REPORT OF THE NATIONAL CONVENTION COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS AND REHABILITATION
K. ROBERT LEWIS (CT), CHAIRMAN

The report of the Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation to the 89th National Convention of the American Legion was delivered by Mr. K. Robert Lewis, Chairman, on August 29, 2007, Reno, Nevada. The recommendations of the Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation, in the following condensed version, were accepted as follows.

PETER S. GAYTAN, Director

89 members of your Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation met at 9:00 a.m. on August 26, 2007, in Room A-1, Concourse Level, Upper Level, Reno-Sparks Convention Center, Reno, Nevada, and agreed on the following report, which is respectfully submitted for your consideration.

The Committee was called to order by Peter Gaytan (MD), Liaison Representative appointed by the National Adjutant to act as temporary chairman. Jacob Gadd (DC), Assistant Director for Program Management, VA&R Commission, acted as temporary secretary and called the roll. A quorum being present, nominations were received for permanent chairman. K. Robert Lewis (CT), Chairman of the Standing National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, was unanimously elected Chairman of the Convention Committee.
With unanimous consent, the Chairman appointed Chris Harding (OK), as Committee Secretary; R. Michael Suter (NY), Chairman of the Claims and Rating Subcommittee and John Hickey (IN), Secretary; Terry Schow (UT), Chairman of the Hospital and Medical Services Subcommittee and David Sanborn (MI), Secretary.

Subcommittee liaison assignments were as follows: Steve Smithson (MI), Deputy Director, to Claims and Rating and Shannon Middleton (MD), Deputy Director for Healthcare, to Hospital and Medical Services.

As has been the custom for the 63 previous National Conventions, a Special Department Service Officers Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Resolutions, in a preconvention meeting, screened and grouped the resolutions. A report of their action, with recommendations, was presented to the Convention Committee for consideration.

The Screening Committee conserved the time of the Convention Committee substantially. It was chaired by K. Robert Lewis, Chairman of the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission and was composed of the following Department Service Officers:

REGION 1 – Walter Pytka (RI)
REGION 2 – Randall Fisher (KY)
REGION 3 – Philip Youngblood (GA)
REGION 4 – Donald Lanthorn (OH)
REGION 5 – Milton Smith (ID)

The Convention Committee recommended that such a Committee be appointed for this purpose to serve the Eighty-Ninth National Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation.

The 55 Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation resolutions presented for the consideration of this Convention were referred by the Resolutions Assignment Committee. The following action on the resolutions was taken by the Convention Committee:

Approved or Approved w/Amendment    3
Consolidated with Resolutions Approved    0
Referred to the Standing Commission    9
Received and Recorded    27
Rejected    16

A motion was made and seconded to authorize the Chairman and Secretary to sign and deliver the report on the Convention Committee’s behalf.
A report of action taken on the 9 resolutions referred to the Standing National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission will be made to the National Executive Committee and to the Adjutant of the Department concerned.

APPROVED RESOLUTIONS OR APPROVED WITH AMENDMENT

RESOLUTION NO.: 10

SUBJECT: Oppose Legislation Authorizing Legion-Accredited Representatives to Develop Claims Directly on Behalf of The Department of Veterans Affairs

Origin: Michigan

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 28, 29, 30, 2007, That The American Legion adamantly oppose any federal legislation requiring an accredited representative of The American Legion to develop claims on behalf of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs under a contractual arrangement between VA and County or State government or under any other arrangement where the representative would be acting in an official capacity directly on behalf of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

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RESOLUTION NO.: 111

SUBJECT: Oppose Processing of Original Pension Claims by Department of Veterans Affairs Pension Maintenance Centers

Origin: Michigan

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 28, 29, 30, 2007, That it oppose any effort by the Department of Veterans Affairs to have original pension claims processed by the Pension Maintenance Centers.

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RESOLUTION NO.: 140

SUBJECT: Extend VA Mortgage Protection Life Insurance to Service-Connected Veterans Who Are Permanently and Totally Disabled

Origin: Minnesota

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 28, 29, 30, 2007, That the members of The American Legion seek the enactment of legislation, which would extend the Veterans Administration Mortgage Protection Life Insurance to service-connected veterans who are rated as permanently and totally disabled.

RESOLUTION NO.: 179

SUBJECT: Increase Beneficiary Travel Pay for Eligible Veterans

Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 28, 29, 30, 2007, That The American Legion urge the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to seek adequate funding to accommodate the needs of the increasing demand for care, to include the need for an increase in the beneficiary travel rate; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to immediately increase the per mile beneficiary travel pay for eligible veterans; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to periodically adjust the rate to assure that the per mile reimbursement rate is increased at a reasonable and acceptable level.
THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTIONS ARE BEING REFERRED TO THE STANDING COMMISSION FOR STAFF STUDY OR APPROPRIATE ADMINISTRATIVE DISPOSITION

RECEIVED AND RECORDED RESOLUTIONS

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<td>MI</td>
<td>Indiana-Ohio Center for Traumatic Amputation Rehabilitation Research</td>
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<td>MI</td>
<td>Oppose Any Reduction of Eligibility Criteria for Department of Veterans Affairs Per Diem Payments To State Veterans Homes</td>
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<td>The American Legion Policy on the State Veterans Home Program</td>
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<td>Provide Full Funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs Construction Program</td>
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<td>Support Medicare Reimbursement for the Department of Veterans Affairs</td>
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<td>Recognize Operations in Lebanon (1958), Grenada (1983) and Panama (1989-1990) as Periods of War for Department of Veterans Affairs Pension Purposes</td>
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<td>26</td>
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<td>The American Legion Policy on Prostate Cancer Research and Treatment</td>
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<td>Clarification of “Service in the Republic of Vietnam” for the Purpose of Agent Orange Presumption</td>
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<td>OH</td>
<td>Support Increased Per Diem Payments to the State Veterans Home Program</td>
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<td>Support the Automatic Waiver of Veterans Benefits Administration Debts of $250 or Less</td>
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<td>ID</td>
<td>Funding for Mental Health Care in the Department of Veterans Affairs</td>
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<td>66</td>
<td>ID</td>
<td>Assured Funding for Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Care be Made a National Priority</td>
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The American Legion Policy on Department of Veterans Affairs Information Technology Management

Department of Veterans Affairs Burial and Plot Allowance

Presumptive Medical Treatment for Persian Gulf War Veterans

Funding for Department of Veterans Affairs Construction Program

Support 33 1/3 Percent Per Diem Payment to State Veterans Homes

Protect Disability Rating After Ten Years

Increase the Burial Allowance for Service-Connected Veterans and Those who Die in a Department of Veterans Affairs Facility and Provide for Annual Adjustments

Support Protection of Veterans Benefits in the Case of Taxation, Cutbacks, and Elimination

Oppose Lump-Sum Payments of Department of Veterans Affairs Disability Compensation

Oppose Offset of Social Security Benefits or Any Other Federal Benefit by Department of Veterans Affairs Disability Compensation Payments

Support Legislation to Authorize the Veterans Health Administration to Collect Monies from Medicare
147  MN  Oppose Means Testing of Disability and Death Compensation

148  MN  Mandatory Funding for the Veterans Health Administration

153  MN  Support Legislation to Provide Presumptive Service Connection to Atomic Veterans for All Recognized Radiogenic Diseases

REferred RESOLUTIONS

3    AK  Department of Veterans Affairs Study for a Community-Based Outpatient Clinic in Southeast Alaska

87   SC  Construction of a New Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Upstate South Carolina

112  NY  Oppose Efforts by the Department of Veterans Affairs to Create a Virtual Information Center

139  MN  American Legion Oppose Any Recommendation to Alter Current Law Regarding Service Connection

142  MN  Rounding Up Department of Veterans Affairs Benefits for 50 Cents or Higher

150  MN  Increase the Department of Veterans Affairs Fee-Based Limitation for Medical Care

152  MN  Support a Change in the Federal Regulations to Provide for a Temporary Total Rating

162  WI  Construction of a Fisher House on the Grounds of Milwaukee VA Medical Center

164  WI  Congress Authorize and Fund the Construction of Columbaria

REJECTED RESOLUTIONS

5    CO  Financial Performance Bonuses to Department of Veterans Affairs Employees
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<td>Department of Veterans Affairs Allowance for Purchase of Cremation Urns</td>
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<td>Department of Veterans Affairs Beneficiary Travel Reimbursement at Forty Cents Per Mile</td>
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<td>Veterans Receive Medications with No Co-Pay</td>
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<td>Future Employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs be Qualified and Honorably Discharged Veterans</td>
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<td>Department of Veterans Affairs Beneficiary Travel Reimbursement at 48.5 Cents Per Mile</td>
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<td>Department of Veterans Affairs Regional Offices be Authorized to Hire Employees</td>
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<td>NY</td>
<td>Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service Include All Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs)</td>
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<td>Sensitizing Department of Veterans Affairs Records to Prevent Identity Theft</td>
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<td>Require the Department of Veterans Affairs to Employ Full-Time Veteran Benefits</td>
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<td>Access to Department of Veterans Affairs Electronic Files for Which The American Legion Holds Power of Attorney</td>
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<td>IL</td>
<td>Equal Disability Compensation Ratings for All Veterans and Their Families</td>
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<tr>
<td>MN</td>
<td>Burial Flags for Members of the National Guard and the Reserves</td>
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Respectfully submitted:

K. Robert Lewis (CT), Chairman
Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

Chris Harding (OK), Secretary
Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation