WHEREAS, Rural veterans face a unique combination of factors that create disparities in health care not found in urban areas, such as: inadequate access to care, limited availability of skilled care providers and additional stigma in seeking mental health care; and

WHEREAS, more than 44% of military recruits and service members deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan come from rural areas and to date, more than 60,000 service members have become injured, wounded or ill during their deployment; and

WHEREAS, 36% (more than 2.2 million) of all VA health-care users reside in rural areas, including 76,955 from ‘highly rural’ areas and 49% of rural veterans are over the age of 65; and

WHEREAS, currently VA operates: 153 medical centers, of which only 25 are considered by VA to be located in rural or highly rural areas; 786 community based outpatient clinics (CBOCs); and 3 regional veterans rural health resource centers (VRHRC); now therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that AMVETS utilize every means at its disposal to ensure that VA considers the distance a veteran must travel, as well as other hardships they face in seeking medical care in determining appropriate locations and settings for providing direct VA health care services; and be it further

RESOLVED, that AMVETS urges VA and Congress to increase the travel reimbursement allowance commensurate with the actual cost of current automobile travel and that they develop a transportation strategy in rural and highly rural cases; and be it further

RESOLVED, that AMVETS expresses in the strongest terms the need for the VA to establish additional mobile Vet Centers in order to meet the physical and mental health care needs of all American veterans.