



### Protect the American Flag

The American Legion strongly believes the flag is a symbol of our nation's freedom and all that we hold in common as Americans, secured by the servicemen and women who sacrificed so much for all citizens. That is why The American Legion continues to urge Congress to approve an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would allow Congress to prohibit the physical desecration of the American flag. Our belief is not to silence those who protest perceived injustices. The American Legion is not alone in its belief that our nation's symbol should be protected from desecration. The U.S. House of Representatives has routinely passed such an amendment. Every state has endorsed such a resolution. And surveys show that 80 percent of Americans agree that the flag should be protected. Rather than fearing such a constitutional amendment, members of Congress concerned about supporting the amendment should embrace it. The proposed flag protection amendment is no infringement on the Bill of Rights. Instead, it is a wonderful exercise in the popular sovereignty the Bill of Rights was designed to protect. Please support and cosponsor H.J. Res. 61 sponsored by Rep. Steve Womack (AR). (Resolution 360)

**Contact: Jeff Steele**

*The American Legion is the voice of 2 million American veterans and servicemembers. As a resolutions-based organization, The American Legion's positions represent the views of its members and are based on our four pillars: Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, National Security, Americanism, and Children & Youth.*

*This report highlights the top issues The American Legion will fight for in 2017.*

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THE AMERICAN LEGION

# LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

for the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress

1<sup>st</sup> Session

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# THE AMERICAN LEGION LEGISLATIVE AGENDA FOR THE 115<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESS

## Fully fund a superior national defense as the global war on terror continues

Today's war on terrorism continues to overcome threats to America's security and national interests at home and abroad. It is critical to maintain a well-funded national security strategy to ensure a strong national defense to protect America and its allies from enemies such as the Islamic State, China and North Korea. The United States must counter the drawdown of our Armed Forces by enhancing foreign policy, improving military intelligence, and increasing cyber operations and capabilities. Additionally, The American Legion strongly advocates for a good quality of life for troops and an improved transition from military service to civilian life. The Legion vows to fight against those who seek to jeopardize the benefits promised to past, present and future servicemembers for short-term budget gains. (Resolutions 17 and 86) **Contact: Matthew J. Shuman**

## Limit outsourcing, unify VA's programs

Continued focus is needed to ensure VA can meet challenges in delivering high-quality, timely benefits and health care to veterans. In 2017, critical policy choices must be made, primarily the future of the Veterans Choice Program, which expires in August. A community care option is now a basic expectation for enrollees in VA's health-care system. Excessive outsourcing would render VHA too small to function economically or preserve quality of care and essentially dismantle it. Congress should pass legislation to unify VA's multiple non-VA care programs with VA as the coordinator and guarantor of care. **Contact: Warren Goldstein**

## Reform VA's claims appeals process

The current VA appeals process is broken and is providing a frustrating experience for veterans. The status quo isn't acceptable. Congress must pass appeals modernization legislation that would provide veterans with a simple, fair and transparent appeals process in which the vast majority would receive a final appeals decision within a year of filing an appeal. (Resolution 5) **Contact: Warren Goldstein**

## Institute gender-specific health care for women

Women veterans face remarkably different experiences than their male counterparts when transitioning in and out of combat roles, in between services and back to civilian life. VA must ensure an improved quality of life for women veterans with gender-specific health care to meet their needs. (Resolution 147) **Contact: Warren Goldstein**

## Reclassify cannabis for medical research

Studies show great promise that medical cannabis is a viable solution for treating pain, inflammation, seizures, mental health disorders, autoimmune diseases, multiple sclerosis, Crohn's disease, Alzheimer's disease and even cancer. The American Legion supports increased research into cannabis as part of the larger effort to develop complementary and alternative treatments and therapies. (Resolutions 11, 160, 165) **Contact: Warren Goldstein**

## Support those who care for wounded veterans

There are 5.5 million caregivers who go unnoticed while they care for America's wounded. Military caregivers suffer higher rates of depression and health problems than others. The American Legion is committed to the support of these hidden heroes. (Resolution 146) **Contact: Warren Goldstein**

## Provide mandatory end-of-service exams for reservists

Active-duty servicemembers have the right to physical examinations when separating. After all, servicemembers retiring from active duty are required to have such examinations. This same right to an end-of-service exam is not authorized for reserve component servicemembers. This unfair treatment must be changed. (Resolution 85) **Contact: Matthew J. Shuman**

## Repeal unfair offsets that penalize disabled veterans and widows

Many military retirees must forfeit some of their retirement pay to receive their VA service-connected disability compensations. It is equally outrageous that VA survivor benefits (DIC) are offset from military Survivor Benefit Plan annuities. The American Legion supports legislation to repeal both of these unjust offsets. (Resolutions 85 and 224) **Contact: Matthew J. Shuman**

## Defend veterans education benefits

As the creator of the original GI Bill, The American Legion continues to focus on the sustainability of this important earned benefit, while ensuring that veterans receive the most benefit possible. (Resolution 318) **Contact: Matthew J. Shuman**

## Ensure those returning from active duty retain re-employment rights

Passed by Congress in 1994, the Uniformed Services Employment and Re-employment Rights Act protects the rights of servicemembers to be re-employed after returning from active duty, including reserve or National Guard members. The American Legion wants to prohibit employers from pressuring veterans into waiving their veterans employment rights and protections. (Resolution 315) **Contact: Matthew J. Shuman**

## Support veteran-owned small businesses

Businesses owned by disabled veterans are required to receive 3 percent of federal contracts. The American Legion supports efforts to ensure the U.S. government meets this threshold. (Resolution 154) **Contact: Matthew J. Shuman**

## Continue funding programs to end veterans homelessness

To fully implement VA's pledge to eradicate veterans homelessness, Congress must continue making responsible investments in affordable housing and programs such as Supportive Services for Veterans Families that move veterans and their families off the streets and into stable housing. (Resolution 340) **Contact: Matthew J. Shuman**

## Create an American Legion Commemorative Coin

The American Legion will celebrate its centennial in 2018-2019. An American Legion Centennial Coin is under consideration by the U.S. Mint. Timely congressional authorization is needed and your support is requested. **Contact: Matthew J. Shuman**