Resolution No. 108: Support For Legislation To Introduce Atomic Veterans Service Medal
Origin: Convention Committee on Internal Affairs
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Internal Affairs

WHEREAS, Between 1945 and 1962, about 225,000 members of our Armed Forces participated in hundreds of nuclear weapons tests; and
WHEREAS, These men and women are collectively known as “Atomic Veterans”; and
WHEREAS, These veterans were placed in extremely hazardous areas and bravely served our country while being exposed to potentially dangerous ionizing radiation; and
WHEREAS, These men and women were often sworn to secrecy about their assigned duties and many remain silent today; and
WHEREAS, More than 75 percent of Atomic Veterans have already passed away, never having received recognition from a grateful nation of their service during the Cold War; and
WHEREAS, Our great allies Great Britain, New Zealand, and Australia have long recognized their own Atomic Veterans by authorizing a medal for their military personnel who served with the United States during nuclear testing; and
WHEREAS, Presidents William J. Clinton and George H. W. Bush acted to provide specialized care and compensation for veterans who suffered from a variety of illnesses and cancers as a result of exposure to ionizing radiation; and
WHEREAS, In the early 1990s, Congress passed the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA) to provide lump sum compensation to approximately 4,000 veterans, uranium workers, and civilians who lived downwind from U.S. nuclear weapons test sites; and
WHEREAS, In July, 2017, the House unanimously approved an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act to create an Atomic Veterans Service Medal in the NDAA, which passed 424-0 by the House but was dropped in the Senate; and
WHEREAS, The United States will remain forever indebted to the bravery, valor, discretion, and dedication that the Atomic Veterans displayed during a time of great national nuclear insecurity; and
WHEREAS, The commitment and sacrifice of these veterans demonstrates a highly uncommon and commendable sense of duty, patriotism and honor during and after the Cold War; and
WHEREAS, The United States Congress has a proud tradition of recognizing other classes of veterans who served under unusually hazardous circumstances; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on August 23, 29, 30, 2018, That The American Legion fully supports legislation to award the Atomic Veterans Service Medal to members of the United States Armed Forces who were exposed to ionizing radiation as a result of their assigned duties during nuclear testing from 1945 to 1962; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Congress develop the criteria for award of this medal.