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

Resolution No. 194: Department of Veterans Affairs Veteran Integrated Service Networks
Origin: Washington
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Veterans Health Administration (VHA) is organized into a national VA Central Office Headquarters and 21 Veteran Integrated Service Networks (VISNs), or regions, which oversee several VA Medical Center facilities and Community Based Outpatient Clinics; and

WHEREAS, VISNs were established by Dr. Kenneth Kizer, Former Under Secretary for Health for VHA to decentralize VA from VA Central Office to regions in order to promote best practices, innovation and be responsible for all financial and operational activities for the VA Medical Center facilities under their jurisdictions; and

WHEREAS, Originally, VISN staffing models called for seven to ten full time employee equivalents (FTEE) within each of the 22 VISNS nationwide, for a total of 220 FTE employees nationwide; and

WHEREAS, Over the years, as new VHA programs and initiatives have been designed and implemented by VA Central Office, the VISNs have considerably increased staff to administer, track and manage these programs which are over 1,300 employees today; and

WHEREAS, The VA Office of the Inspector General issued three reports on VISNs recommending (a) the Under Secretary for Health implement a system of financial management and fiscal controls for the VISN offices; (b) strengthen the VISN offices' performance management system and implement management controls over organizational structures and staffing; (c) VA and VHA acquisition management improve oversight of VISN contracts and develop tools to effectively manage VISN contracting activities, which clearly indicates the need for improvements with VISN programs and initiatives; and

WHEREAS, Since the VISN model was developed, there has not been any Government Accountability Office, VA Office of the Inspector General or reports from VHA leadership on the overall effectiveness of the current VISN structure and geographic boundaries in improving access to and quality health care for veterans; 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 urges Congress to direct the Government Accountability Office and Department of Veterans Affairs Office of the Inspector General conduct a comprehensive study to include purpose, goals, objectives and budget and evaluation of the effectiveness of the 21 Veteran Integrated Service Networks (VISNs); and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the Veterans Health Administration leadership conduct an internal review and develop an action plan to address VISN management, staffing and its current geographic boundaries/catchment areas concerns, in order to better provide timely access and quality health care for veterans.