

**NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE  
OF  
THE AMERICAN LEGION  
INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA  
October 18-19, 2006**

**Resolution No. 3: The American Legion Policy On Non-Surgeons Performing  
Invasive Eye Surgery Within The Department Of Veterans Affairs**

Submitted by: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) issued a controversial directive in August 2004 creating a new precedent to allow non-physicians to perform eye surgery on veterans in VA facilities; and

WHEREAS, This precedent raised concerns about the quality of surgical eye care veterans could receive in VA medical facilities; and

WHEREAS, Ophthalmologists have extensive training to include four (4) years of medical school, one (1) year of internship, and three (3) years of specialized medical and surgical instruction; and

WHEREAS, Non-physicians are not allowed to perform surgery in 49 states, and have not been trained in surgery through an extensive medical school education; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense (DoD) prohibits non-surgeons from performing eye surgery on our nation's soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines currently serving in our Armed Forces; and

WHEREAS, The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) subsequently rescinded the original directive, and specified that only ophthalmologists will be privileged to perform therapeutic laser eye procedures in Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical facilities; and

WHEREAS, Access to quality and safe health care must remain a priority, especially when our soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines in Iraq and elsewhere are serving in harm's way and will rely upon VA health care upon returning home; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By the National Executive Committee of The American Legion in regular meeting assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, on October 18-19, 2006, That The American Legion strongly reaffirm its support of the concept of "surgery by surgeons" within the VA eye care arena in order to provide veterans with the highest possible quality of surgical eye care available, and to ensure only medically trained surgeons perform invasive eye surgery on America's veterans.**