

**NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
OF
THE AMERICAN LEGION
May 5-6, 2021
Virtual**

**Resolution No. 18: Veteran Military Sexual Trauma (MST) Claims Training
Origin: Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission
Submitted by: Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission**

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) wrongly denies benefits to thousands of veterans, claiming they suffer from military sexual trauma (MST); and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Office of Inspector General (OIG) reported that representatives who "do not have the experience or expertise" to process claims for sexual trauma are tasked with doing so; and

WHEREAS, Military sexual trauma claims are no longer subject to adequate or appropriate special or additional reviews; and

WHEREAS, According to findings released by the VA OIG, 1,300 claims denied during a five-month period last year were rejected without due diligence by the VA; and

WHEREAS, In 740 of those cases, the VA incorrectly denied claims before requesting a medical examination; and

WHEREAS, Claims for military sexual trauma used to be handled by VA representatives with specialized training; and

WHEREAS, In 2016, the VA ended requiring military sexual trauma claims to be reviewed by trained military sexual trauma representatives; and

WHEREAS, The OIG audit team identified several deficiencies that led to the improper denial of benefits such as lack of specialization, inadequate MST related claim processing training for Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) staff, deficient internal controls, and discontinued special focus reviews; and

WHEREAS, VA's Inspector General found in 2018 that thousands of military sexual trauma survivors may have been incorrectly denied benefits due to paperwork and procedural mistakes; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By the National Executive Committee of The American Legion in regular meeting assembled virtually on May 5-6, 2021, That The American Legion strongly supports legislation setting forth mandatory military sexual trauma (MST) training for individuals who are reviewing claims submitted by all veterans who have suffered MST.