

**NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE  
OF  
THE AMERICAN LEGION  
INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA  
MAY 10 - 11, 2017**

**Resolution No. 29: Department of Veterans Affairs Establish an Opioid Treatment Program to Include an Opioid Detox Unit at Every VA Medical Center**

**Origin: Register Resolution No. 2745 (NC) Department Executive Committee**

**Submitted By: Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission**

WHEREAS, Many veterans return home after serving in combat with unseen injuries and illnesses such as traumatic brain injuries (TBI) and post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSD); and

WHEREAS, These injuries are referred to as the “signature wounds” of Iraq and Afghanistan; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) helped create a large population of opioid-addicted veterans by overprescribing painkillers for injuries; and

WHEREAS, In 2015, Congress passed and President Obama signed into law legislation that requires the VA adopt the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s “voluntary” opioid guidelines, which discourage the prescribing of opioids for chronic pain; and

WHEREAS, Over the past year, the VA has implemented these guidelines throughout its health-care system; and

WHEREAS, According to Dr. Carolyn Clancy, deputy undersecretary for health for organizational excellence at the Veterans Health Administration, the VA is working to increase treatment capacity nationwide and expand alternatives to the use of painkillers, such as acupuncture; and

WHEREAS, The department also is aggressively addressing the supply of prescription opioids; and

WHEREAS, Since 2012, the peak of opioid prescribing, according to VA they have reduced the number of its patients on long-term or high-dose painkillers by about a third; and

WHEREAS, The VA system’s treatment for opioid addicted veterans is limited; and

WHEREAS, In Fayetteville, North Carolina, home to Fort Bragg, the largest military installation in the U.S., 47% of opioid prescriptions are abused, according to an April study by Castlight Health Inc., a health enterprise software company; and

WHEREAS, The Fayetteville VA has an outpatient alcohol detox unit but no opioid detox unit; and

WHEREAS, The Fayetteville VA refers veterans to other local facilities for detoxification, the initial period of up to about a week when an addict comes off drugs, endures withdrawal and is stabilized; and

WHEREAS, The VA health system here has no residential addiction-treatment program, no inpatient opioid detoxification facility and only five doctors in a 21-county area able to dispense medications like buprenorphine, used to treat opioid-use disorder; and

WHEREAS, Addicted veterans can be referred to one of the 43 VA inpatient rehab centers around the country, which combined have 96 beds, according to a 2014 VA audit; and

WHEREAS, According to the audit, waits are usually longer than 30 days, which deters referrals, and beds often stay empty because of lack of staffing; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By the National Executive Committee of The American Legion in regular meeting assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, on May 10-11 2017, That The American Legion urge Congress to provide adequate funding to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to address the opioid epidemic throughout the VA; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That an opioid treatment program be established at every VA medical center.**