

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

**Resolution No. 83: Virtual Lifetime Electronic Record**

**Origin: Delaware**

**Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation**

WHEREAS, On April 9, 2009, President Obama provided direction to the Department of Defense (DoD) and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to develop a Virtual Lifetime Electronic Record (VLER), which would create a unified lifetime electronic record for members of the Armed Services; and

WHEREAS, The VLER plans to include administrative and medical information for servicemembers from when they first join the service throughout their lives until they are laid to rest; and

WHEREAS, The VLER plan seeks to expand the departments' health information sharing capabilities by enabling access to private sector health data as well; and

WHEREAS, VLER is a federal, inter-agency initiative to provide portability, accessibility and complete health, benefits and administrative data for servicemembers, veterans and their beneficiaries; and

WHEREAS, DoD and VA for years have yet to fully implement a bilateral medical record between both agencies with no target end date in sight; and

WHEREAS, Approximately 2.6 million members of the military have served in Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Operation New Dawn and are returning home in unprecedented numbers needing care for their injuries and illnesses sustained in service to our nation; and

WHEREAS, Failure to implement a bilateral medical record and VLER to date has caused significant delays in the veterans' treatment process from DoD to VA because the VA treatment team does not have full access to the patient's DoD records and have to rely on a patient's self-report of their medical history and symptoms; and

WHEREAS, Servicemembers and veterans are forced to make copies of their records at their last duty station or submit a request to the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis, which can take months to process; and

WHEREAS, Veteran service organizations, such as The American Legion, have not been invited to VLER meeting to provide stakeholder input and sharing of mutual concerns; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has over 2,000 accredited department (state) and county veteran service officers that will continue to need access to Veteran Benefit Administration databases in order to file for VA benefits and claims for those claimants represented; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is concerned that within VA's three branches – Veterans Health Administration (VHA), Veterans Benefits Administration, and National Cemetery Administration – there are numerous computer-based programs that are inoperable between these branches which are not addressed in the VLER plan; and

WHEREAS, Because a bilateral medical record is not currently available, there is not an ability for a patient's record to be flagged at the time of injury/illness occurred during military service, which makes it difficult and more time-consuming for DoD/VA physicians and raters to find proof of service connection; and

WHEREAS, Currently VA has the ability to send patients encrypted email messages and a VHA program, Myhealthvet, allows patients to refill their VA prescriptions, view their labs and receive VA wellness reminders but does not allow VA patients to schedule appointments online; 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 urge Congress to provide oversight to the Department of Defense (DoD) and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to ensure that the Virtual Lifetime Electronic Record (VLER) is fully implemented by Fiscal Year 2017; and, be it further**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge DoD and VA to implement VLER no later than FY 2015 to ensure returning servicemembers' medical records are able to be accessed by both agencies which will improve the timeliness and delivery of VA health care and claims benefits; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion recommend the following be included in design and implementation of VLER:**

- **Include veterans service organizations, such as The American Legion, in VLER meetings to offer stakeholder input and sharing of mutual concerns;**
- **Allow servicemember records to be flagged at the time of injury/illness in the military to speed up processing of VA benefits (health care and claims) during and after discharge;**
- **Ensure computer systems and programs within the Veterans Health Administration, Veterans Benefits Administration, and National Cemetery Administration are interoperable and able to communicate with each other;**
- **Allow VA patients to be able to make appointments online by choosing the day, time and provider and that VA sends a confirmation within 24 hours.**