

**NINETY-SIXTH NATIONAL CONVENTION  
OF  
THE AMERICAN LEGION  
Charlotte, North Carolina  
August 26, 27, 28, 2014**

**Resolution No. 283: Licensed Professional Mental Health Counselors and Marriage and Family Therapists**

**Origin: Iowa**

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

WHEREAS, Licensed professional mental health counselors (LPMHCs) and marriage and family therapists (MFTs) comprise over 40 percent of the mental health workforce, totaling more than 175,000 mental health professionals; and

WHEREAS, All 50 states license LPMHCs and MFTs to independently deliver clinical mental health services to individuals, families and groups, providing diagnosis and treatment of mental and addictions disorders, psychotherapy, counseling, and the full range of behavioral health services offered by all mental health professionals; and

WHEREAS, Congress passed legislation recognizing LPMHCs and MFTs as qualified mental health professionals within the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) in 2006, and VA released qualification standards authorizing the hiring of these professions in 2010; and

WHEREAS, As of August 31, 2012, there were 28 LPMHCs and 69 MFTs onboard in the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), and since then, VHA has more than tripled the number of LPMHCs to 90 onboard providers and increased by 55% the number of MFTs to 107 onboard providers; and

WHEREAS, The VA's primary recruitment program, the trainee support program, provides over \$100 million in financial stipends, including \$36 million for social work and psychology trainees, and trains more than 3,000 mental health professionals annually; and

WHEREAS, The VA trainee support program does not recognize LPMHCs or MFTs for financial stipends, and the VA has stated that it will not add the professions to the program; and

WHEREAS, Research demonstrates that LPMHCs and MFTs are more likely to practice in rural and underserved areas that lack social workers, psychologists or other mental health professionals, so exclusion from the VA workforce and trainee support program decreases veterans' access to behavioral health care; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 26, 27, 28, 2014, That The American Legion supports the inclusion of licensed professional mental health counselors (LPMHCs) and marriage and family therapists (MFTs) as funded associated health trainees through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) trainee support program; and, be it finally**

**RESOLVED, That The American Legion supports legislation directing VA to provide financial stipends to LPMHCs and MFTs through the VA trainee support program and increase the hiring of these mental health professionals.**