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To: All Legion Leadership
Subject: The American Legion slams White House VA Budget
Date: Friday, May 26, 2017 9:48:35 AM

For Immediate Release

The American Legion slams White House VA Budget

WASHINGTON (May 25, 2017) – National Commander Charles E. Schmidt of The American Legion expressed extreme disappointment in the Trump administration's 2018 budget for the Department of Veterans Affairs.

"The administration's budget for the VA would effectively lower the earnings of our most vulnerable veterans by reducing or eliminating disability payments from veterans who are the most in need," Schmidt said. "This is absolutely unacceptable to us."

The budget would stop higher disability payments to veterans once they become minimally eligible for Social Security. Veterans currently enrolled in the Individual Unemployability program, which is available to those who cannot work and receive the maximum disability compensation from VA, will see their benefits slashed by nearly two-thirds in some instances.

Another disturbing provision caps working age unemployability at age 62. Schmidt pointed out that many members of Congress continue to work past 70. "This plan breaks faith with veterans," Schmidt added. "Moreover, it's an assault on TRICARE benefits, which were earned by veterans who spent decades of their lives serving and defending the Constitution of the United States. We are also alarmed by the cannibalization of services needed for the Choice program. It is a 'stealth' privatization attempt which The American Legion fully opposes. Choice should not be advanced to the detriment of cost of living increases for veterans. We hope all veterans, families and supporters of veterans call their elected officials and tell them that they can do better than this misguided plan. Our veterans deserve no less."

With a current membership of 2.2 million wartime veterans, The American Legion, www.legion.org, was founded in 1919 on the four pillars of a strong national security, veterans affairs, Americanism, and youth programs. Legionnaires work for the betterment of their communities through more than 13,000 posts across the nation.

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