

**NINETY-FOURTH NATIONAL CONVENTION
OF
THE AMERICAN LEGION
Indianapolis, Indiana
August 28, 29, 30, 2012**

Resolution No. 130: Vet Centers Expansion to Rural Communities

Origin: Maryland

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Veterans residing in rural areas maintain reoccurring disadvantages accessing earned VA medical care and mental health services as due to traveling distances; and

WHEREAS, The Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010 encourages improved mental health services to veterans residing in rural areas; and

WHEREAS, The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) has identified the need to establish and maintain a nation-wide system of community based programs separate from VA medical centers in order to remove unnecessary barriers to care and honoring requests for counseling without delay; and

WHEREAS, Vet Centers provide a broad range of counseling, outreach, and referral services to assist veterans and family members overcome the readjustment problems associated with war and personal trauma; and

WHEREAS, Vet Centers retain counselors with specific military backgrounds making it more likely to effectively relate to the unique needs of combat veterans; and

WHEREAS, Vet Centers provide bereavement counseling services to surviving parents, spouses, children, and siblings of service members who died of any cause while on active duty, including federally activated Reserve and National Guard personnel; and

WHEREAS, Vet Centers provide outreach services to combat veterans that's integral to locating and engaging veterans by providing them with information and services; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28, 29, 30, 2012, That The American Legion support the Department of Veterans Affairs' Vet Centers be expanded in geographic locations that maximize opportunities to reach rural veterans; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That Vet Centers be established using input from interested Veteran Service Organizations representing those veterans for whom Vet Centers have been established to assist; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That Vet Centers provide a clear definition of those geographic locations that outreach and counseling services are to be provided; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That criteria be used to justify the establishment of new Vet Centers that take into account factors not measurable, but rather reflective of the unique characteristics of each state, its resources and limitations to reach its rural veterans.