NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
OF
THE AMERICAN LEGION
May 8-9, 2024
Indianapolis, Indiana

Resolution No. 10: Improve Security at Department of Veterans Affairs Health-Care Facilities
Origin: Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission
Submitted by: Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission

WHEREAS, Nearly 70% of all disabled veterans rely on Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) facilities for their health care; and

WHEREAS, Safe and secure facilities are paramount to ensuring veterans receive the world-class care that they deserve; and

WHEREAS, A 2022 report from the VA Office of the Inspector General (OIG) found an average 33% vacancy rate in security officer positions across VA medical facilities; and

WHEREAS, That report also found that the security officer vacancy rate surged to over 60% at some facilities; and

WHEREAS, An OIG audit, as part of that report, found that nearly 25% of publicly accessible doors at selected VA facilities had no security presence, and around 20% of security cameras at facilities were nonfunctional; and

WHEREAS, In February of 2024, a security guard at the Atlanta VA Medical Center in Decatur, Georgia was forced to shoot and kill a veteran experiencing a mental-health crisis when the veteran advanced on him with a knife, leading the hospital to install metal detectors at its emergency room entrance; and

WHEREAS, Two weeks before the shooting incident, the same facility's security staff arrested a veteran in the parking lot after finding his vehicle contained several weapons and a controlled substance; and

WHEREAS, These incidents occurred after a July 2023 letter from doctors and staff members at the Atlanta VA Medical Center calling for advanced security measures, including metal detectors at entrance doors, that could have prevented the shooting incident and saved the life of a veteran in mental crisis; and

WHEREAS, In March of 2024, a veteran at the West Palm Beach VA Medical Center was murdered by a fellow veteran in the hospital's inpatient psychiatric unit while unmonitored by security personnel; and

WHEREAS, These incidents highlight a larger and growing problem with security at VA health-care facilities; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By the National Executive Committee of The American Legion in regular meeting assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, on May 8-9, 2024, That The American Legion urges Congress to pass legislation to improve security staffing at Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health-care facilities, to include filling vacant security officer positions, increasing overall security staffing and improving security officer training; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion calls upon Congress to pass legislation to improve the physical security at VA facilities, such as installing metal detectors at facility entrances, ensuring security staff are present at all publicly accessible entrances and strengthening facility doors and windows; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges Congress to improve security surveillance at VA facilities by repairing and modernizing video surveillance technology at facilities, as well as ensuring enough staffing to properly monitor it.