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To: Public Relations Division
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Subject: The American Legion calls for revamping and expansion of veterans and military health care

Attachments:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**The American Legion calls for revamping and expansion of
veterans and military health care**

VA and DoD systems must be separate from national health care, says Legion

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Aug. 25, 2009) - The American Legion is calling for a significant expansion of the healthcare systems administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Department of Defense (DoD).

In resolutions adopted by members of its National Executive Committee (NEC), the nation's largest veterans service organization strongly reiterated its longstanding positions affecting the funding of VA healthcare and extending its coverage to veterans' family members. Specifically, the Legion favors, in the words of its resolution, "allowing Medicare Reimbursement for VA as a realistic health care coverage for enrolled, Medicare-eligible veterans seeking treatment of NON-service-connected medical conditions in VA health care facilities." This, says the Legion would not only benefit a greater number of veterans, but provide the Department of Veterans Affairs with an alternative revenue stream. The Legion is also encouraging Congress to "allow all eligible veterans, dependents and beneficiaries, especially those who are either uninsured or underinsured, to enroll in the VA's integrated health care delivery system."

In its resolution, adopted during the organization's annual convention meeting this week in Louisville, Ky., The American Legion emphasized that it considers the VA health care system "the best care anywhere."

The Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Eric Shinseki, is expected to discuss the Legion resolution with the Legion's National Commander, David K. Rehbein, when the two meet tomorrow. Secretary Shinseki is also scheduled to address convention attendees tomorrow morning.

The Department of Defense's Medical Health Care System (MHS) was the subject of another, similar Legion resolution. Recognizing the high quality of military health care as well, the Legion says it favors expanding it, too and, "supports health care reform that assures all active-duty service members, members of the Reserve components, military retirees to include Temporary Early Retirement Authority (TERA) and Chapter 61 retirees, and their families, especially those who are uninsured or underinsured, have timely access to quality health care within DoD's Medical Health System."

Each of the resolutions concludes with an admonition to not absorb either the veterans' or military health care systems into any National Health Care Reform program. The Legion's National Commander, David Rehbein, extracted a personal promise to that effect when he met privately with President Barack Obama recently.

With a current membership of 2.5-million wartime veterans, The American Legion was founded in 1919 on the four pillars of

a strong national security, veterans affairs, Americanism,
and youth programs. Legionnaires work for the betterment of their communities through more than 14,000 posts across the nation.

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