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

Resolution No. 37: Improvements to Department of Veterans Affairs Women Veterans Programs
Origin: Michigan
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Women veterans are the fastest growing demographic serving in the military and enrolling in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for their health-care treatment; and

WHEREAS, According to VA statistics, the total veteran population in the United States, as of September 30, 2012, was approximately 22.3 million, of which women veterans numbered 2,248,579; and

WHEREAS, Women veterans continue to face many barriers and challenges with enrolling for and receiving their VA care due to a number of reasons such as: not identifying as a veteran; not being recognized as a veteran by VA employees and staff; lack of awareness and understanding of their VA health-care benefits; and the stigma and perceptions that VA is still an "all male" health-care system; and

WHEREAS, According to VA, women veterans are 30 percent less likely to enroll for health care than their male counterparts, which is as a result of many factors that include, but are not limited to, lack of awareness of benefits and fragmentation of care from limited access to gender specific care (OB/GYN, Mammography); and

WHEREAS, According to VA estimates, 27 percent of female Vietnam veterans report that they have been diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and 20 percent of female veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan have been diagnosed with PTSD; and

WHEREAS, The majority of VA facilities do not offer inpatient/residential mental health programs for women veterans, and as a result, based on findings from the System Worth Saving Task Force, one veteran had to travel from Colorado to the Coatesville, PA VA Medical Center in order to receive inpatient treatment for Military Sexual Trauma and PTSD; and

WHEREAS, Research on women veterans long-term care, health and reproductive issues is needed, especially in developing mental health treatments for women veterans in their child-bearing ages; and

WHEREAS, On October 3, 2011, VA launched congressional child care pilot programs for veterans at the Buffalo VA Medical Center, Northport, NY VA Medical Center and the Tacoma, WA VA Medical Center; and

WHEREAS, On October 3, 2013, the legislative authority for these child care programs expired and VA no longer has congressional authority to provide these crucial and vital child care services, which many veterans have come to rely on when seen by their VA health care provider for their scheduled appointment; and

WHEREAS, Without the support of VA's child care program, veterans may no longer be able to attend their scheduled appointments, which will result in a significant increase in VA's no show rate or veterans not receiving care in VA; 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 the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to work with the Department of Labor and Department of Defense to develop

a customized women veterans health-care track for the Transition Goals, Plans and Success program, facilitated by women clinicians; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge VA to establish an acceptable benchmark for communication of mammogram results to women veterans that is better than industry standards, which currently is 30 days for normal results and 3 to 5 days for abnormal results; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge VA to evaluate the access and demand for mental health residential services for women veterans at each of the 152 VA Medical Centers and require each of the 21 Veteran Integrated Service Networks (VISNs) to have a minimum of one (1) Inpatient/Residential Mental Health Program site per VISN; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That VA conduct studies on the long-term health effects for women in the military and differences in treatment for mental health conditions, especially for women in their child-bearing age; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress to pass legislation extending the VA child care program for veterans, which expired on October 3, 2013.