FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Commander calls VA reform bill “one step”

Congressional leaders praised for reaching agreement and passing emergency legislation to speed up and improve delivery of VA health care for veterans.

WASHINGTON (Aug. 1, 2014) -- American Legion National Commander Daniel M. Dellinger described a $16.3 billion VA health-care reform package, passed 91-3 by the Senate Thursday, as “one step” in a journey just getting under way to repair problems in the Department of Veterans Affairs. The measure, in part, provides funds for VA patients to receive care outside the system, which Dellinger said must be a temporary response until a permanent solution can be reached.

“The VA reform package that passed overwhelmingly in the Senate Thursday night is an important step in the process to begin repairing systemic problems in the Department of Veterans Affairs,” Dellinger said. “But it is only one step, and only a beginning. The American Legion applauds efforts by both the House and Senate Committees on Veterans’ Affairs this week to reach an agreement to provide funds now that will get veterans the health care they need as quickly as possible. Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs Chairman Bernie Sanders and House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs Chairman Jeff Miller showed great leadership in carving through political differences and putting the needs of veterans first. The American Legion is confident President Obama will sign this measure into law so we can all continue working together toward a lasting solution to ensure reasonable access to VA health care and restore trust among veterans who depend on the system.”

The reform legislation was introduced after whistleblowers across the country came forward to report that medical appointment records had been falsified in many VA health-care facilities. The American Legion has conducted, and continues to conduct, town hall meetings and Veterans Crisis Command Centers in those communities to provide direct assistance for veterans whose appointments and benefits applications have been delayed.

The American Legion, with 2.3 million members, is the nation’s largest wartime veterans organization.

Contact: Marty Callaghan: 202-263-5758/202-341-8900, mcCALLaghan@legion.org or John Raughter, 317-630-1253/317-441-8847, jraughter@legion.org. A high resolution photo of Nat. Cmdr. Dellinger is available at www.legion.org