

RESOLUTION 08-01

SUBJECT: Assured Funding for VA Health Care

WHEREAS, each year, veterans service organizations fight for sufficient funding for VA health care and a budget that is reflective of the rising cost of health care and increasing need for medical services; and

WHEREAS, our nation's veterans are continuing to suffer because the system they depend on has been routinely under funded; and

WHEREAS, the fiscal year 2006 funding shortfall of more than \$1 billion in health care services for sick and disabled veterans requires a long term fix; and

WHEREAS, the current discretionary funding method for veterans' health care is broken and the needs of our nation's sick and disabled veterans are not being met; and

WHEREAS, without assured funding, VA will continue to remain under funded and unable to provide timely access to quality health care to many of our Nation's veterans; and

WHEREAS, taking VA's budget out of the discretionary budget would eliminate the year-to-year uncertainty about funding levels that have prevented VA from being able to adequately plan for and meet the constantly growing number of veterans seeking treatment: Now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That Congress enact legislation to make VA health care funding mandatory, thereby guaranteeing sufficient resources to cover expenses of the veterans health care system.

RESOLUTION 08-02

SUBJECT: Adequate Funding for VA Health Care

WHEREAS, VA provides medical services to 5.3 million veterans, and is expected to see 109,000 new veterans in 2007; and

WHEREAS, VA is ill equipped to handle the large influx of those waiting and wanting to use its services; and

WHEREAS, almost half of the military servicemen and women returning from operations overseas will need healthcare services for the physical and psychological traumas of war that may never heal; and

WHEREAS, diminishing veterans earned benefits at a time of war is unwarranted and unrealistic; and

WHEREAS, continued efforts by the Office of Management and Budget to undermine the VA budget will lead to further deterioration of VA programs; and

RESOLVED, That Congress and the administration provide adequate and timely funding for veterans' health care to ensure that VA can meet the mission of providing the necessary medical services to veterans seeking care.

RESOLUTION 08-03

SUBJECT: Claims Backlogs

WHEREAS, there exists a longstanding problem of large claims backlogs and consequent delays in delivery of crucial disability benefits to veterans and their families; and

WHEREAS, the backlog of VA claims grows yearly, yet VA continues to reduce claims processing staff; and

WHEREAS, many experienced claims processors are retiring and being replaced by novices requiring years of training; and

WHEREAS, with the nation at war, the demand for VA services is only expected to increase with thousands of newly disabled veterans entering the system: Now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That Congress ensure adequate funding to hire and train VA personnel to improve the timeliness and accuracy of VA's claims decisions; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Veterans Benefits Administration process quality claims in a timely manner and work together to develop a long-term strategy focused on improving the claims system.

RESOLUTION 08-04

SUBJECT: Flag Protection Amendment

WHEREAS, the flag of the United States of America is a symbol of our country and of freedom around the world; and

WHEREAS, in 1989, the United States Supreme Court has ruled that flag desecration is protected by the First Amendment of the Constitution; and

WHEREAS, AMVETS has strongly supported reversing this ruling since 1989; and

WHEREAS, a flag protection amendment is supported by over 80 percent of the American people; and

WHEREAS, all fifty State legislatures have passed resolutions asking Congress to submit a flag protection amendment for ratification; and

WHEREAS, Congress should be permitted to protect the American flag from desecration: Now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That AMVETS petition Congress to allow the people of the United States to consider for ratification a flag protection amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

RESOLUTION 08-05

SUBJECT: Support POW/MIA Recovery and Identification

WHEREAS, the Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) provides policy oversight for the mission to recover captured, missing, or isolated men and women placed in harm's way while serving in the Armed Forces; and

WHEREAS, efforts to recover fallen service members from past and present battlefields serve the common interest of all Americans; and

WHEREAS, AMVETS remains committed to pursuing the American POW/MIA issue until the fullest possible accounting of our missing service personnel has been achieved; and

WHEREAS, we will stand behind our men and women in uniform and work to account for those who do not return: Now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That AMVETS petition Congress to provide adequate DPMO funding to ensure the release or rescue of our missing or captured men and women in uniform; and be it further

RESOLVED, That AMVETS work with DPMO to ensure a full accounting for the missing from all conflicts and military operations worldwide.

RESOLUTION 08-06

SUBJECT: Concurrent Receipt

WHEREAS, Title 38, United States Code, Sections 5304 and 5305, has prohibited the concurrent receipt of both military retirement pay for longevity from the Department of Defense and disability compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs; and

WHEREAS, a disabled veteran who does not retire from military service but elects instead to pursue a civilian career after enlistment expires can receive full compensation and full civilian retired pay; and

WHEREAS, a veteran who has served this country for 20 years should have that same right and not be penalized for choosing a military career rather than a civilian career; and

WHEREAS, no other category of federal employee faces the same restriction on disability and retirement pay: Now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That AMVETS pursue enactment of legislation that would provide full and immediate concurrent receipt for all disabled military retirees; and be it further

RESOLVED, That enacting concurrent receipt would correct the fundamental inequity in the law that has lasted for over a century.

RESOLUTION 08-07

SUBJECT: Support Veterans' Preference in Public Employment

WHEREAS, AMVETS is committed to seeking full access to employment opportunities for our nation's veterans; and

WHEREAS, AMVETS has strongly supported federal, state, and local veterans' preference laws; and

WHEREAS, it is important that programs and policies at all levels of government continue to help veterans establish private businesses by providing them with technical, financial, and procurement assistance: Now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That AMVETS support the strongest veterans preference laws as possible at all levels of government and oppose any attempt to weaken such laws.

RESOLUTION 08-08

SUBJECT: Develop a “Total Force” GI Bill of Education Benefits

WHEREAS, our nation’s total Armed Forces—active duty, National Guard, and Reserves—are operationally integrated to carry out national security missions, but educational benefits under the Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) do not reflect this “total force” policy; and

WHEREAS, Congress strengthened the MGIB in 1984 to stimulate an all-volunteer force recruitment and retention program and help veterans readjust to the civilian world upon completion of their service; and

WHEREAS, in more recent times active duty MGIB benefits have lagged behind the rising cost of tuition; and

WHEREAS, for Guard and Reservists, MGIB benefits have fallen to less than 29 percent of the 47 percent benchmark: Now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That AMVETS support a new, integrated “Total Force” approach to the Montgomery GI Bill to support service recruitment needs and provide post-service benefits commensurate with the benefits earned through military service.

RESOLUTION 08-09

SUBJECT: Increasing Travel Reimbursement Rates for Disabled Veterans

WHEREAS, the sharp increase in gas prices is causing unprecedented burdens for disabled veterans traveling to VA medical facilities; and

WHEREAS, many veterans travel long distances to receive medical care; and

WHEREAS, disabled veterans traveling to VA for service-related injuries are only eligible to receive 11 cents per mile reimbursement, but federal employees receive 48.5 cents per mile for travel reimbursement; and

WHEREAS, in many cases, after the \$6 roundtrip deductible is subtracted, veterans receive nothing for their expenses: Now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That AMVETS endorse legislation that would repeal the roundtrip deductible and create equality between federal employees and disabled veterans; and be it further

RESOLVED, That aforementioned legislation mandate the mileage reimbursement funding cannot and will not take away from funds already in place to support other Department of Veterans Affairs programs.

RESOLUTION 08-10

SUBJECT: Increase Veterans Burial Benefits

WHEREAS, there have been serious erosion in the value of the burial allowance over the years; and

WHEREAS, while these benefits were never intended to cover the full costs of burial, they now pay for only a small fraction of what they covered in 1973 when the federal government first started paying burial benefits: Now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That AMVETS support legislation to increase the service-connected burial allowance benefits from \$2,000 to \$4,000 and the non-service connected burial allowance benefit from \$300 to \$1,270; and be it further

RESOLVED, That AMVETS support legislation to increase the plot allowance from \$300 to \$745, and expand the eligibility for the plot allowance to all veterans who would be eligible for burial in a national cemetery, not just those who served during wartime.

RESOLUTION 08-11

SUBJECT: Accelerated GI Benefits for Training Programs

WHEREAS, GI Bill benefits are paid as a monthly stipend to a maximum amount of \$1,000; and

WHEREAS, many training programs run anywhere from 4 to 6 weeks, and can cost upwards of \$6,000; and

WHEREAS, at most, the GI Bill benefit only offsets about \$1,500 of the veterans' training tuition; and

WHEREAS, accelerated benefits would cover upwards of 60% of the cost of training program; and

WHEREAS, current law only allows certain "high tech" training programs, as determined by the Secretary of Labor, to receive accelerated benefits; and

WHEREAS, veterans between the ages of 20 and 24 have an unemployment rate nearly double the national rate of non-veterans in the same age group: Now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That AMVETS supports legislation that would expand and enhance GI Bill educational benefits for eligible veterans wanting to use tuition assistance for training programs; and be it further

RESOLVED, That AMVETS recognize that accelerating GI Bill benefits for training in high-growth and high-tech occupations would help place veterans in a good paying, long-term, and secure job.

RESOLUTION 08-12

SUBJECT: Oppose TRICARE Increases

WHEREAS, this nation has a moral obligation to provide quality health care to those who protect our freedoms; and

WHEREAS, there has been several attempts to shift healthcare costs from the Federal government to active duty, reserve and retired military personnel and their families; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Defense proposes doubling or tripling TRICARE premiums for military retirees under age 65; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Defense admits the premium increases will kick out 600,000 beneficiaries; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Defense is not a commercial business that can undermine health care and benefits in order to increase its bottom line; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Defense has sole authority to increase premiums and fees; and

WHEREAS, military retirees premiums have already been paid by 20-plus years of service: Now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That AMVETS oppose any and all efforts to increase TRICARE premiums; and be it further

RESOLVED, That AMVETS supports legislation that would give Congress the authority to prohibit increases in healthcare costs for members of the Uniformed Services.

RESOLUTION 08-13-a

SUBJECT: Veterans Mental Health Funding

WHEREAS, 17 percent of returning soldiers will have some sort of psychological trauma that may never heal; and

WHEREAS, VA and the Federal government have a special obligation to these veterans; and

WHEREAS, mental and emotional problems can have disastrous effects not only on the veteran, but the family as well; and

WHEREAS, the psychological effects of war vary from person to person and sometimes don't show up for years, which is why it is so important that mental health programs continue to take care of veterans with these kinds of issues: Now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That AMVETS recommends to the Congress to double VA's mental health care budget in 5 years to adequately treat veterans suffering from psychological trauma.

RESOLUTION 08-14

SUBJECT: Survivor Benefit Plan

WHEREAS, because retired pay stops when the veteran dies, the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) helps make up for the loss of part of this income; and

WHEREAS, under SBP, deductions are made from the member's retired pay to purchase a survivor's annuity; and

WHEREAS, upon the veteran's death, the annuity is paid monthly to eligible beneficiaries under the plan; and

WHEREAS, if the veteran's death is due to service-connected causes, the SBP annuity is reduced by the amount of dependency and indemnity (DIC) payment; and

WHEREAS, the offset of SBP against DIC is inequitable because it penalizes survivors of military retired veterans whose deaths are under circumstances warranting indemnification from government separate from the annuity funded by premiums paid by veterans from retired pay: Now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That AMVETS pursue enactment of legislation to repeal the offset between SBP and DIC.

RESOLUTION 08-15

SUBJECT: Formalizing National Guard Liaison Position

WHEREAS, AMVETS on 23 March 2005 established an outreach program with the National Guard Bureau (NGB) to bolster support for National Guard service members and their families, who face increasing deployments in the War on Terror;

WHEREAS, the Memorandum of Understanding signed on that date states that each Department and Post should establish a working relationship with their respective NG State Joint Force Headquarters;

WHEREAS, during 2006 seventy-six Posts representative of twenty-six Departments provided numerous services totaling over \$254,000;

WHEREAS, communication with NG Joint Force Headquarters, State Family Program Directors is critical to sustaining these services, sharing Best Practices and expanding our capacity to serve these Troops and their families: Now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that Posts and Departments be required to submit the names and contact information of their duly appointed National Guard Liaison to National Headquarters, as soon as possible after Post and Department elections, but not later than 14 days after said events.

RESOLUTION 08-16

SUBJECT: Traumatic Brain Injury

WHEREAS, on today's battlefield, polytrauma often results from blast injuries sustained by improvised explosive devices, or by other exploding devices such as a rocket-propelled grenade or landmines.

WHEREAS, it has been reported that approximately 60 percent of injured servicepersonnel will have some degree of Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI).

WHEREAS, according to the VA, animal models of blast injury have demonstrated damaged brain tissue and consequent cognitive deficits.

WHEREAS, the limited data available suggests that brain injuries are a common occurrence from blast injuries and often go undiagnosed and untreated as attention is focused on more "visible" injuries.

WHEREAS, The overarching problem for the Department of Defense (DOD) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is identifying symptoms due to TBI or PTSD because the symptomology can be similar.

WHEREAS, AMVETS is extremely concerned about the lack of awareness and screening among health care professionals for Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI).

WHEREAS, AMVETS believes that the medical community needs a better understanding of the effects of stress and trauma on the brain and how complications arise from these conditions.

WHEREAS, TBI has its own unique medical origin that should be addressed through a multidisciplinary approach that recognizes TBI as physical injury to the brain.

RESOLVED, That AMVETS support efforts to improve screening and diagnosis, and increase funding for TBI.

RESOLUTION 08-17

SUBJECT: Formalizing VAVS Department Level Coordination

WHEREAS, AMVETS is a highly regarded member organization of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Voluntary Service program and holds membership on its National Advisory Committee,

WHEREAS, in the last program year over 1,800 AMVETS provided 159,000 plus hours of service on behalf of our hospitalized veterans, valued in excess of \$3 million dollars,

WHEREAS, this is an awesome responsibility and the need for volunteers continues to grow, and AMVETS must increase our level of commitment, not only to recruit additional volunteers but to ensure the responsible management of those volunteers,

WHEREAS, the current requirement is for AMVETS Department Commanders to make bi-annual appointments of VAVS Representatives and Deputies for the VA Medical Centers within their respective departments,

RESOLVED, that the Departments now be required to submit the name and contact information of a duly appointed VAVS Department Coordinator, who will provide leadership and support for all Certified Representatives and Deputies within their respective departments; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the contact information for the VAVS Coordinator should be forwarded to the National Headquarters as soon as possible after the Department elections, but not later than 14 days after said event.

RESOLUTION 08-18

SUBJECT: Troops struggle with finding therapists

WHEREAS, Soldiers returning from war are find it more difficult to get mental hearth treatment because military insurance is cutting payments to therapists, on top of already low reimbursement rates, and

WHEREAS, Waiting lists now extend for months to see a military doctor and it can take weeks to find a private therapist willing to take on members of the military and the challenge appears great in rural areas where many National Guard and Reserve troops and their families live, and

WHEREAS, Roughly one third of returning soldiers seek out mental health counseling in their first year home and they are among the 9.1 million people covered by Tri-care, a number that grew by more than 1 million since 2001, and

WHEREAS, Tri-care's psychological health benefit is hindered by fragmented rules and policies, inadequate oversight and insufficient reimbursements and a difficulty in locating mental health specialists who accept Tri-care, therefore be it

RESOLVED, that The Department of Defense raise the reimbursement rates for private contractors providing mental health assistance to Tri-care recipients

RESOLUTION 08-19

SUBJECT: Support for the Republic of China on Taiwan

WHEREAS, the Republic of China on Taiwan is a long-time friend, ally, and seventh largest trading partner of the United States; and

WHEREAS, Taiwan is a strategically located island and is extremely important to the peace, prosperity, and stability of the Pacific Rim; and

WHEREAS, the Republic of China maintains a strong and well-trained military force, has extensive air and naval facilities and, therefore, is a vital link in the Pacific defense chain; and

WHEREAS, the People's Republic of China has never renounced the use of force to integrate the Republic of China into its communist system and government and this threat remains substantial: Now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, the AMVETS supports and encourages the democratic process in Taiwan, and encourages the President of the United States to promote peaceful dialogue and avoid any actions which could lead to military conflict; and be it further

RESOLVED, that AMVETS supports the continued promotion of educational and cultural relationships and exchanges between the United States and the Republic of China.

RESOLUTION: 08-20

SUBJECT: Military Retirees Health Care Protection Act

WHEREAS, The Pentagon has tried to closed budget gaps by increasing TRICARE Annual Fees charged to retirees and

WHEREAS, These proposed increases would raise fees currently charged retirees by more than four times or approximately \$1000 annually and

WHEREAS, Retirees have already faithfully serves their county, experiencing all the sacrifices of family separations, frequent moves, and service in foreign lands often under harsh conditions and

WHEREAS, When we enlisted in the military we were promised Free Health care for life for our dedicated commitment and service and

WHEREAS, The government has already broken its promise when they instituted an annual co-pay fee for our healthcare coverage under TRICARE

WHEREAS, We have already contributed more that our fair share in service to our country and are entitled to free health care for the rest of our lives and now: therefore be it

RESOLVED, that AMVETS, actively lobby Congress to oppose any increase in Tri-care fees.

RESOLUTION: 08-22

SUBJECT: Reopen Wood Cemetery in Wisconsin

WHEREAS, Milwaukee County is home to the highest concentration of veterans in the state of Wisconsin and;

WHEREAS, the surrounding counties in southeast Wisconsin are also home to concentrations of honorably discharged veterans who are entitled to death benefits as a result of their service and;

WHEREAS, Wood National Cemetery has been closed since October 1, 1996 and;

WHEREAS, there are over 25 acres of vacant land at the ZABLOCKI VA Medical Center in Milwaukee that have been characterized as underutilized by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, now be it

RESOLVED, that the AMVETS Department of Wisconsin forward this resolution to the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs and that the National AMVETS be called upon to support every effort to reopen the Wood National Cemetery utilizing the vacant 25 acres of land immediately for both in ground and above ground internment. It is requested that the National AMVETS actively lobby Congress for positive action on this issue.

RESOLUTION 08-24

SUBJECT: RECA – DU coverage concerns

WHEREAS, our military personnel have and are using Depleted Uranium Munitions in the Gulf Wars Campaigns; and

WHEREAS, a complete medical exam of individual service personnel before and after deployment as mandated by Congress is not being performed; and

WHEREAS, abnormally high rates of birth defects are known to occur among children born to Gulf War I veterans; and

WHEREAS, U238 is found in urine and semen of Gulf War I veterans to date December 2003; and

WHEREAS, DU armor plating on our armored vehicles burns off (abates) deflecting or stopping enemy projectiles; and

WHEREAS, this burn-off consists of aerosolized dusty particles .01 to .05 micron particles of U236, U237, U238, Plutonium, Strontium90, and Americium, all highly carcinogenic materials with a half life of 4.5 billion years; and

WHEREAS, these dust particles are widely disbursed throughout the combat areas and ingested by breathing, drinking, or eating foods contaminated by DU residue; and

WHEREAS, once ingested, this material remains in the human body for decades, if not life, causing cancers and other unknown illnesses; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that AMVETS will expend every effort possible through legal advocacy and publicity to expand existing coverage for our Gulf War veterans under the existing Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA) Program to ensure that these veterans shall be considered service connected for any of the 21 cancers currently covered by RECA under USC 38 CFR Section 3.309 [*not Section 3.311*] plus any other cancers or diseases found to result from DU exposure. If they were assigned to or served in the Gulf Wars areas or clean-up and/ or servicing of vehicles and/ or equipment that had been in those areas: **THEY SHALL BE CONSIDERED AS EXPOSED AND THEIR ILLNESS SHALL BE DEEMED SERVICE CONNECTED.** *Further*, in depth medical studies shall be made by independent civilian medical entities to determine other diseases that may result from the effects of Depleted Uranium (DU) on all DU exposed service personnel.

RESOLUTION 08-25

SUBJECT: Anthrax Vaccination Concerns

WHEREAS, our military personnel have been injected with and orally ingesting Anthrax vaccination in the Gulf War Campaigns; and

WHEREAS, abnormally high rates of birth defects are known to occur among children born of Persian Gulf veterans; and

WHEREAS, 20,000 veterans have been hospitalized since being administered Anthrax vaccinations, with various symptoms resulting in, it is believed from these vaccinations: now; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that AMVETS recommends to Congress to direct DoD to stop administering Anthrax vaccinations to all service members; and be it further

RESOLVED, that AMVETS lobby Congress to provide legislation to provide health benefits and further research through Veterans' Affairs for veterans who have symptoms related to Anthrax vaccinations.

RESOLUTION 08-26

SUBJECT: Uniform Star Design

WHEREAS, a number of State Departments and National Districts currently issue Stars to signify a Commander or Past Commander and,

WHEREAS, these Stars vary in size, shape, color, insignia, and number of points; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the National Commander and PNC Stars remain as they are currently designed. And that a National District Commander and Past National District Commander Star be designed along the same lines as the National Commander Star only smaller in size. And a gold five point Star be designed with the AMVET logo in the center for use as a Department Commander and Past Department Commander Star. And a silver five point star be designed with the AMVETS logo in the center for use as a State District/Regional Commander and Past State District/Regional Commander Star. And a silver five point star smaller than the District/Regional Star be designed with the AMVETS logo in the center for use as a Post Commander and Past Post Commander Star. And be it further

RESOLVED, that current Stars and Badges in use by any entity effected by this resolution be grandfathered and their use be permitted until depletion of supplies, and the National Quartermaster be required to maintain a supply of the above mentioned Stars so that Districts and State Departments may readily purchase said Stars.

