EIGHTY-SIXTH NATIONAL CONVENTION
OF
THE AMERICAN LEGION
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE
August 31, September 1, 2, 2004

Resolution No. 177: The Anthrax Vaccine Immunization Program
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, There are more than ten countries that have or are suspected of developing biological warfare agents; and

WHEREAS, The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved the anthrax vaccination in 1970; and

WHEREAS, Anthrax is considered to be one of the major biological warfare threats to U.S. Forces because it is lethal, easily produced and weaponized; and

WHEREAS, There are no other means of protection available, at this time, other than the anthrax vaccination from contacting the disease anthrax if encountered; and

WHEREAS, Over 525,000 servicemembers have received at least one anthrax vaccination shot and the Department of Defense's (DoD) Anthrax Vaccine Immunization Program (AVIP) had initially planned to vaccinate all 2.4 million active duty and reservists as a part of its Force Health Protection program; and

WHEREAS, Studies on efficacy of the licensed anthrax vaccine and long term health effects are currently being conducted; and

WHEREAS, The sole manufacturer, BioPort Corporation, has had numerous problems with financial insecurity, building violations, and repeated failures to pass FDA inspections; and

WHEREAS, The aforementioned problems with the manufacturer and its facility caused a shortage of FDA approved vaccine, necessitating DoD to institute a slowdown of AVIP in July 2000, limiting vaccination to personnel deploying to high threat areas; and

WHEREAS, Despite the fact that BioPort finally received FDA approval in early 2002, AVIP and BioPort continue to be plagued by controversy and skepticism; and

WHEREAS, Even with recent FDA approval of BioPort, vaccine shortage remains a problem necessitating continued slowdown of AVIP, limiting vaccination to personnel deploying to high threat areas for more than 15 days; and

WHEREAS, Numerous adverse reaction reports have been filed, and some servicemembers are refusing to take the vaccine, thus ending military careers as well as adversely impacting overall morale and an unknown number have seriously questioned the implementation of this program; and

WHEREAS, The Center for Disease Control and Prevention and General Accounting Office have noted the passive surveillance reporting that DoD has employed is flawed as a tracking device for reaction rates; and

WHEREAS, The DoD has failed to adequately follow-up on vaccine reaction rates and track pertinent data for entry into individual medical records; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion continue to closely monitor the progress of the Anthrax Vaccine Immunization Program, urge comprehensive congressional oversight and conduct outreach to servicemembers, veterans and their families; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the DoD to seek production of a newer vaccine proven for efficacy, safety and with a shorter inoculation regiment than the current six inoculations, all in accordance with FDA regulations; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion recommend that the Department of Defense expeditiously develop a second manufacturer of anthrax vaccine, and in the quantities necessary, which surpass the funding, credibility and FDA inspection issues which are currently under criticism; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the Department of Defense to re-evaluate the Anthrax Vaccine Immunization Program and maintain individual medical records with the greatest of accuracy; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges both the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs to provide timely medical assistance and health care to those participants who experience vaccination reactions.