The American Legion
For God and Country

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Office of the
National Commander

October 31, 2019

The Honorable Robert Wilkie, Jr.
Secretary of the Dept. of Veterans Affairs
Office of the Secretary, U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Ave. NW., Room 1000
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Wilkie,

Those who made the Greatest Generation truly great are nearly gone. According to VA's 2018 statistics, of the 16 million U.S. veterans who served during World War II, only half a million remain, and by 2020 only 282,000 of these heroes will still be alive. Most of these veterans are already using VA services – The National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics notes that in 2016 VA's benefits utilization rate for male World War II veterans was 73.6% and 67.3% for female veterans.

You can recognize these remaining heroes with actions far more meaningful than words. The Veterans Health Care Eligibility Act of 1996 exempted all Spanish American War and World War I veterans from the means test required to enter the VA health care system. It's time to do the same for our World War II veterans.

The American Legion has spoken loudly in support of this proposal. Delegates at our 2017 National Convention in Reno, Nev., unanimously passed a resolution calling for an amendment to the 1996 law which would open access for these elderly veterans.

Earlier this year, you spoke of Gen. Matthew Ridgeway's reading of the Book of Joshua on D-Day. "I will not fail thee and I will not forsake thee," was God's promise to his faithful warrior. Mr. Secretary, The American Legion has confidence that you will not fail or forsake the heroes who literally saved the world three quarters of a century ago. Please act now to open the VA's great system to all of our nation's World War II veterans.

Most Sincerely,

James W. "Bill" Oxford

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National Commander