system to all of our nation’s World War II veterans,” American Legion National Commander James W. “Bill” Oxford said in a letter to VA Secretary Robert Wilkie Jr. sent today.

Oxford pointed out that the Veterans Health Care Eligibility Act of 1996 exempted all Spanish American War and World War I veterans from the means test required to enter the VA health care system. “It’s time to do the same for our World War II veterans,” he wrote.

Delegates at The American Legion’s national convention in 2017 unanimously passed a resolution urging VA to extend the means test exemption to World War II veterans. Since the resolution passed, the population of living veterans has declined dramatically. VA estimates that of the original 16 million U.S. veterans who served in World War II, only 282,000 will be living on September 30, 2020. Moreover, 73.6 percent of male and 67.3 of female World War II veterans in 2016 were already utilizing VA benefits.

With a current membership of nearly two million wartime veterans, The American Legion was founded in 1919 on the four pillars of a strong national security, veterans affairs, patriotic youth programs and Americanism. Legionnaires work for the betterment of their communities through nearly 13,000 posts worldwide. From the drafting of the original GI Bill to the creation of the Department of Veterans Affairs, The American Legion is the most influential voice for America’s veterans. The American Legion, www.legion.org, will be celebrating its centennial through Veterans Day.
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