

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

Resolution No. 239: Research to Develop a Blood Test to Detect Colorectal Cancer

Origin: Michigan

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, According to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Colorectal Cancer (CRC) is the third most common cancer and the second leading cause of cancer deaths in the United States; and

WHEREAS, In the 2013 VA's Office of the Inspector General (OIG) report "Gastroenterology (GI) Consult Delays at the William Jennings Bryan Dorn VA Medical Center, Columbia, SC," the OIG cited the Centers for Disease Control that more than 22 million Americans remain unscreened for CRC; and

WHEREAS, Failure to recognize the critical nursing staffing shortages resulted in a GI consult backlog of 3,800 gastroenterology consults, 700 of them critical; and

WHEREAS, During the review "look-back" period, 280 patients were diagnosed with GI malignancies, 52 of which had been associated with a delay in diagnosis and treatment; and

WHEREAS, In accordance with the Veterans Health Administration Directive 2007-004 titled, "Colorectal Cancer Screening," it is VA's policy that eligible veterans at average or high risk for CRC must be offered CRC screening; and

WHEREAS, To detect CRC, there are four commonly tests used:

- Fecal occult blood test (FOBT)—This test checks for hidden blood in fecal material (stool);
- Sigmoidoscopy—This test examines the rectum and lower colon using a lighted instrument called a sigmoidoscope;
- Colonoscopy—This test examines the rectum and entire colon are examined using a lighted instrument called a colonoscope, and;
- Double contrast barium enema (DCBE)—With this test a series of x-rays of the entire colon and rectum are taken after the patient is given an enema with a barium solution and air is introduced into the colon; and

WHEREAS, Delays in detecting CRC due to backlogs, and scheduling can result in patients deaths as in the case where six deaths were linked to delayed screenings for colorectal cancer at a South Carolina VA Medical Center; and

WHEREAS, On May 28, 2013, in House Report 113-90 titled, "Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bills," the Committee on Appropriations encouraged the VA to support additional research and development in the field, including investigation of a less costly blood test for colorectal cancer; and

WHEREAS, In a May 2012 VA Research Currents publication it included a quote stating, "A simple blood test would be the ideal approach to colorectal cancer"; 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 urge Congress to increase the budget for The Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) research and clinical trials to develop a blood test for colorectal cancer; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That VA accelerate the research and development of a screening blood test for detecting colon cancer to ensure that veterans at risk for colon cancer are properly screened and evaluated to prevent further harm or death.