DRAFT RESOLUTION 17 – 11

SUBJECT: Ensure that Veterans Continue to Receive First Class Anesthesia Services

SOURCE: DC, FL, LA, NC, VA, OH, MA, TX, TN, MO, NJ, ND, WA

WHEREAS, it has come to AMVETS’ attention that the VA’s draft nursing services handbook, which has been under review, proposes changes to VHA policies which would fundamentally and adversely impact the delivery of care to veterans; and

WHEREAS, the proposed policy change calls for the complete removal of physician anesthesiologists from VA surgical procedures and replacing them with solo-practice nurse anesthetists; and

WHEREAS, currently, and for many years previous, policies regarding anesthesia delivery within the VA health care system were governed by the Anesthesia Services Handbook, which mandates the use of a physician-led anesthesia care team; and

WHEREAS, AMVETS believes that the existing policies and system of anesthesia delivery in the VHA ensures our veterans get the safe, world-class anesthesia care they have earned and deserve; and

WHEREAS, this proposed change was formulated without the input of the VA’s leading experts on anesthesia care, their own Chiefs of Anesthesiology; and

WHEREAS, doctors and nurses, while both critical for any healthcare delivery, are not interchangeable due to the vast differences in their education; and

WHEREAS, Congress has also expressed deep concerns regarding this policy change as evidenced by the 30 July 2015 letter to VA Sec. McDonald signed by seventeen Congressmen, which requested “further information on the timing and basis for this policy change and its implication on the safety of veterans during surgery.” The letter points out an independent study (Memtsoudis et al 2012) which was published in the Journal of Clinical Anesthesia, “found the ‘odds of unexpected disposition’ were 80% higher when the anesthesia care was provided by a nurse anesthetist as opposed to a physician anesthesiologist; now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that AMVETS staunchly opposes any efforts to replace Anesthesiologists with solo-practice nurse anesthetists within the VA healthcare delivery system.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS:
CONSTITUTION & BY-LAWS......................ADOPT □ AMEND □ REJECT □ NONE □
FLOOR ACTION: ADOPTED □ ADOPTED (as amended) □ REJECTED □ TABLED □