The American Legion

For God and Country

bulletin

National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission
1608 K Street, N.W. • Washington, D.C. 20006
K. Robert Lewis, Chairman - Connecticut
Peter S. Gaytan, Director - Maryland

24-07 **September 13, 2007**

REPORT OF THE NATIONAL CONVENTION COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS AND REHABILITATION K. ROBERT LEWIS (CT), CHAIRMAN

The report of the Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation to the 89th National Convention of the American Legion was delivered by Mr. K. Robert Lewis, Chairman, on August 29, 2007, Reno, Nevada. The recommendations of the Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation, in the following condensed version, were accepted as follows.

PETER S. GAYTAN, Director

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89 members of your Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation met at 9:00 a.m. on August 26, 2007, in Room A-1, Concourse Level, Upper Level, Reno-Sparks Convention Center, Reno, Nevada, and agreed on the following report, which is respectfully submitted for your consideration.

The Committee was called to order by Peter Gaytan (MD), Liaison Representative appointed by the National Adjutant to act as temporary chairman. Jacob Gadd (DC), Assistant Director for Program Management, VA&R Commission, acted as temporary secretary and called the roll. A quorum being present, nominations were received for permanent chairman. K. Robert Lewis

(CT), Chairman of the Standing National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, was unanimously elected Chairman of the Convention Committee.

With unanimous consent, the Chairman appointed Chris Harding (OK), as Committee Secretary; R. Michael Suter (NY), Chairman of the Claims and Rating Subcommittee and John Hickey (IN), Secretary; Terry Schow (UT), Chairman of the Hospital and Medical Services Subcommittee and David Sanborn (MI), Secretary.

Subcommittee liaison assignments were as follows: Steve Smithson (MI), Deputy Director, to Claims and Rating and Shannon Middleton (MD), Deputy Director for Healthcare, to Hospital and Medical Services.

As has been the custom for the 63 previous National Conventions, a Special Department Service Officers Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Resolutions, in a preconvention meeting, screened and grouped the resolutions. A report of their action, with recommendations, was presented to the Convention Committee for consideration.

The Screening Committee conserved the time of the Convention Committee substantially. It was chaired by K. Robert Lewis, Chairman of the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission and was composed of the following Department Service Officers:

REGION 1 – Walter Pytka (RI)
REGION 2 – Randall Fisher (KY)
REGION 3 – Philip Youngblood (GA)
REGION 4 – Donald Lanthorn (OH)
REGION 5 – Milton Smith (ID)

The Convention Committee recommended that such a Committee be appointed for this purpose to serve the Eighty-Ninth National Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation.

The 55 Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation resolutions presented for the consideration of this Convention were referred by the Resolutions Assignment Committee. The following action on the resolutions was taken by the Convention Committee:

Approved or Approved w/Amendment	**3**
Consolidated with Resolutions Approved	**0**
Referred to the Standing Commission	**9**
Received and Recorded	**27**
Rejected	**16**

A motion was made and seconded to authorize the Chairman and Secretary to sign and deliver the report on the Convention Committee's behalf.

A report of action taken on the 9 resolutions referred to the Standing National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission will be made to the National Executive Committee and to the Adjutant of the Department concerned.

APPROVED RESOLUTIONS OR APPROVED WITH AMENDMENT

RESOLUTION NO.: **10**

SUBJECT: **Oppose Legislation Authorizing Legion-Accredited Representatives to Develop Claims Directly on Behalf of The Department of Veterans Affairs**

Origin: **Michigan**

Submitted by: **Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation**

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 28, 29, 30, 2007, That The American Legion adamantly oppose any federal legislation requiring an accredited representative of The American Legion to develop claims on behalf of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs under a contractual arrangement between VA and County or State government or under any other arrangement where the representative would be acting in an official capacity directly on behalf of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

RESOLUTION NO.: **111**

SUBJECT: **Oppose Processing of Original Pension Claims by Department of Veterans Affairs Pension Maintenance Centers**

Origin: **Michigan**

Submitted by: **Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation**

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 28, 29, 30, 2007, That it oppose any effort by the Department

of Veterans Affairs to have original pension claims processed by the Pension Maintenance Centers.

RESOLUTION NO.: **140**

SUBJECT: **Extend VA Mortgage Protection Life Insurance to Service-Connected Veterans Who Are Permanently and Totally Disabled**

Origin: **Minnesota**

Submitted by: **Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation**

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 28, 29, 30, 2007, That the members of The American Legion seek the enactment of legislation, which would extend the Veterans Administration Mortgage Protection Life Insurance to service-connected veterans who are rated as permanently and totally disabled.

RESOLUTION NO.: **179**

SUBJECT: **Increase Beneficiary Travel Pay for Eligible Veterans**

Origin: **Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation**

Submitted by: **Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation**

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 28, 29, 30, 2007, That The American Legion urge the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to seek adequate funding to accommodate the needs of the increasing demand for care, to include the need for an increase in the beneficiary travel rate; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to immediately increase the per mile beneficiary travel pay for eligible veterans; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to periodically adjust the rate to assure that the per mile reimbursement rate is increased at a reasonable and acceptable level.

THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTIONS ARE BEING REFERRED TO THE STANDING COMMISSION FOR STAFF STUDY OR APPROPRIATE ADMINISTRATIVE DISPOSITION

RECEIVED AND RECORDED RESOLUTIONS

9	MI	Indiana-Ohio Center for Traumatic Amputation Rehabilitation Research
11	MI	Oppose Any Reduction of Eligibility Criteria for Department of Veterans Affairs Per Diem Payments To State Veterans Homes
12	MI	The American Legion Policy on the State Veterans Home Program
23	MD	Provide Full Funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs Construction Program
24	MD	Support Medicare Reimbursement for the Department of Veterans Affairs
25	MD	Recognize Operations in Lebanon (1958), Grenada (1983) and Panama (1989-1990) as Periods of War for Department of Veterans Affairs Pension Purposes
26	MD	The American Legion Policy on Prostate Cancer Research and Treatment
27	MD	The American Legion Policy on Radiation
28	MD	Clarification of "Service in the Republic of Vietnam" for the Purpose of Agent Orange Presumption
57	OH	Support Increased Per Diem Payments to the State Veterans Home Program
62	NJ	Support the Automatic Waiver of Veterans Benefits Administration Debts of $250 or Less

65	ID	Funding for Mental Health Care in the Department of Veterans Affairs
66	ID	Assured Funding for Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Care be Made a National Priority
81	DC	The American Legion Policy on Department of Veterans Affairs Information Technology Management
93	MA	Department of Veterans Affairs Burial and Plot Allowance
94	MA	Presumptive Medical Treatment for Persian Gulf War Veterans
98	MA	Funding for Department of Veterans Affairs Construction Program
99	MA	Support 33 1/3 Percent Per Diem Payment to State Veterans Homes
138	MN	Protect Disability Rating After Ten Years
141	MN	Increase the Burial Allowance for Service-Connected Veterans and Those who Die in a Department of Veterans Affairs Facility and Provide for Annual Adjustments
143	MN	Support Protection of Veterans Benefits in the Case of Taxation, Cutbacks, and Elimination
144	MN	Oppose Lump-Sum Payments of Department of Veterans Affairs Disability Compensation
145	MN	Oppose Offset of Social Security Benefits or Any Other Federal Benefit by Department of Veterans Affairs Disability Compensation Payments
146	MN	Support Legislation to Authorize the Veterans Health Administration to Collect Monies from Medicare

147	MN	Oppose Means Testing of Disability and Death Compensation
148	MN	Mandatory Funding for the Veterans Health Administration
153	MN	Support Legislation to Provide Presumptive Service Connection to Atomic Veterans for All Recognized Radiogenic Diseases

REFERRED RESOLUTIONS

3	AK	Department of Veterans Affairs Study for a Community-Based Outpatient Clinic in Southeast Alaska
87	SC	Construction of a New Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Upstate South Carolina
112	NY	Oppose Efforts by the Department of Veterans Affairs to Create a Virtual Information Center
139	MN	American Legion Oppose Any Recommendation to Alter Current Law Regarding Service Connection
142	MN	Rounding Up Department of Veterans Affairs Benefits for 50 Cents or Higher
150	MN	Increase the Department of Veterans Affairs Fee-Based Limitation for Medical Care
152	MN	Support a Change in the Federal Regulations to Provide for a Temporary Total Rating
162	WI	Construction of a Fisher House on the Grounds of Milwaukee VA Medical Center
164	WI	Congress Authorize and Fund the Construction of Columbaria

REJECTED RESOLUTIONS

5	CO	Financial Performance Bonuses to Department of Veterans Affairs Employees

15	MI	Department of Veterans Affairs Allowance for Purchase of Cremation Urns
61	NJ	Restrict Monetary Bonuses to Department of Veterans Affairs Management
67	ID	Department of Veterans Affairs Compensation for 100% Disability
68	ID	Department of Veterans Affairs Beneficiary Travel Reimbursement at Forty Cents Per Mile
69	ID	Veterans Receive Medications with No Co-Pay
70	ID	Future Employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs be Qualified and Honorably Discharged Veterans
106	NY	Department of Veterans Affairs Beneficiary Travel Reimbursement at 48.5 Cents Per Mile
107	NY	Department of Veterans Affairs Regional Offices be Authorized to Hire Employees
109	NY	Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service Include All Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs)
125	IL	Sensitizing Department of Veterans Affairs Records to Prevent Identity Theft
126	IL	Require the Department of Veterans Affairs to Employ Full-Time Veteran Benefits
127	IL	Access to Department of Veterans Affairs Electronic Files for Which The American Legion Holds Power of Attorney
128	IL	Equal Disability Compensation Ratings for All Veterans and Their Families
135	MN	Burial Flags for Members of the National Guard and the Reserves

158 AL Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs
Accept Amputees' and Serious Head Injury Claims Automatically

Respectfully submitted:

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K. Robert Lewis (CT), Chairman
Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs
and Rehabilitation

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Chris Harding (OK), Secretary
Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs
and Rehabilitation