

**NINETY-EIGHTH NATIONAL CONVENTION  
OF  
THE AMERICAN LEGION  
Cincinnati, Ohio  
August 30, 31, September 1, 2016**

**Resolution No. 142: Department of Veterans Affairs Mental Health Services  
Origin: Maryland  
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, The Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) has a substantial mental health population; and

WHEREAS, According to the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards, of the returning Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom veterans who have sought care at VHA facilities, mental health problems are the second most common medical problem of these war veterans; and

WHEREAS, There has been significant restructuring of VA mental health services during the past several years; and

WHEREAS, This restructuring has often resulted in a downsizing of in-patient based care, and the shift of treatment programs from residential-based to ambulatory-based programs; and

WHEREAS, There has not been a commensurate reinvestment of resources in alternative treatment modalities to maintain community-based mental health services to treat veterans who were deinstitutionalized by the closure of inpatient programs; and

WHEREAS, During the past several years, the number of veterans provided specialized substance abuse treatment has declined, while the funding for such treatment has been significantly decreased; and

WHEREAS, Since the restructuring, the Veterans Health Administration now has more mental health patients seeking treatment with fewer mental health providers; and

WHEREAS, Veterans continue to need increased access to mental health services, including, but not limited to, community based outpatient clinics, mental health intensive case management, substance abuse disorder programs, and compensated work therapy programs; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 30, 31, September 1, 2016, That The American Legion shall monitor the efficiency and effectiveness of the Mental Health Strategic Plan; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress to annually appropriate sufficient funds for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to ensure comprehensive mental health services are available to veterans; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress to provide annual oversight of VA's mental health services.**