



124TH NATIONAL CONVENTION

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

National Bylaws

Approved: B3, B4 & B5

Rejected: B1, B2, B6, B7 & B8 (B9 Out of Order)

Manual of Procedure

Approved: M5, M6 & M7

Rejected: M1, M2 & M3 (M4 Withdrawn)

Finance & Internal Organization (200 Series)

Approved: NA

Rejected: 201 & 202

General (300 Series)

Approved: 302

Approved as Amended: 301 & 304

Rejected: 303, 306, 307 & 309

National Security & Foreign Affairs (400 Series)

Approved: 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406, 408, 411, 412, 413, 414 & 419

Approved as Amended: 407, 415 & 417

Rejected: 416, 418, 420 (used to be 308) & 421 (used to be 310 - Out of Order)

SubCommittee on POW/MIA

Approved: 409 & 410

Veterans Service (600 Series)

Approved: 601, 602, 603, 604, 605, 606, 608, 609, 610, 611, 612, 613, 615, 617, 618, 620, 621, 622, 623, 624, 625, 626, 627, 628, 629, 633, 636, 637, 638, 639, 640 & 642 (used to be 305)

Approved as Amended: 607, 614, 616, 619 & 632

Rejected: 630, 631, 634, 635 & 641

TO COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL BYLAWS, MANUAL OF PROCEDURE AND RITUAL
This committee meets at 2:00 p.m., Sunday, July 23

Chairman: Vincent B.J. Lawrence, Past Commander-in-Chief, Post 7686, NM
Vice Chairman: Paul A. Spera, Past Commander-in-Chief, Post 144, MA

This committee considers all proposed amendments to the National Bylaws and Manual of Procedure, as well as resolutions having any bearing upon the National Bylaws and Manual of Procedure. It makes recommendations to the Convention for approval or disapproval of proposed amendments that may be adopted only in accordance with sections 1401, Bylaws and Manual of Procedure. It also considers resolutions or other proposals pertaining to changes in the VFW Ritual and makes recommendations thereon.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO NATIONAL BYLAWS

B-1

Proposed by Department of Pacific Areas

ARTICLE I – MEMBERS

Sec. 101 – Eligibility.

Amend Sec. 101 - Eligibility., National Bylaws, by replacing the language in (3) with the following:

“in Taiwan or in its territorial waters for not less than 30 consecutive days, for a total of 60 days, from 1951 to 1979; or”

Renumber the current language in (3) as (4).

B-2

Proposed by Department of Vermont

ARTICLE I – MEMBERS

Sec. 101 - Eligibility.

Amend Sec. 101 – Eligibility., National Bylaws, by adding the following as (4):

“(4) Foreign Duty Service on Foreign Soil, its Airspace, and Territorial Waters for not less than 30 consecutive days, or a total of 60 non-consecutive days of duty after September 11, 2001.”

B-3

Recommended by National Bylaws Study Group

Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE I – MEMBERS

Sec. 102 – Applications-Affiliation of New Members.

Amend Sec. 102 – Applications-Affiliation of New Members., National Bylaws, by replacing “**Members-At-Large.**” with the following:

“A. National Member-at-Large.

1. An individual who is eligible for membership who chooses not to join a Post and Department, may become a “National Member-at-Large”, for up to two (2) years.

2. To become a National Member-at-Large, the individual must submit the following to the Adjutant General’s office:

(a) Completed membership application; and

(b) Proof of eligibility; and

(c) Payment of annual membership dues.

3. Annual dues required for National Membership-at-Large shall be forty-five dollars \$45.00, unless a different amount is established by the National Council of Administration.

4. Annual dues received by the Quartermaster General under this section shall be distributed as follows:

(a) National shall retain fifty percent (50%) of the annual membership dues received; and

(b) The Quartermaster General shall deliver the remaining fifty percent (50%) to the appropriate Department, as directed by the National Membership Department.

5. Upon the two (2)-year anniversary of becoming a National Member-at-Large; or, upon upgrading to Life Membership; the Adjutant General shall transfer the Member to the Department in which their home address of record is located.

B. Department Member-at-Large

1. An individual who is eligible for membership and chooses not to join a Post but wishes to join a Department (as permitted by these Bylaws), may become a “Department Member-at-Large” on an annual basis.

2. To become a Department Member-at-Large, the individual must submit the following to the State Adjutant for the identified Department:

(a) Completed membership application; and

(b) Proof of eligibility; and

(c) Payment of annual membership dues.

3. Annual dues required for Department Membership-at-Large shall be forty-five dollars \$45.00, \$26.00 of which shall be National Organization dues which shall be transmitted to the Quartermaster General monthly on a consolidated report and \$19.00 of which shall be Department dues, provided the Department Council of Administration may establish some other amount as Department dues.”

B-4

Proposed by Department of Pacific Areas

ARTICLE IV – DISTRICTS

Sec. 416 – Elected and Appointed Officers; Chairmen and Committees.

Amend Sec. 416 – Elected and Appointed Officers; Chairmen and Committees., National Bylaws, under (a), by removing “Chaplain”.

B-5

Proposed by Department of Pacific Areas

ARTICLE IV – DISTRICTS

Sec. 416 – Elected and Appointed Officers; Chairmen and Committees.

Amend Sec. 416 – Elected and Appointed Officers; Chairmen and Committees., National Bylaws, under (b), by adding “Chaplain” after “Adjutant”.

B-6

Proposed by Department of Illinois

ARTICLE IV – DISTRICTS

Sec. 421 - Voting.

Amend Sec. 421 – Voting., National Bylaws, in the first sentence of the first paragraph, by removing “except delegates elected by the Posts,”. At the beginning of the second sentence of the first paragraph, add “When a roll call vote is required,”.

B-7

Proposed by Department of Illinois

ARTICLE V – DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 521 - Voting.

Amend Sec. 521 – Voting., National Bylaws, in the first sentence, by removing “except delegates elected by the Posts,”. At the beginning of the second sentence, add “When a roll call vote is required,”.

B-8

Proposed by Department of Illinois

ARTICLE VI - NATIONAL

Sec. 621 - Voting.

Amend Sec. 621 – Voting., National Bylaws, in the first sentence, by removing “except delegates elected by the Posts,”. At the beginning of the second sentence, add “When a roll call vote is required,”.

B-9

Proposed by Department of Missouri

ARTICLE XI - AUXILIARY

Sec. 1102 - Eligibility.

Amend Sec. 1102 – Eligibility., National Bylaws, in the first paragraph, by adding the following as a second sentence:

“Veterans who served honorably who are not otherwise eligible for Veterans of Foreign Wars membership shall be permitted to join the Auxiliary.”

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE MANUAL OF PROCEDURE

M-1

Recommended by National Bylaws Study Group

Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE I – MEMBERS

Sec. 101 – Eligibility.

Amend Sec. 101 – Eligibility., Manual of Procedure, under the ELIGIBILITY GUIDE, by adding “Air and Space Expeditionary Service Ribbon”.

M-2

Proposed by Department of Florida

ARTICLE I – MEMBERS

Sec. 101 – Eligibility.

Amend Sec. 101 - Eligibility., Manual of Procedure, by adding the following to the ELIGIBILITY GUIDE: “Silver Star, Bronze Star and Purple Heart”.

M-3

Proposed by Department of Vermont

ARTICLE I – MEMBERS

Sec. 101 – Eligibility.

Amend Sec. 101 - Eligibility., Manual of Procedure, by adding the following under the ELIGIBILITY GUIDE before “Hostile Fire or Imminent Danger Pay” or where appropriate:

“Foreign Duty Service on Foreign Soil, its Airspace, and Territorial Waters for not less than 30 consecutive days, or a total of 60 non-consecutive days of duty after September 11, 2001.”

M-4

Recommended by National Bylaws Study Group

Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE IV – DISTRICTS

Sec. 418 – Officers: Duties and Obligations.

Amend Sec. 418 – Officers: Duties and Obligations., Manual of Procedure, under (a)(11), by replacing the first sentence of the first paragraph with the following:

“The District Inspector shall ensure that each Post in the District is inspected during the administrative year.”

M-5

Proposed by Department of Georgia

ARTICLE V – DEPARTMENTS

Sec. 518 – Officers: Duties and Obligations.

Amend Sec. 518 – Officers: Duties and Obligations., Manual of Procedure, under (a)(4)f., in the second sentence, by removing “and a hard copy”.

M-6

Recommended by National Bylaws Study Group

Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE VII – MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

Sec. 706 – National Home for Children Funds.

Amend Sec. 706 – National Home for Children Funds, Manual of Procedure, by renaming the section as “**National Home Funds**”.

M-7

Recommended by National Bylaws Study Group

Proposed by the Commander-in-Chief

ARTICLE VIII – UNIFORMS, BADGES, ETC.

Sec. 803 – Manufacture and Use of Seals, Emblems, Badges, Insignia and Uniforms.

Amend Sec. 803 – Manufacture and Use of Seals, Emblems, Badges, Insignia and Uniforms, Manual of Procedure, under **Cap.**, by replacing the second sentence with the following:

“The color shall be green, shade 51; Suntan; or other colors as the National Council of Administration may dictate.”

Resolution No. 201

CREATE VFW NATIONAL SUBMARINE LIAISON OFFICE

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW) is “a national association of veterans who as soldiers, sailors, marines, and airmen served this Nation in wars, campaigns, and expeditions on foreign soil or in hostile waters,” and is committed to “Ensure that veterans are respected for their service, always receive their earned entitlements, and are recognized for the sacrifices they and their loved ones have made on behalf of this great country.”; and

WHEREAS, the mission of the VFW is “To foster camaraderie among United States veterans of overseas conflicts. To serve our veterans, the military and our communities.” And especially “To advocate on behalf of all veterans.”; and

WHEREAS, the VFW’s membership is primarily comprised of Army, Marine, Air Force, and Navy combat veterans, there is less than 2% of that membership who have served in the US Navy’s Submarine Force and have unique needs; and

WHEREAS, these unique needs of Navy Submariners are often overlooked or ignored by VFW leadership, yet, these needs are critically important to those who have served on submarines; and

WHEREAS, these VFW members and veterans will benefit greatly from the strength and corporate voice of the VFW in Congress, the Navy’s command structure at all levels, and the Veterans Administration; and

WHEREAS, in keeping with the mission and vision of the VFW, the VFW must be able to communicate adequately and appropriately with the Submarine Force appropriately to the Submarine Force and its active duty and veteran members; and

WHEREAS, the VFW and its leadership must be educated in the above-stated uniqueness, and in turn, The Submarine veterans must be made aware of the services, advocacy, and support provided by the VFW to all veterans; and

WHEREAS, the Navy’s command would benefit from a partnership with the VFW on behalf of their crews, both enlisted and officer; and

WHEREAS, only a Submariner can fully understand and communicate the complexities, responsibilities, duties, and assignments of the US Submarine Force, i.e., the Silent Service; and

WHEREAS, a liaison is “a person who establishes and maintains communication for mutual understanding and cooperation,” (Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary); now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, the members of VFW Department of Hawaii, Missouri and Wisconsin request that the VFW National Headquarters establish an office of the National VFW Liaison to the Submarine community to be manned by two VFW Submariners holding the offices of VFW National Liaison to the Submarine Community – East and West Coast. This office will contribute to greater understanding, enhance new member recruitment initiatives within the submarine community, target legislative actions to recognize the unique needs of our submarine veterans and contribute to better care for submarine veterans by the Veterans' Administration.

Submitted by Department of Hawaii, Missouri and Wisconsin
To Committee on FINANCE & INTERNAL ORGANIZATION

REJECTED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 202

VFW BOYCOTT OF CHINESE MANUFACTURED GOODS

WHEREAS, the summary of the 2017 National Defense Strategy issued by the U.S. Department of Defense declared “China is a strategic competitor” and further noted: “China is leveraging military modernization, influence operations, and predatory economics to coerce neighboring countries to reorder the Indo-Pacific region to their advantage. As China continues its economic and military ascendance, asserting power through an all-of-nation long-term strategy, it will continue to pursue a military modernization program that seeks Indo-Pacific regional hegemony in the near-term and displacement of the United States to achieve global preeminence in the future”; and

WHEREAS, the July 2022 United Nations Special Rapporteur (Report) on contemporary forms of slavery, states “it is reasonable to conclude that forced labor among Uighur, Kazakh and other ethnic minorities in sectors such as agriculture and manufacturing has been occurring in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region of China.” In addition, Tibetan Buddhists, Christians, and Falun Gong followers are all routinely persecuted, harassed, surveilled and targeted by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP); now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that in response to its expansionist policy and use of slave labor by the CCP, we, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, immediately implement an active boycott of Chinese manufactured goods for both organizational needs and the VFW Store.

Submitted by Department of Missouri
To Committee on FINANCE & INTERNAL ORGANIZATION

REJECTED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 301

CREATE PATROL INSIGNIA AWARDS FOR THE SS, SSG, SSN, AND SSGN SUBMARINE CREWS

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW) is “a national association of veterans who as soldiers, sailors, marines, and airmen served this Nation in wars, campaigns, and expeditions on foreign soil or in hostile waters,” and is committed to “Ensure that veterans are respected for their service, always receive their earned entitlements, and are recognized for the sacrifices they and their loved ones have made on behalf of this great country.”; and

WHEREAS, the mission of the VFW is “To foster camaraderie among United States veterans of overseas conflicts. To serve our veterans, the military and our communities.” And especially “To advocate on behalf of all veterans.”; and

WHEREAS, the SSBN Deterrent Patrol Insignia was approved and authorized to be issued to members of SSBN, Boomer, submarine crews in 1969 and retroactive to the first deterrent patrol of the USS George Washington SSBN 598 in 1961, and has been issued to all crews of these submarines to the present after completion of an SSBN deterrent patrol; and

WHEREAS, the SSBN Deterrent Patrol Insignia has been referred to by the US Navy as the successor to the World War II era Submarine Combat Patrol Insignia (SCPI) and as an insignia that is a combat insignia or badge; and

WHEREAS the Navy failed to issue an equivalent, appropriate, and consistent combat patrol insignia or award to SS, SSG, SSN, and SSGN crews and opted for the awarding of the Navy Expeditionary Medal (NEM) as a combat award for these crews albeit inconsistently; and

WHEREAS, the SSBN Deterrent Patrol Insignia has been a divisive award within the Submarine Force, diminished Force cohesiveness, and a negative influence on Force morale; and

WHEREAS, the above has extended to the Submarine Force veterans and the VFW and resulted in SSBN crewmembers and veterans receiving recognition for eligibility for membership while many SS, SSG, SSN, and SSGN crewmembers and veterans being excluded from membership even though they have participated in many deep water, extended, sensitive, and extremely hazardous patrols, without being awarded an Expeditionary Medal; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States commence efforts to petition US Navy Submarine Force commands, commanders, and US Navy officials at the Pentagon to design, approve, and authorize patrol insignias for the SS, SSG, SSN, and SSGN crews retroactive to 1947 and holding the same award rank as the SCPI and SSBN Deterrent Patrol Insignias.

Submitted by Department of Hawaii, Missouri, Utah and Wisconsin
To Committee on GENERAL RESOLUTIONS

APPROVED AS AMENDED by the 124th National Convention of the
Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 302

BUDDY POPPY ® DISTRIBUTION ON MILITARY INSTALLATIONS

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW) is the oldest Congressionally Chartered Veterans Service Organization in the United States; and

WHEREAS, membership in the VFW is limited to those individuals who have served honorably in a foreign war, insurrection, or expedition and received a campaign or expeditionary medal authorized by the United States Government for such service or received Hostile Fire Pay; and

WHEREAS, the Congressional Charter of the VFW includes the requirement to assist worthy comrades, perpetuate the memory and history of our dead, and to assist their surviving spouses and orphans; and

WHEREAS, the principal fund-raising activity of the VFW is, and has been for more than one-hundred years, through the distribution and voluntary contributions of the trademarked Buddy Poppy ®; and

WHEREAS, all funds received as contributions for Buddy Poppies are, by National By-Law, restricted placement in a Relief Fund, the primary use of which remains the air, assistance, relief, and comfort of needy and disabled veterans or members of the Armed Forces and their dependents and survivors; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Defense (DoD) has issued an Instruction (to wit: DoD Inst 1344.07 of March 30, 2006, entitled *Personal Commercial Solicitation on DoD Installations*) intended to protect service personnel from predatory investment solicitations by for-profit commercial insurance and banking institutions; and

WHEREAS, a number of installation Judge Advocate General Corps officers have interpreted this Instruction as also applying to such not-for-profit fund-raising activities as Buddy Poppy ® distribution – the contribution of funds for which is entirely voluntary; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, engage with DoD to update this 17-year-old Instruction and/or enter into a Memorandum of Understanding to protect and perpetuate access to DoD installations by the VFW for the innocent distribution of Buddy Poppies and associated, non-coercive or predatory, fund-raising activities as a matter of mutual benefit.

Submitted by Department of Virginia
To Committee on GENERAL RESOLUTIONS

APPROVED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 303

NATIONAL FLAG TO HONOR AND REMEMBER THOSE WHO DIED WHILE SERVING IN THE ARMED FORCES OF THE UNITED STATES

WHEREAS, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States honors the service and sacrifice of all military service members, especially those who have lost their lives in service to the Republic; and

WHEREAS, there is not an officially recognized symbol that serves as a daily reminder to the public of those who have made the ultimate sacrifice; and

WHEREAS, an “Honor and Remember” flag has been created as a daily reminder for the American public to acknowledge those sacrifices defending our freedom; and

WHEREAS, the “Honor and Remember” flag will recognize, not only those killed in action during war but all service members who died in the line of duty and from their wounds and illnesses as a result of their service; and

WHEREAS, this flag will serve as a symbol of national gratitude, for each American life given in defense of liberty and give comfort to the families who lost a loved one during military service; and

WHEREAS, the flag’s presence will also serve as a tool to educate the public of those lost in service to the Republic; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, to endorse the Honor and Remember flag as the National flag of remembrance for those who gave the ultimate sacrifice to this nation; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that by endorsing the flag that the Veterans of Foreign Wars is demonstrating support for the families who have sacrificed so much for the nation.

Submitted by Department of Virginia
To Committee on GENERAL RESOLUTIONS

REJECTED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 304

DEPORTED VETERANS

WHEREAS, United States Service members have been, and are currently being deported from the United States after serving in the United States military; and

WHEREAS, the current United States Code provides: that the term "national of the United States" means:

- a. a citizen of the United States, or
- b. a person who, though not a citizen of the United States, owes permanent allegiance to the United States. 8 U.S.C. 1101(a) (22); and

WHEREAS, Federal law requires everyone who enlists or re-enlists in the Armed Forces of the United States to take the Oath of Enlistment. This Oath and the Oath of Citizenship contain this pledge of loyalty: "I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same." Both oaths are performed in front of the United States Flag and other flags, such as the state flag, military branch flag and is similar to the Oath of Citizenship and of the states; and

WHEREAS, Veterans have served our nation in every war from WWII, Vietnam, Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan. We strongly believe their oath of enlistment is a permanent oath of allegiance to the United States of America. While mere subjective emotional allegiance to the United States and length of residence in the United States is insufficient to make an individual a national, we believe that raising your right hand, swearing this oath, putting on the uniform in times of both peace and war are in fact a permanent allegiance to the United States and, that the United States owes a permanent allegiance to all Veterans be they U.S. Citizens or Foreign Nationals; and

WHEREAS, when these veterans returned to civilian life without appropriate support for reintegration, psychologically, and economically, some veterans that fell into addictions and criminal activities, were arrested and, due to their legal permanent residence status, were deported regardless of their honorable service; and

WHEREAS, the United States has a duty to protect those who protect and serve, regardless of their personal character. The United States now, and historically, has treated aliens admitted for an indefinite period, whether as lawful permanent residents, refugees, or asylees, as other countries would treat noncitizen "nationals or subjects." It requires these individuals to submit to the draft, to have an allegiance of political loyalty to the United States, subjecting them to the death penalty for betraying that allegiance and, itself treats the individuals when in uniform as American nationals for a variety of purposes, including American jurisdiction in its Status-of-Forces Agreements; and

WHEREAS, exiled veterans who have sponsors for their visa are often denied access to the Housing and Urban Development-VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program; and

WHEREAS, the removal of veterans, those who served honorably during times of hostility, present a number of problems that the removal of other aliens do not:

- a) There is the possible loss of native citizenship rendering the individual stateless,
- b) There is the possibility of criminal charges awaiting the alien in their native land for his or her service in the war; and

WHEREAS, the current administration reports, as of February 8, 2023, 65 individuals have returned to the United States under the guise of Humanitarian Parole; and, only 20 individuals have been able to retain permanent residency; and

WHEREAS, these exiled veterans face inherent barriers to accessing Veteran Affairs (VA) healthcare system as they should have earned during military service; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States hereby urges the United States House of Representative and United States Senate to amend the United States Code 8 U.S.C. 1101(a) (22) to clearly state “The following shall be nationals*, but not citizens of the United States: (1) A person who, by Conscription or enlistment, entered any branch of the United States armed forces and served honorably, and, this shall be retroactive to service members/veterans previously removed from the United States.”

Submitted by Department of California
To Committee on GENERAL RESOLUTIONS

APPROVED AS AMENDED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 306

OFFER RANKED CHOICE VOTING IN FEDERAL ELECTIONS

WHEREAS, the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) was enacted by Congress in 1986; and

WHEREAS, UOCAVA requires that the states and territories allow members of the United States Uniformed Services and merchant marine, their family members and United States citizens residing outside the United States to register and vote absentee in elections for Federal offices; and

WHEREAS, at least five states (Alaska, Hawaii, Kansas, Nevada and Wyoming) currently allow some form of Ranked Choice Voting in Federal Elections with several other states implementing and/or considering Ranked Choice Voting (i.e., Maine and Colorado); and

WHEREAS, at least ten states require runoff elections when no candidate achieves a majority vote and the occurrence of runoff elections are on the rise. Likewise, votes cast for candidates that drop out after the ballot has been returned are wasted; and

WHEREAS, using Ranked Choice Voting for overseas service members and their families will ensure the votes of these citizens are counted; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to amend the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act to require states and territories to include a Ranked Choice Voting option to be used in Federal elections.

Submitted by Department of Colorado
To Committee on GENERAL RESOLUTIONS

REJECTED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 307

SUPPORTING ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION FOR APPLICANTS

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars' (VFW) mission is to foster camaraderie among United States veterans of overseas conflicts. To serve our veterans, the military and our communities. To advocate on behalf of all veterans.; and

WHEREAS, the VFW's vision is to ensure that veterans are respected for their service, always receive their earned entitlements and are recognized for the sacrifices they and their loved ones have made on behalf of this great country; and

WHEREAS, there are two qualifiers for membership in the VFW as set out in our National Bylaws. An individual must meet both in order to become a member. Honorable Service – must have served in the Armed Forces of the United States and either received a discharge of Honorable or General (Under Honorable Conditions) or be currently serving. Service in a war, campaign or expedition on foreign soil or in hostile waters; and

WHEREAS, service in a war, campaign or expedition on foreign soil or in hostile waters can be proven by any of the following: an authorized campaign medal, receipt of Hostile Fire Pay or Imminent Danger Pay (verified by a military pay statement) and service in Korea for 30 consecutive or 60 non-consecutive days; and

WHEREAS, the 113th Congress (2013-2014) passed H.R. 258 – Stolen Valor Act of 2013, making it a crime for someone to claim they received certain medals to obtain money, property or some other tangible benefit. The law only bars false claims about certain military awards including the Purple Heart, Bronze Star and a few others; and ONLY when someone makes a false claim about them to gain money or some tangible benefit from a crime. Someone falsely claiming military service to brag or impress others is not a crime; and

WHEREAS, investigators at the National Archives have taken steps to make their research resources more available to federal and local law enforcement to deal with what they suspect is an uptick in “stolen valor” cases to obtain benefits or loans during the COVID-19 pandemic; and

WHEREAS, results from SheerID's Stolen Valor Act Military Survey; 92% of those surveyed were aware of the Stolen Valor Act and 96% believe that the punishments for committing Stolen Valor are fair. 8% of those surveyed said they like watching the Stolen Valor videos online, 62% are in support of those who take the time to out suspected violators of the act and 31% believed that it is ok for veterans to out suspected violators but not citizens. 57% also thought that Stolen Valor videos have prompted states to pass stricter Stolen Valor laws. Interestingly enough, more than 15 states have passed their own complimentary Stolen Valor Acts to make the federal law easier to enforce and also to enact stiffer penalties since 2013; and

WHEREAS, combating Stolen Valor remains an ongoing problem and disservice to veterans who served. It is impossible to say exactly how many people falsely claim military

service or honors. But the problem is widespread enough that even those within the military sometimes get caught lying about their service. Unlike civilians or veterans, current military members can be punished for lying about their military records; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars Department of Rhode Island enthusiastically supports and strongly recommends National provide standardized guidance on how to review, assess and grant eligibility determination of applicants of brothers and sisters of America who want to join the VFW and preserve the rights of veterans and support each other as only those who share in the camaraderie forged by conflict can.

Submitted by Department of Rhode Island
To Committee on GENERAL RESOLUTIONS

REJECTED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 309

PURPOSE OF OUR ORGANIZATION

WHEREAS, the 113th Congress unanimously supported the change to the VFW's Congressional Charter that was signed 87 years ago by President Franklin D. Roosevelt when the military was composed almost entirely of men; and

WHEREAS, in 2014 the update consisted of two wording changes – replacing men with veterans and widows with surviving spouses – and was supported by two companion bills, SB2782 and HR 5441. The change was prompted by VFW Resolution 301 that was passed in July by delegates attending the 115th VFW National Convention in St. Louis, MO; and

WHEREAS, “We didn’t change our congressional charter to be politically correct; said VFW National Commander John W. Stroud, “we changed it because being an eligible service member or veteran is what’s important to our great organization, not one’s gender”; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we petition Congress to remove the word “**FRATERNAL**” from our charter. We are no longer a fraternal organization. This is the first line under Purpose – SEC. 230102, page 7. Going forward the Purpose should read: “The purposes of the corporation are patriotic, historical, charitable, and educational and are:

1. to preserve and strengthen comradeship among its members;
2. to assist worthy comrades;
3. to perpetuate the memory and history of our dead, and to assist their surviving spouses and orphans;
4. to maintain true allegiance to the Government of the United States, and fidelity to its Constitution and laws;
5. to foster true patriotism;
6. to maintain and extend the institution of American freedom; and
7. to preserve and defend the United States from all enemies.”

Submitted by Department of Pennsylvania
To Committee on GENERAL RESOLUTIONS

REJECTED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 401

PRESERVE THE ALL-VOLUNTEER FORCE

WHEREAS, the year 2023 marks the 50th anniversary of America's All-Volunteer Force which was until only recently engaged in a 20-year war that nobody prior to 9/11 would have thought possible without reinstating the draft. It has done so despite repeated combat tours and significant military recruiting and retention challenges, and continues to operate in an extremely dangerous and unpredictable world; and

WHEREAS, the troops are concerned. They are concerned that elected and appointed officials don't understand what it's like to serve in an All-Volunteer Force that has been tasked to do so much for so long. They are concerned about rising costs, quality of life programs, their families, and accessing mental health care. Moreover, military leaders are very concerned about burnout in a military that is continually tasked to do more with less human and fiscal resources; and

WHEREAS, worldwide commitments and challenges have increased with continuous military operations against radical forces aligned with terrorist organizations, heightened engagement in Africa and troop buildup in U.S. Indo-Pacific Command area of responsibility against Chinese expansion, increasing rotations to Eastern Europe to support NATO deterrence of Russia since its February 2022 invasion of Ukraine, and maintaining a continuous presence of service members in Iraq; and

WHEREAS, substandard military housing, insufficient emphasis on training, personnel shortages, food insecurity, childcare challenges, spouse un- and underemployment, frequent relocations, outdated equipment, the inability to fund new programs, the unprecedented use of Reserve component members without providing traditional benefits, and cuts to morale and welfare programs are the direct result of a military struggling to survive a budget crisis that will only continue to grow the longer Congress is unable to provide a stable, consistent defense budget without threats of being cut. The cumulative impact of lower pay, quality of life shortcomings, and a higher operations tempo have had a direct impact on morale, which in combination with a better civilian economy, has resulted in a dire recruiting and retention problem, thereby threatening the continued existence and viability of the All-Volunteer Force; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we will redouble our efforts to work with Congress and the Administration to preserve the All-Volunteer Force, to end the sequester, and to help bring some permanent financial stability to a military that will continue to operate in a very dangerous and unpredictable world.

Submitted by the Commander-in-Chief
To Committee on NATIONAL SECURITY & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

APPROVED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 402

ELIMINATE SEXUAL ASSAULT AND HARASSMENT IN THE MILITARY

WHEREAS, sexual assault and harassment within the military and at the Military Service Academies are urgent, detrimental, and prevalent issues that impact individual well-being and morale, unit cohesion, recruiting, and retention and require aggressive action and accountability to eliminate; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Defense (DOD) Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military and Academic Program Year 2021-2022 Annual Report on Sexual Harassment and Violence at the Military Service Academies were the worst reports on sexual harm in the military and at the academies since reporting began; and

WHEREAS, military sexual assault and harassment affect both men and women, occur on a “continuum of harm,” are enabled by entrenched culture, and are not always stereotypical in nature with women being disproportionately victimized; and

WHEREAS, it is widely held that a far greater number of sexual assault and harassment survivors do not come forward due to embarrassment, lack of trust in command support and accountability, and/or fear of personal and/or professional reprisal, to include real or perceived “red flags” in their military personnel folders; and

WHEREAS, DOD is in the process of implementing new and reformed programs, policies, and processes as a result of the 2021 Independent Review Commission (IRC) on Sexual Assault in the Military but is not estimated to be complete until FY 2030; and

WHEREAS, Congress has passed Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) reforms that will ensure investigation and prosecution of military sexual assault and harassment cases are independent of military chains of command; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we strongly demand DOD become more aggressive in its efforts to reduce sexual assault and harassment, to provide victims with proper and necessary medical and mental health care, as well as assistance with disability claims as may be required, to aggressively and diligently investigate every reported incident and punish attackers, as well as individuals involved in acts of retribution and retaliation, and that Congress perform rigorous oversight of IRC recommendations and the recently passed UCMJ reforms to ensure timely and proper implementation, and identify areas for improvement.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief
To Committee on NATIONAL SECURITY & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

APPROVED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 403

ENSURE DOD COMPLIANCE WITH TAP LAW

WHEREAS, transition from military service is a very stressful and time-consuming period for service members and their families, and often presents psychological, financial, and professional challenges in addition to the need to find new housing, healthcare, resources, and programs to support the unique needs of each member and family; and

WHEREAS, Congress has mandated Transition Assistance Program (TAP) pre-separation counseling for all service members to ease the difficult transition from service into civilian life by offering job-search assistance, guidance on education and healthcare programs, and information on other benefits and post-service needs; and

WHEREAS, the DOD is required to abide by TAP law reforms that were included in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019 and directed, among other requirements, that all service members attend TAP at least 365 days prior to separation, complete a two-day career track if they are minimally prepared for transition, and be connected to resources in communities in which they plan to reside after service; and

WHEREAS, a December 2022 U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) report revealed that 70 percent of service members did not attend TAP on time and almost 25 percent of service members who needed to complete a two-day career track did not; and

WHEREAS, VFW surveys of transitioning service members (TSM) indicate findings that align with the GAO's report and show that nearly 34 percent of TSMs either were not or did not know if they were connected to community resources, while our accredited Benefits Delivery at Discharge program representatives hear that TSMs are not consistently getting connected to community resources; and

WHEREAS, in 2014, the DOD issued guidance to installation commanders to accommodate nationally accredited Veterans Service Organizations who provide pre-discharge services like disability claims assistance to TSMs, but local TAP managers do not consistently provide these organizations' VA accredited representatives the opportunity to engage TSMs during scheduled TAP classes leading to inequities; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to conduct oversight of DOD's compliance with the TAP law, afford VA accredited representatives a consistent means to access TSMs during TAP, and require DOD and its partner agencies to continuously improve TAP and maximize access to materials and resources for TSMs, veterans, and their families.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief
To Committee on NATIONAL SECURITY & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

APPROVED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 404

KEEP DEFENSE BUDGET RELEVANT

WHEREAS, America's Number #1 priority is to defend itself, its citizens, and its interests, and Congress must provide the Defense Department with sufficient funding to properly train, equip and field a military that can defeat all enemies, as well as protect vital U.S. interests around the globe; and

WHEREAS, the claim the U.S. spends more on defense than the next 8 or 10 countries combined is a false narrative. Except for China and Russia, all the other countries are focused on homeland and/or shared theater defense alliances, whereas the U.S. has a worldwide commitment to project power, reliability, and leadership; and

WHEREAS, defense spending accounts for nearly half of all discretionary spending, which makes DOD a consistent target for lawmakers trying to reduce overall federal spending, which puts America's national security at the risk; and

WHEREAS, Russia's attack on Ukraine's sovereignty, the continuing threats by North Korea and Iran, and China's military expansion, make the world more dangerous and therefore increases the world's reliance on the United States to lead militarily against those threats; and

WHEREAS, it is crucial that any proposed reduction in funding not jeopardize America's security or break faith with those who serve or have served our nation in uniform. A nation that cherishes its freedom and supports the troops can afford to do both; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we strongly urge Congress to provide the necessary funding equal to not less than 5 percent of GDP for the readiness, training, modernization, healthcare, and quality of life initiatives for the armed forces of today and tomorrow.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief
To Committee on NATIONAL SECURITY & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

APPROVED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 405

LINK MILITARY PAY INCREASES TO PRIVATE-SECTOR INCREASES

WHEREAS, military pay raises are linked by law to the increase in private-sector wages, as measured by the Employment Cost Index (ECI). The Administration's military pay raise request, however, can be more or less than the ECI, with Congress having the final approval; and

WHEREAS, Congress erased the double-digit pay gap of the 1990s by directing military pay raises from fiscal years 2000-2006 to be a half-percent above private-sector wage increases, and raises from FY 2007-forward to match the ECI, although more could be authorized; and

WHEREAS, the 4.6 percent military pay raise for FY 2023 was the largest increase in 20 years but was below the ECI, but the Department of Defense — in its continuing campaign to slow the growth of military compensation due to budget constraints — recommended that future pay increases be limited; and

WHEREAS, the 4.6 percent raise in FY 2023 and proposed 5.2 percent raise in FY 2024 are improvements. The FY 2024 5.2 percent pay raise would be the largest pay raise in over 40 years. This average raise in the compensation is a 4.9 percent raise and still 0.2 percent below the ECI of 5.1 percent; and

WHEREAS, changes to military pay and benefits is the top concern of military service members and their families. Continued efforts to slow the growth of military compensation, combined with a better civilian job market, and a sustained intense operational tempo have already impacted recruiting and retention, which jeopardizes the continued existence and viability of the All-Volunteer Force; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Defense is already facing a shortage in key fields, such as pilots and maintenance personnel, and must develop competitive pay and benefit scales to recruit talent in critical high-tech fields, such as cyber and space; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we call upon Congress to maintain military base pay comparability with private-sector wages by ensuring annual military pay raise percentages match or exceed annual ECI increases.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief
To Committee on NATIONAL SECURITY & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

APPROVED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 406

PROVIDE FULL CONCURRENT RECEIPT OF MILITARY RETIREMENT PAY AND VA DISABILITY COMPENSATION

WHEREAS, military retirement pay and VA disability compensation are fundamentally different benefits earned for two very different reasons; and

WHEREAS, the fiscal year 2004 National Defense Authorization Act allowed for the gradual phase-in of full concurrent receipt of military retirement pay and Department of Veterans Affairs disability compensation for service-connected wounds, illnesses or injuries; and

WHEREAS, the 10-year phase-in period ended in 2014, which means military retirees with 20 or more years of service and 50 percent or higher VA disability ratings no longer have their military retirement pay offset by the amount of their VA disability compensation; and

WHEREAS, the law, however, did not provide the same equity to service-connected disabled military retirees with VA ratings of 40 percent or below, or to Chapter 61 retirees who were medically retired with less than 20 years, regardless of VA disability rating; and

WHEREAS, more than 50,000 Chapter 61 retirees receive Combat Related Special Compensation from the Department of Defense, many of whom are Purple Heart recipients; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support legislation that allows for the concurrent receipt of military retirement pay and VA disability compensation without offset and regardless of disability rating percentage.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief
To Committee on NATIONAL SECURITY & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

APPROVED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 407

PRESERVE THE INTEGRITY OF THE TRICARE BENEFIT

WHEREAS, the FY17 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) made significant changes to the TRICARE military health benefit program by eliminating Tricare Standard and Extra, creating the new TRICARE Select Plan, adding enrollment fees for individuals joining the service after Jan.1, 2018 and for military retirees starting in January, 2021; and

WHEREAS, the changes mandated by the NDAA were further compounded by a change in costs instituted by the Defense Health Agency (DHA) for both the Select and the Prime plans. The changes included a complete change in the cost-share methodology for the new Tricare Select plan, which changed the beneficiary costs from a percentage of individual-services-used to an averaged, flat-rate co-payment and increased Tricare Prime fees; and

WHEREAS, Congress added additional costs by raising mail order and retail pharmacy fees for all Tricare beneficiaries, including Tricare for Life members. The additional costs included raising the costs of a 90-day mail order supply of generic medications from a \$0 co-pay to a \$12 per prescription co-pay, adding significant out of pocket costs to beneficiaries on maintenance medications for chronic conditions; and

WHEREAS, military health coverage is expensive, yet so is the personal investment someone makes to voluntarily commit to a military career. Any real or perceived erosion of benefits for career-minded personnel will undermine long-term retention, as well as recruiting of new service members; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we oppose all Tricare fee increases as well as any additional fee increases or attempts to erode the earned benefit of military healthcare. Moreover, DOD should reform its healthcare programs by eliminating institutional inefficiencies before considering fee increases; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress and DOD to ensure timely and equal access across the force, regardless of geographic location, to holistic healthcare services including medical and non-medical mental health counseling, reproductive health services, specialty care, and pharmacies.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief
To Committee on NATIONAL SECURITY & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

APPROVED AS AMENDED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution 408

AWARDING THE ARMED FORCES EXPEDITIONARY MEDAL FOR EXPEDITIONARY OPERATIONS IN EASTERN EUROPE

WHEREAS, the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal (AFEM) was established by Executive Order 10977, dated December 4, 1961 (DA Bulletin. 1, 1962) and Executive Order 11231, July 8, 1965; and

WHEREAS, the medal is authorized for (1) U.S. military operations, (2) U.S. operations in direct support of the United Nations, or (3) U.S. operations of assistance for friendly foreign nations; and

WHEREAS, the AFEM is awarded for services after July 1, 1958, meeting the following qualifications that military personnel must be a bona fide member of a unit and engaged in the operation, have served not less than 30 consecutive days in the area of operations, and be engaged in actual combat, or duty which is equally as hazardous as combat, during the operation with armed opposition, regardless of time in the area; and

WHEREAS, United States military personnel have been assigned to eastern Europe under the operational banners of Operations ATLANTIC RESOLVE and EUROPEAN ASSURE, DETER, and REINFORCE since February 24, 2022 to support NATO's deterrence and defense posture on its eastern flank; and

WHEREAS, since February 24, 2022, the United States has deployed units to the USEUCOM theater and has U.S. forces positioned in Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia. These are qualifying NATO countries with contiguous borders with Ukraine and are in direct support of NATO and friendly nations; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, supports and encourages Congress and the Secretary of Defense to designate Operations ATLANTIC RESOLVE and EUROPEAN ASSURE, DETER, and REINFORCE since February 24, 2022 in support of NATO's deterrence and defense posture on its eastern flank as U.S. military operations that are eligible for the award of the ARMED FORCES EXPEDITIONARY MEDAL.

Submitted by Commander in Chief
To Committee on NATIONAL SECURITY & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

APPROVED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 409

PROTECT POW/MIA FULL ACCOUNTING MISSION FUNDING

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States is deeply committed to achieving the fullest possible accounting of nearly 82,000 missing Americans that include approximately 72,000 from World War II, 7,544 from the Korean War, 1,584 from the Vietnam War, 126 from the Cold War, and 6 post-Vietnam that include Operations Eldorado Canyon (1), Desert Storm (2) and Iraqi Freedom (3); and

WHEREAS, public-private partnerships are increasing the ability to be at more sites and DPAA has strong bipartisan support on Capitol Hill, which has in the past provided additional funding required to support pending recovery operations in North Korea, which have been interrupted since 2005 due to U.S. safety and security concerns; and

WHEREAS, Congress has in recent years acknowledged the importance of the Fullest Possible Accounting mission by increasing DPAA funding above requested amounts; and

WHEREAS, it is critical that DPAA remain adequately funded. Recovering fallen Americans from long-ago battlefields is demanding and often dangerous work for investigation and recovery teams, but it is the most sacred of missions. It is our government's fulfillment of a soldier's pledge to never leave a fallen comrade on the battlefield, which is a promise that spans all generations; and

WHEREAS, additional money enables DPAA to efficiently plan, resource and accomplish its worldwide mission to recover, identify and return to their families all missing American service members from our nation's previous conflicts; and

WHEREAS, Congress has adopted nine continuing resolutions in the last ten-years and caused three shutdowns since 2013, which hinder operational planning and slow recoveries; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we call upon Congress to continue to increase funding levels for the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency and all supporting organizations involved in the Fullest possible Accounting Mission; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Congress must pass advanced appropriations to prevent a slowdown in recoveries and allow for budget carry-over allowing DPAA to plan multi-year operations.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief
To Committee on NATIONAL SECURITY & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

APPROVED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 410

CALL FOR MORE UNILATERAL POW/MIA ACTIONS BY VIETNAM

WHEREAS, 2,646 Americans were listed as missing and unaccounted-for at the end of the Vietnam War. As of March 2022, the number of missing is now 1,584 due to a combination of increased U.S. Government emphasis, better research and identification technology, stronger diplomatic ties with host governments, and access to aircraft crash and ground battlefield sites; and

WHEREAS, Vietnam had a comprehensive wartime and post-war process to collect and retain information and remains, and, according to the National League of POW/MIA Families, this unilateral effort enabled the Vietnamese to locate, and return remains to U.S. custody; and

WHEREAS, joint U.S. – Vietnam field operations, first conducted 37-years ago, continue to provide answers to families of unaccounted for American servicemen; and

WHEREAS, Vietnam granted access to their National Archives I and II and the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) Library; and

WHEREAS, many of the grieving families may never live to see the return of their missing loved one; and

WHEREAS, Vietnamese museums contain many personal items which belonged to missing U.S. servicemen; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we encourage Vietnam to grant U.S. government analysts access to the PAVN archives where potentially valuable documents which could lead to case resolution may be located; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, in this cooperative effort, that we encourage the Vietnamese government to turn over any items of a personal nature from missing American servicemen that are currently in the custody of Vietnamese museums or other locations under their control so they may be returned to their grieving families.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief
To Committee on NATIONAL SECURITY & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

APPROVED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 411

RECOGNITION FOR AFGHAN AND IRAQI COMBAT TRANSLATORS

WHEREAS, Afghan and Iraqi wartime allies were bridges to the Afghan and Iraqi people during U.S. operations against terrorism in those countries and mission success was directly dependent on close working relations between local nationals and U.S. agents; and

WHEREAS, our wartime allies often served consecutive tours with several different units to provide continuity and their lives and the lives of their family members were threatened for working with the Americans; and

WHEREAS, our wartime allies saved countless American lives and directly contributed to every level of tactical, operational, and strategic success during the missions in Iraq and Afghanistan; and

WHEREAS, Special Immigrant Visa recipients and Priority 2 Refugee Admissions Program recipients go through the strictest vetting and approval process of any category of person coming to the U.S.; and

WHEREAS, this initiative is supported by all post 9/11 former secretaries of defense as well as key national security leaders in the military, Department of State, and the intelligence community; and

WHEREAS, the former chairmen of the 9/11 Commission have stated, “As former chairman and vice chairman of the 9/11 Commission, we encourage Congress to do everything in its power to keep the nation’s promise to Afghan and Iraqi combat translators and to ensure these intrepid partners can achieve the American Dream. Special Immigrant Visas recipients from Afghanistan and Iraq loyally protected our men and women in uniform. Many directly saved American lives. Their future success will help to prevent the continued growth of Islamist terrorism – the third goal identified by the 9/11 Commission. A great nation keeps its promises”; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the President of the United States and the U.S. Congress to recognize the contributions of Afghan and Iraqi Combat Interpreter Immigrants who stood shoulder to shoulder with, assisted and protected U.S. military service members, U.S. diplomats and government agents, non-governmental organizations, and media organizations during U.S. involvement in those countries.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief
To Committee on NATIONAL SECURITY & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

APPROVED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 412

SUPPORT THE REPUBLIC OF CHINA ON TAIWAN

WHEREAS, the Republic of China on Taiwan is a historic democratic ally of the United States, a valuable trading partner, and key link in the Western Pacific defense chain; and

WHEREAS, the Taiwan Relations Act (PL 96-8) codifies the policy of the United States to provide Taiwan with arms of a defensive character to bolster peace and stability in the cross-strait environment; and

WHEREAS, on January 1, 1979, then-President Carter terminated diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Taiwan, and instead established diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China to help maintain peace, security, and stability in the Western Pacific. This loss of diplomatic status prevents the President of Taiwan from receiving the same respect and courtesies afforded other Heads of State who visit the U.S.; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Administration and Congress to strictly adhere to the concepts of the Taiwan Relations Act by continuing to approve the sale of state-of-the-art military equipment, weapons, and technology to maintain an adequate defense capability; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we call upon the Administration and Congress to support the admission of the Republic of China on Taiwan into the United Nations, and to provide the President of Taiwan the same respect and privileges due other visiting Heads of State.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief
To Committee on NATIONAL SECURITY & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

APPROVED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 413

SUPPORT THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA

WHEREAS, the Republic of Korea is a historic democratic ally of the United States, a valuable trading partner, and a key link in the Northeast Asia defense chain. Numerous treaties are in force with the Republic of Korea concerning economic and technical cooperation, education, maritime matters, trade and commerce, and the Mutual Defense Treaty, that was enacted on November 17, 1954; and

WHEREAS, South Korea's immediate neighbor, however, continues to maintain an extremely large and forward-deployed military force capable of launching no-notice offensive operations against South Korea; and

WHEREAS, North Korea maintains the ability to launch nuclear-capable missiles, including a missile capable of reaching the United States, and has conducted six underground nuclear explosions since 2006, and is a known exporter of ballistic missiles and its technology to countries adversarial to the United States, most notably Iran; and

WHEREAS, the continued unpredictability of North Korea makes the presence of U.S. ground and air forces inside South Korea even more critical as a deterrent to aggression; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the U.S. Government to maintain a substantial military presence in the Republic of Korea, and to increase military aid and assistance through modern weaponry and technology to help promote peace and stability in the region.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief
To Committee on NATIONAL SECURITY & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

APPROVED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 414

SUPPORT OF NATO DETERRENCE AND SUPPORT TO UKRAINE

WHEREAS, throughout a 45-year Cold War, United States military personnel, who would later become members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW), were instrumental in leading North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) efforts to deter Soviet aggression in Europe, bring about the collapse of the Warsaw Pact, and the disintegration of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics; and

WHEREAS, in the ensuing thirty-odd years, many former Warsaw Pact countries embraced democracy and flourished under a participatory form of government, becoming suppliers of commodities and technology across the globe, and have become productive members of the European Union (EU), NATO, and numerous additional international organizations aimed at ensuring world and regional peace and economic prosperity; and

WHEREAS, Ukraine has formed a flourishing presidential republic embracing Western tenets, such as open elections and the rule of law; and

WHEREAS, Russia has embarked upon a war in Ukraine of occupation, annexation, and indiscriminate targeting of civilians, the likes of which have not been seen since Adolf Hitler embarked on such power-grabs in the 1930s; and

WHEREAS, Ukrainians are heroically fighting tooth-and-nail to repel the Russian invasion but lack the heavy and precision military equipment, ordnance, and training to do so; and

WHEREAS, worldwide foreign policy experts and Russian leaders themselves have made it evident that Russia intends to expand these efforts to occupy, annex, and subjugate other free European countries that border Russia, such as Moldova, Lithuania, et cetera; and

WHEREAS, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has led to millions of internally displaced persons and refugees of a scale not seen in Europe since World War II; and

WHEREAS, Russia's invasion of Ukraine and stated expansionist plans bear a direct threat to the freedom of the whole of Europe, NATO, the free world economy, and, thereby, the United States; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support the people and free government of Ukraine in their fight against Russian aggression; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the VFW urges the President and Congress to decidedly exercise our position as leader of the free world to decidedly support Ukrainian people and armed forces with necessary humanitarian and military aid and encourage all of our allies to follow suit.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief
To Committee on NATIONAL SECURITY & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

APPROVED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 415

SUPPORT THE STATE OF ISRAEL

WHEREAS, the State of Israel is a historic, democratic ally of the United States of America, and a key link in the defense of democratic principles in the Middle East; and

WHEREAS, Israel has been a beacon of stability and the foundation of Middle Eastern regional security for the past 60 years, despite the repeated targeting by hostile actors wishing to infringe upon its sovereignty; and

WHEREAS, peace between Israelis and Palestinians remains of strategic interest to the United States and other partners within the region; and

WHEREAS, Israel has been one of our partners in the ongoing fight against the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS); now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the United States Government to continue to support the State of Israel both diplomatically and militarily and continue to work with them to ensure and promote regional stability in the Middle East, and elsewhere.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief
To Committee on NATIONAL SECURITY & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

APPROVED AS AMENDED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 416

SUPPORT THE AWARDING OF THE VIETNAM SERVICE MEDAL FOR THOSE INVOLVED IN THE S.S. MAYAGUEZ INCIDENT

WHEREAS, on May 12, 1975, 12 days after the fall of Saigon, the U.S. container ship SS Mayaguez was seized by Khmer Rouge soldiers off the island of Poulo Wai, Cambodia as the Mayaguez was enroute from Hong Kong to Sattahip, Thailand; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Navy deployed the aircraft carrier USS Coral Sea (CV-43), destroyer escort USS Harold E. Holt (FF-1074), and guided missile destroyer USS Henry B. Wilson (DDG-7) to SS Mayaguez last known position; and

WHEREAS, an alert order was sent to 1st Battalion 4th Marines, the 2nd Battalion, 9th Marines, the 21st Special Operations Squadron, 23rd Tactical Air Support Squadron, and the 3rd Tactical Fighter Squadron.; and

WHEREAS, then-U.S. President Gerald Ford under recommendation from his National Security Council ordered U.S. military forces to conduct a rescue mission to recapture the SS Mayaguez and her crew; and

WHEREAS, the rescue mission resulted in the deaths of 38 American military members and 50 wounded. Additionally, three Marines were captured by the Khmer Rouge and were executed days later; and

WHEREAS, those killed in action are memorialized on the Vietnam Wall at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C.; and

WHEREAS, even though the SS Mayaguez incident did not occur in Vietnam, the incident is commonly referred to as the "last battle of the Vietnam War;" and

WHEREAS, the military personnel who participated in the rescue operation were not eligible for the Vietnam Service Medal but were authorized instead for the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, petition the United States Congress and the Department of Defense to consider awarding the Vietnam Service Medal for those involved in the Mayaguez incident.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief
To Committee on NATIONAL SECURITY & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

REJECTED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 417

BRING BACK UNITED STATES NAVY RECRUITING IN THE PHILIPPINES

WHEREAS, the United States Navy stopped recruiting Filipino citizens in the Philippines in 1992 after the United States-Republic of the Philippines Military bases agreement was rejected, the US Navy closed its recruiting station in Subic Bay, Philippines; and

WHEREAS, the program allows Filipino Citizens who are not legal US residents to join the US Navy directly from the Philippines. The Navy ended the program that recruited Filipinos in 1992 because the base agreement with the Philippines ended; and

WHEREAS, bringing back the US Navy Recruiting in the Philippines would enhance recruiting of much needed personnel with the US Navy and to which the Philippines will provide recruits who are the best and brightest that the Philippines can offer; and

WHEREAS, the US and Philippines have a long-standing Mutual Defense Treaty and recruiting of Filipinos to join the United States Navy in the Philippines will greatly assist in the security and preparedness and would both benefit both countries; and

WHEREAS, generations of Filipinos have served in the Navy since the end of the Spanish-American War, World War 1, World War II, Korean Conflict, Persian Gulf War Operation Enduring Freedom and when the Philippines became a U.S. colony Filipino sailors have fought in every conflict involving the U.S. armed forces since 1900 and have served the United States with great courage and honor. Several Filipinos earned distinguished awards to include the US Congressional Gold Medal and the highest of them all the Medal of Honor; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, supports bringing back the recruitment of Filipino Citizens by the United States Navy in the Philippines, after enactment of appropriate legislation.

Submitted by Department of Pacific Areas
To Committee on NATIONAL SECURITY & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

APPROVED AS AMENDED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 418

HONORING THE OATHS OF U.S. SERVICE MEMBERS

WHEREAS, Congress signed the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force three days after 9/11, leaving the geographical scope undefined, no time frame, and no clear conditions our military to achieve victory; and

WHEREAS, the conflicts engaged in under the 2001 AUMF have spread across 19 countries, cost an estimated \$8 trillion, killed over a million people worldwide, and taken a psychological, physical, and spiritual toll on our veterans without demonstratable benefit to national defense; and

WHEREAS, a disproportionate flow of resources is going to military and intelligence solutions along with a more general sidelining of diplomacy amid a continuing “militarization of foreign policy”; and

WHEREAS, addressing the root causes of violent conflict overseas through development and diplomacy helps protect Americans and helps reduce the need to send our service members into harm’s way; and

WHEREAS, James Madison wrote to Thomas Jefferson in 1798 “The Constitution supposes, what the History of all Governments demonstrates that the Executive is the branch of power most interested in war.... It has accordingly with studied care, vested the question of war in the Legislature”; and

WHEREAS, Congress has mostly abdicated their Article I responsibilities to authorize and oversee military actions by extensive, potentially permanent delegations of congressional war powers to the Executive; and

WHEREAS, S.J.Res.10 - A joint resolution to repeal the authorizations for use of military force against Iraq, and for other purposes was introduced in the senate on 03/03/2021; and

WHEREAS, the National Executive Committee of the Veterans of Foreign Wars addressing the “Forever War” in regular meeting assembled on ~~XXXXXX XX-XX, 20XX~~, that the VFW urges a renewal of a proper constitutional balance to American foreign policy decision-making by encouraging Congress to repeal and replace outdated Authorizations for Use of Military Force; now; therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, the Veterans of Foreign Wars call upon Congress to re-establish constitutional balance to American foreign policy decision-making, to honor their imperative obligation to debate and officially declare wars before sending American troops into harm’s way; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars advocate for the passing of any bill that immediately repeals outdated Authorizations for Use of Military Force.

Submitted by Department of Alaska
To Committee on NATIONAL SECURITY & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

REJECTED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 419

HONDURAS

WHEREAS, the vision of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) of the United States is to "Ensure that veterans are respected for their service, always receive their earned entitlements, and are recognized for the sacrifices they and their loved ones have made on behalf of this great country;" and

WHEREAS, the VFW believes all military members and veterans who serve or have served in hostile environments should be appropriately recognized; and

WHEREAS, the United States (U.S.) military maintained a presence in Honduras throughout and beyond the 1980s providing training to and conducting military exercises with the host nation military; and

WHEREAS, the buildup and presence of U.S. troops served as a deterrent to Nicaraguan aggression in the region and also a means of building support for democratic values via civil action in Honduran communities; and

WHEREAS, U.S. troops were equipped with live ammunition and assisted the Honduran military in training and combat support capacities; and

WHEREAS, U.S. troops reported experiencing hostile fire and imminent danger; and

WHEREAS, at least one U.S. service member received a Purple Heart because of terrorist activity; and

WHEREAS, U.S. troops lost their lives while conducting various duties due to terrorist activity and other hazardous circumstances; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we strongly urge Congress to issue an Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, or similar recognition of having served in an area of hostility, to all U.S. troops who served in Honduras from 1981 to 1992.

Submitted by Department of Iowa
To Committee on NATIONAL SECURITY & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

APPROVED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 420

RECOGNITION OF ADDING 74 SAILORS ON THE VIETNAM MEMORIAL WALL

WHEREAS, on June 3, 2023, marks the 54th anniversary of the collision between the Australian Aircraft Carrier HMAS Melbourne and the US Destroyer USS Frank E. Evans DD754 in the South China Sea. In this collision the Evans was cut in half and 74 Sailors were killed. Seventy-three Sailors went down with the bow of the ship and one-Sailor was recovered at Sea; and

WHEREAS, the USS Evans was in support of American troops in Vietnam on different orders from the years 1966 until the night of the collision. Although they left Vietnam after their 5 May 1969 operation to re-arm at Subic Bay Philippines. While at Subic Bay, the USS Evans was ordered to participate in a multinational operation called SEA SPIRIT; and

WHEREAS, Operation SEA SPIRIT was conducted off the coast of Vietnam as defined as the outer edge of Market Time. This area disqualified these 74 Sailors from being enshrined on the Vietnam Memorial Wall. Although exceptions to the geographic limit rule have been made for other personnel killed as part of the Vietnam conflict but not in Vietnam itself; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Congress and DOD to reconsider and make exceptions to have these 74 Sailors be enshrined on the Vietnam Memorial Wall with their brothers and sisters.

Submitted by Department of New Jersey
To Committee on NATIONAL SECURITY & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

REJECTED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 421

EXPAND THE DATES OF ELIGIBILITY FOR THE ARMED FORCES EXPEDITIONARY MEDAL

WHEREAS, the Department of Defense recognized service of the United States Armed Forces personnel in the Republic of Vietnam from 1 July 1958 to 3 July 1965, by awarding personnel the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal; and

WHEREAS, Executive Order 11231 establishes the Vietnam Service Medal as recognition of service in the Republic or contiguous waters from 3 July 1965 to 28 March 1973; and

WHEREAS, service in the Republic of Vietnam during Operation Frequent Wind during 29 to 30 April 1975 was recognized by awarding eligible personnel the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal; and

WHEREAS, Armed Forces personnel originally receiving the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal for service in the Republic of Vietnam during either from 1 July 1958 to 3 July 1965 or 29 to 30 April 1975 are now qualified to receive the Vietnam Service Medal in lieu of the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal; and

WHEREAS, after the Paris Peace Accords were signed 27 January 1973 and the last combat troops were withdrawn from the Republic of Vietnam on 29 March 1973 there were many members of the United States Armed Forces remaining in Thailand and on ships in the Vietnam coastal waters in support of the South Vietnamese Army from 29 March 1973 until Operation Frequent Wind thus placing United States personnel in harm's way, but not recognized by a campaign or service; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, petition Congress to direct the Secretary of Defense to authorize the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal for those that served in Thailand and on the ships in the coastal waters of Vietnam from 29 March 1973 to 30 April 1975 in support of the Vietnamese Army.

Submitted by Department of Nevada
To Committee on NATIONAL SECURITY & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

REJECTED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 601

ADEQUATE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS BUDGET

WHEREAS, there are more than 18 million living veterans; and

WHEREAS, Department of Veterans Affairs anticipates that enrollment in the Veterans Health Administration will grow to nearly 10 million veterans and more than 7.2 million of those veterans will be seen by VA for health care; and

WHEREAS, the passage of favorable legislation, such as the PACT Act, more veterans will seek to use VA for numerous other benefit programs including education programs, recipients of disability compensation, and insurance policies; and

WHEREAS, the complexity of conditions that veterans which receive VA health for care will add demands to the system for years to come; and

WHEREAS, even though appropriations for VA continues to increase, proposals to return to previous funding levels will create a disparity that is detrimental to the services VA is obligated to provide; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Congress of the United States to authorize appropriations for the Department of Veterans Affairs which fully fund and maintain the integrity and enhancement of veteran entitlement programs and health care system.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief
To Committee on VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

APPROVED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 602

VA PHARMACEUTICAL CO-PAYMENTS

WHEREAS, veterans, other than those with a service-connected disability rating of 50 percent or greater, those who are receiving medications for their service-connected conditions or those whose incomes fall below the nonservice-connected pension threshold, must pay a co-payment for each 30-day supply of medications obtained through the Department of Veterans Affairs; and

WHEREAS, there have been repeated proposals to change VA pharmaceutical co-payments, placing an undue hardship on many veterans; and

WHEREAS, the increase in costs of the benefit would likely place an undue burden on veterans, limit access to earned benefits, and serve to inequitably balance the federal budget on the backs of veterans; and

WHEREAS, pharmaceuticals are part of the VA's standard health benefits package and must be provided to all eligible veterans; and

WHEREAS, VA is required by current law to charge veterans for life saving preventive medicines which are cost-free under private sector insurance and other public health care options; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we oppose increases in Department of Veterans Affairs pharmaceutical co-payments; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Congress must exempt preventive medicines from VA pharmaceutical co-payment requirements.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief
To Committee on VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

APPROVED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 603

VA MEDICARE AND TRICARE REIMBURSEMENT

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States views it as essential that the Department of Veterans Affairs health care system provide qualifying veterans with timely and accessible care; and

WHEREAS, VA collects third party payment for treatment, but current law prevents VA from collecting from the Medicare Trust Fund and TRICARE in certain circumstances; and

WHEREAS, a large number of VA's patients are eligible for Medicare and TRICARE; and

WHEREAS, VA medical care collections are used to supplement the appropriations VA receives from Congress to deliver efficient and effective health care at a lower cost than private sector health care providers; and

WHEREAS, with the increased demand on its health care system, it is now absolutely essential that VA be authorized to collect federal dollars to supplement its annual appropriations to ensure adequate funding for the Veterans Health Administration; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support enactment into law of legislation authorizing Department of Veterans Affairs to receive reimbursement for the cost of non-service connected care that is provided to veterans who are enrolled in Medicare or TRICARE.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief
To Committee on VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

APPROVED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 604

NURSING HOME ELIGIBILITY

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States has called upon Congress to enact legislation to regulate and expand eligibility for Department of Veterans Affairs health care and provide all veterans with mandated access to the full continuum of VA health care services which include nursing home care; and

WHEREAS, current VA regulations extend VA eligibility for nursing home care to those veterans who are service-connected at 70 percent or above or those seeking nursing home care for a service-connected disability; and

WHEREAS, the demand for VA nursing home care is increasing as the veteran population continues to age; and

WHEREAS, VA nursing home care units are VA hospital-based and provide an intensive and extensive level of nursing home care supported by the clinical specialties and other services within the host hospital; and

WHEREAS, VA nursing home care is considered the “safety net” for VA outpatient services such as residential care, respite care, hospital-based home care, adult day health care, homemaker/home health aid services and other extended care programs; and

WHEREAS, VA, through their own statements, recognizes the difference in eligibility for nursing home care and inpatient hospital care as inconsistent with the principles of sound medical practice, which support continuity of care for veterans; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to establish a standard Department of Veterans Affairs nursing home entitlement for all veterans enrolled in the VA health care system.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief
To Committee on VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

APPROVED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 605

TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY HEALTH CARE

WHEREAS, since 2019, more than 41,000 service members have sustained Traumatic Brain Injury including those who served in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan; and

WHEREAS, veterans with blast injuries, blunt trauma, motor vehicle accidents, and falls are at risk for TBI which often goes unrecognized; and

WHEREAS, even patients with mild TBI may have long-term health consequences; and

WHEREAS, veterans with severe TBI require a lifetime of intensive services to care for their injuries, yet many Department of Veterans Affairs medical facilities are neither properly staffed nor equipped to provide the necessary screening and comprehensive health care services veterans suffering from TBI require; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to provide sufficient funding to the Department of Veterans Affairs to ensure that appropriate screening, diagnostic services, treatment and life-long case management services are available to every veteran suffering from conditions associated with service-connected head trauma to include, but not limited to Traumatic Brain Injuries; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to improve research pertaining to screening methods, diagnostic tools, and treatment of conditions associated with TBIs caused by blast injuries, blunt traumas, motor vehicle accidents, falls and other related injuries to ensure veterans who have experienced a TBI receive effective health care.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief
To Committee on VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

APPROVED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 606

PTSD AND MENTAL HEALTH CARE

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has indicated that treating Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and providing Mental Health Care among returning war veterans is one of its highest priorities, and the VA operates a nationwide network of nearly 200 specialized PTSD outpatient treatment programs; and

WHEREAS, the early and accurate screening, diagnosis and treatment for PTSD, depression, substance use, and other mental health disorders, yields optimal patient outcomes, and statistics have shown that these conditions, left untreated or poorly treated, can lead to increases in suicide attempts or death by suicide among a host of other negative consequences; and

WHEREAS, studies conducted by VA show that social determinants of health, like financial stability, access to housing, and pathways to a quality career serve as protective factors against suicide. Each time a veteran uses a VBA economic opportunity program or benefit is an opportunity to provide resources and treatment; and

WHEREAS, the National Center for PTSD found an average of 23 percent of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans have been diagnosed with PTSD; and

WHEREAS, available research has not sufficiently evaluated the clinical effectiveness of treatment programs for veterans diagnosed with and/or suffering from the effects of traumatic brain injuries, PTSD, or other mental health conditions, and adequate research into the brain's response to internal and external influences that could result in mental illness has yet to be undertaken; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we strongly urge the Department of Veterans Affairs to continue to adequately staff VA mental health treatment and research programs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge Congress to dedicate adequate resources to address the alarming rate at which Veterans die by suicide to include moving the Office of Suicide Prevention from Veterans Health Administration to the enterprise level of the Department of Veterans Affairs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge the Department of Veterans Affairs to assess what specific treatments or practices are the most effective in helping our veterans cope with their PTSD.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief
To Committee on VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

APPROVED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 607

VA HEALTH CARE FOR WOMEN VETERANS

WHEREAS, the total number of women veterans continues to grow, as does the number of women utilizing the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits; and

WHEREAS, VA reports that as of FY 2019 only 25 percent of women veterans utilize VA health care facilities; and

WHEREAS, VA currently has two Women's Health Primary Care Providers (WH-PCP) at all of the VA's health care systems. In addition, there are WH-PCPs in 90 percent of the community-based outpatient clinics; and

WHEREAS, women veterans have reported that VA staff continue to confuse them for spouses or caregivers and even challenge their veteran status; and

WHEREAS, women veterans also reported concerns regarding the gender specific competencies of VA health care professionals; and

WHEREAS, VA reported in FY 2019 that more than 80 percent of enrolled women veterans are assigned to a Designated Women's Health Provider (DWHP), who have experience and training in women's health care; and

WHEREAS, we acknowledge that the VA has improved the care and services it provides women veterans; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge VA to continue to improve the staffing, equipping, monitoring and enhancing health care services available to women veterans at all VA medical facilities and expand its designated women's health program to mental health care to ensure access to mental health care providers who understand women-specific mental health conditions; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge the Secretary of Veteran Affairs to improve outreach to women veterans, allow women to choose the gender of their VA health care providers and properly train VA's workforce to treat women veterans with the respect and dignity they have earned and deserve.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief
To Committee on VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

APPROVED AS AMENDED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 608

EXPAND VA CAREGIVER BENEFITS

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers Program provides a monthly stipend, respite care, mental and medical health care, and necessary training and certifications for caregivers of veterans who were severely injured on or after September 11, 2001; and

WHEREAS, the VA Comprehensive Assistance Program has begun to expand for the caregivers of veterans of other eras, but excludes veterans who require home caregiver services as a result of serious illness; and

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States believes severely wounded, injured, and ill veterans of all conflicts have made incredible sacrifices, and all family members who care for them are equally deserving of our recognition and support; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Defense provides support to family caregivers of members of the armed forces who are catastrophically disabled through its Special Compensation for Assistance with Activities of Daily Living program, which includes disability caused by illnesses in its eligibility criteria; and

WHEREAS, the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims (CAVC) through *Beaudette v. McDonough* has granted veterans appellate rights to challenge VA Caregiver Program decisions, but VA has yet to establish a framework for caregiver appeals; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to provide the accurate resources to VA for the expansion of the Department of Veterans Affairs Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers Program to veterans of all eras; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge VA to establish regulations clarifying caregiver appeal procedures allowing VA to adjudicate caregiver appeals to address the growing backlog of veterans in need of caregiver benefits; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge Congress to fully align the VA's Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers Program with the Department of Defense Special Compensation for Assistance with Activities of Daily Living program by including in its eligibility criteria veterans who require caregiver services as a result of serious illnesses incurred in the line of duty.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief
To Committee on VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

APPROVED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 609

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY CARE OPTIONS

WHEREAS, members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States report being satisfied with the health care they receive from the Department of Veterans Affairs and believe the VA health care system must be improved to ensure all veterans have timely access to high quality care; and

WHEREAS, the VFW has consistently worked with Congress and VA to improve the health care VA provides our nation's veterans through community care programs to ensure veterans have a seamless experience; and

WHEREAS, the veteran population is a shifting demographic with evolving health care needs, which necessitates that VA identify new and innovative ways to deliver timely access to high quality, comprehensive, and veteran-centric health care; and

WHEREAS, VA is now allowed to charge veterans copayments for service-connected care they receive from networked urgent care clinics in the community; and

WHEREAS, the networks of VA community care programs, to include dependent care delivered through CHAMPVA, are limited by factors that influence the willingness of private sector providers to participate in these programs; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that Congress must provide Department of Veterans Affairs with the oversight, appropriations and assets necessary to properly implement the VA MISSION Act as intended by Congress; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that VA comply with federal prompt payment requirements and incentivize private sector health care providers to participate in its community care programs, while ensuring veterans and eligible dependents are not held financially liable for services furnished through such programs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that VA must remain the guarantor and coordinator of care for enrolled veterans and that the VFW remains opposed to privatizing VA or eroding VA's ability to provide direct care to veterans; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the VFW opposes any out-of-pocket costs for care coordinated by VA for service-connected disabilities; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Congress and VA must furnish and conduct proper outreach to ensure veterans are fully aware of their health care options.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief
To Committee on VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

APPROVED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 610

FOREIGN MEDICAL CLAIM PROGRAM (FMP)

WHEREAS, veterans living or traveling overseas are forced to seek reimbursable medical care for service connected disabilities; and

WHEREAS, veterans seeking treatment for service-connected disabilities must pay the cost of the care and mail a paper-based claim to VA for reimbursement or request the service provider submit a paper-based claim on their behalf and communications with FMP managers is nearly nonexistent; and

WHEREAS, the reimbursement process takes six months to a year for resolution with VA issuing a US Treasury check and mailing it to the foreign address of the veteran or service provider if they reside overseas; now therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge VA to revise their woefully inadequate paper-based system and utilize Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT), to allow veterans and service providers to file claims electronically directly to VA; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge VHA to provide adequate staffing for the FMP to provide timely adjudication of the claims; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge the Secretary of Veteran Affairs to revise the FMPs banking system to align with the Veterans Benefits Administration's banking system, providing electronic funds transfer of reimbursements to veterans and service providers, eliminating the antiquated process of mailing US Treasury checks.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief
To Committee on VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

APPROVED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 611

ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORD MODERNIZATION (EHRM)

WHEREAS, VA and DoD agreed upon an integrated electronic health record (EHR) system, providing a seamless transition of health records for Service Members and veterans from DoD to VA; and

WHEREAS, DoD is nearly two-thirds completed and the United States Coast Guard is fully completed with their new electronic health record system; and

WHEREAS, VA's progress has been slow with frequent leadership changes overseeing the project with failures in change management at all levels and multiple delays of the platform deployment; now therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge VA to provide competent command and control from VHA leadership and to enforce standardization of the electronic health record (EHR) integration across VHA facilities and continued partnership and collaboration with VSO stakeholders; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge the Secretary of Veteran Affairs to adopt best practices from DoD to work with the vendor and VHA facilities to implement the EHR on schedule.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief
To Committee on VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

APPROVED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 612

EXTEND SERVICE CONNECTION PRESUMPTION TO BLAST SURVIVORS

WHEREAS, the Global War on Terrorism has exposed more than 330,000 service members to diagnosable blast injuries, with thousands more going undiagnosed and untreated; and

WHEREAS, the nature of the conflict these service members face is frequently guerrilla-style combat where the enemy is widely known to use improvised explosive devices and indirect fire; and

WHEREAS, much of the attention has been focused on the apparent physical wounds, there are many unseen effects of blast trauma, which could include brain injuries, long-term hearing and balance issues, chronic pain, air embolisms, and injuries mistaken for personality disorders; and

WHEREAS, some effects associated with blast injuries may not become manifest immediately allowing the service member to return to the field, only to have their ability to fulfill their duty dramatically affected by the long-term effects of the blast; and

WHEREAS, many injuries are difficult to diagnose and service members can suffer from these disabilities for many years after the blast; and

WHEREAS, a large number of veterans have been identified as having been diagnosed at Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers with conditions possibly related to blast exposures since the start of the Global War on Terrorism; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to approve a presumption of service connection for conditions associated with blast exposure.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief
To Committee on VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

APPROVED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 613

TINNITUS AND HEARING LOSS PRESUMPTIVE COMPENSABLE SERVICE CONNECTION

WHEREAS, veterans of the armed services who served in combat or in a position (e.g., member of a gun crew on board Navy or Coast Guard ships) or certain occupational specialties have a high incidence rate of hearing loss or tinnitus as a direct result of acoustic trauma; and

WHEREAS, veterans, from earlier, were not afforded a comprehensive audiological examination upon entrance and discharge from the military services, but instead were subject to highly inaccurate test methods; and

WHEREAS, in recent years the second leading disability granted service connection by Department of Veterans Affairs was for hearing loss or tinnitus; and

WHEREAS, the VA has the authority to grant service connection for disabilities associated with combat-related diseases or injuries even if medically undocumented at the time of service; and

WHEREAS, in 2005 the Institutes of Medicine (IOM) (now referred to as the National Academy of Sciences) released a study that showed that nearly all service members are exposed to acoustic trauma at some point during their military service and that many experience hearing loss and/or tinnitus as a result, often years after service. However, "after the fact, hearing loss or tinnitus incurred as a result of military service cannot be distinguished with certainty from subsequent noise-induced hearing loss..." Given these findings, reasonable doubt must be resolved in favor of veterans who suffered acoustic trauma in service; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, we urge Congress and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to grant service connection on a presumptive basis for any veteran diagnosed after discharge with hearing loss or tinnitus when the evidence shows that the veteran participated in combat or worked in a position or occupational specialty likely to cause acoustic trauma.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to amend the Schedule for Rating Disabilities to provide a minimum compensable evaluation for any service connected hearing loss for which a hearing aid is medically indicated.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief
To Committee on VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

APPROVED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 614

VA CLAIMS WORKLOAD

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has made significant progress in reducing the backlog of claims for compensation, pension, education benefits and appeals, yet submissions and appeals continues to grow; and

WHEREAS, Congress has provided increased funding for staffing at VA and improved its oversight. Yet, the attrition rate and quality of new hires and retirement of journeymen claims processors continues to challenge VA's ability to train and maintain a technically proficient workforce; and

WHEREAS, VA has attempted to increase workload production by implementing arbitrary timeliness goals that rarely account for the complexity of claims; and

WHEREAS, VA continues to order redundant and often unnecessary examinations when the evidence of record is sufficient to make a determination, or claimants submit adequate medical records and doctors opinions; and

WHEREAS, after dozens of Congressional hearings, numerous studies, changes of VA leadership, altered workflow, amended work processes, erratic IT development, as well as fruitless pilot programs and experimental initiatives, it is clear that there are no easy, simple or quick solutions that lead to the speedy reduction of the backlog; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that Congress require Department of Veterans Affairs to accept private medical evidence and opinions in lieu of VA examinations whenever they are sufficient for rating purposes; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we continue to advise that Congress exercise its oversight authority and provide the vital resources necessary to sustain a sufficient workforce capable of effectively managing the workload and provide quality and timely service to those claiming benefits or appealing decisions from VA; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the VA should revisit their production goals to reduce error rates; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Congress bolsters its oversight and funding of VA technology initiatives to ensure that they are constructive, relevant and effective in streamlining claims processing and improving quality of entitlement decisions.

Submitted by Commander-in Chief
To Committee on VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

APPROVED AS AMENDED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 615

TOXIC EXPOSURES

WHEREAS, the PACT Act has acknowledged that veterans who have been exposed to toxic substances suffer from an array of conditions and diseases, and should not continue to have to undergo a burdensome claims process; and

WHEREAS, for decades VA was reluctant to establish a clear procedure for establishing additional presumptive conditions related to toxic exposures in service. VA has created a process with the National Academies to add presumptive conditions based on association with toxic exposures; and

WHEREAS, veterans of current and past conflicts were exposed to numerous environmental hazards, including open air burn pits, the anti-malaria drug mefloquine, radioactive substances, herbicides and other hazards; and

WHEREAS, the United States military has conducted testing, monitoring, and clean-up operations related to various chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear weapons resulting in exposure; and

WHEREAS, veterans and family members stationed at Camp Lejeune who consumed contaminated water and now suffer from associated conditions and have recently benefited from the passage of the PACT Act and while VA acknowledged this fact. There are differences in what conditions are compensable and those which only receive reimbursement for medical care. Additionally, the requirement to be stationed on the base for 30 days is arbitrary and ignores thousands who graduated from training in less time; and

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to invest adequate resources to study, diagnose, and treat conditions and illnesses associated with toxic exposures; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge Congress and the Department of Veterans Affairs to grant a presumption of service connection for all conditions and illnesses that are deemed by scientific evidence to be at least as likely as not associated with or caused by exposure to a toxic substance or environmental hazard and not solely on the basis of a definitive causal link or scientific certainty; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge the Department of Defense to disclose known and potential toxic exposures during all military operations; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Congress ensures that the Department of Defense expedites declassification efforts related to exposure events and that the Department of Veterans Affairs extends presumptive service connection to veterans suffering from conditions or illnesses found to be associated with exposure to toxic substances.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief
To Committee on VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

APPROVED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 616

DIGITAL CLAIMS PROCESS

WHEREAS, advancements in technology have created an expectation among many Americans to conduct business in real time in a secure, digital space; and

WHEREAS, Department of Veterans Affairs now processes nearly all its workload in a digital environment; this includes claims for compensation, pension, survivor benefits and appeals, but still fails to offer timely access to this digital environment to veterans' representatives in the benefits process; and

WHEREAS, VA has committed to developing tools, such as the Automated Development Support (ADS) Tool, that allows adjudicators to process claims more efficiently using artificial intelligence. Proper training and implementation of these tools and the adjudicator's assessment are vital to ensure quality benefit decisions; and

WHEREAS, VA has created new self-service tools for veterans to file claim actions, but has failed to similarly invest in secure resources that would allow VSOs to provide quality claims assistance to veterans in real time, relying instead on its antiquated Personal Identity Verification (PIV) credentialing process, the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) has unsuccessfully tried to engage with VA to assist in developing cutting-edge digital tools for VA-accredited representatives to provide high quality assistance anytime, anywhere; and

WHEREAS, in the interim, VSOs have been forced to either contract with third-party vendors or develop internal ad-hoc solutions at substantial cost to the VSOs and without proper insight or oversight from VA; and

WHEREAS, VSOs have had to request VA's Office of General Counsel intervention in executing the same principal functions in a digital environment which VSOs previously performed with paper claims; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Department of Veterans Affairs to update regulations to authorize VSOs the same advocacy rights in the digital environment as were allowed in the paper-based claims process and honor proof of digital transmission to VA as the effective date; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the VFW supports the use of Automated Decision Support in assisting RVSRs to accurately adjudicate claims for benefits, we encourage the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to continue to work with all VA-accredited entities to develop real-time, secure access to tools that allow advocates to provide comprehensive assistance to clients in real time.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars urges VA to integrate their current antiquated claims management systems into one modern data management system.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief
To Committee on VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

APPROVED AS AMENDED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 617

VA LIFE INSURANCE PROGRAM

WHEREAS, Department of Veterans Affairs has established life insurance designed to support veterans whom might otherwise be uninsurable due to service-connected disabilities; and

WHEREAS, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs has expanded the VA life insurance program making it more competitive with the private sector and opening enrollment to all service-connected veterans without a time-limit to apply; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress and Department of Veterans Affairs to continue to ensure that VA life insurance rates are competitive with private insurance company rates; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge Congress to pass legislation to index for inflation the maximum coverage rate of the VA Life Insurance program.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief
To Committee on VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

APPROVED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 618

DOMICILIARY PROGRAMS AND TEMPORARY TOTAL RATINGS

WHEREAS, Department of Veterans Affairs provides free medical treatment for service connected disabilities; and

WHEREAS, VA grants temporary total ratings for veterans hospitalized in excess of 21 days due to service connected disabilities; and

WHEREAS, veterans are not able to work while participating in VA domiciliary and day programs; and

WHEREAS, VA has mischaracterized the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims decision *Mangham v. Shinseki* and now no longer considers domiciliary and day programs as “hospital care” for temporary 100 percent disability ratings; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that Congress restore eligibility for temporary 100 percent ratings to include medical treatment provided by all domiciliary and day programs provided the program is treating a service-connected disability.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief
To Committee on VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

APPROVED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 619

PROTECTING VA ACCREDITATION

WHEREAS, VA has established regulations ensuring claimants are able to obtain assistance from accredited representatives to assist in the preparation, presentation, and prosecution of claims for VA benefits; and

WHEREAS, VA accredits national organizations, attorneys, and claim agents to assist claimants file for VA benefits once they have completed training approved by VA's Office of General Counsel. Accredited attorneys and claim agents may only charge fees that have been deemed reasonable by VA and these fees may only be applied at specific steps within the claims process; and

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars provide representation to VA beneficiaries free of charge; and

WHEREAS, there is a prevalence of non-accredited companies and individuals preying on VA beneficiaries by charging exorbitant fees in violation of federal statutes and regulations; and

WHEREAS, these non-accredited companies have lobbied congress attempting to pass legislation that will preclude these companies from following established fee guidelines at the detriment of VA beneficiaries; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to pass legislation protecting VA beneficiaries from predatory companies, organizations, agencies and individuals attempting to by-pass the VA accreditation process; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge federal law enforcement agencies to investigate and prosecute companies, organizations, agencies and individuals that prey on our nation's veterans and their dependents by charging exorbitant fees under the guise of providing claims assistance.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief
To Committee on VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

APPROVED AS AMENDED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 620

APPEALS MODERNIZATION AND LEGACY REMANDS

WHEREAS, VA beneficiaries had to wait years to have VA review unfavorable benefits decisions under the legacy appeals process. VA implemented the Appeals Modernization Act (AMA) of 2019 designed to streamline the VA appeals process by creating different avenues claimants may use when disagree with benefit decisions; and

WHEREAS, the Appeals Modernization Act intended to reduce the appeals backlog by prohibiting claimants from continuously submitting additional evidence throughout the appeal. Claimants may still submit additional evidence if the claimant submits a supplemental claim or if the claimant provides the evidence at the time the appeal is filed; and

WHEREAS, VA has a duty to assist claimants by obtaining federal records in conjunction with claims and by providing examinations to evaluate the severity of the condition and obtain a nexus linking the claimed condition to the Veterans service when necessary; and

WHEREAS, VA is still addressing the diminishing legacy appeals backlog due to the continuous cycle of remanded claims which need additional development that was not performed when the claim was first processed and BVA is now experiencing an increased inventory in AMA appeals and still has not provided a viable appeals management system; and

WHEREAS, VA adjudicators regularly assign later effective dates negatively impacting veterans despite claims being continuously pursued within the framework of AMA; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs enforces proper development of VA claims by obtaining all pertinent records when claims are initially processed; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States that we urge that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs enforces policies mandating that exams are requested with accurate information and eliminating biases caused by improper phrasing on exam order requests; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States that we urge that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs enforces policies authorizing the assignment of earlier effective dates when claims are continuously pursued without the veteran submitting an additional appeal for the effective date.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief
To Committee on VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

APPROVED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 621

VSO INVOLVEMENT WITH VA SCHEDULE FOR RATING DISABILITIES

WHEREAS, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs' primary strategic goal is to consistently communicate with stakeholders to assess and maximize performance, evaluate needs and build long-term relationships and trust; and

WHEREAS, proposing changes which negatively affect veterans without collaborating with Veteran Service Organizations erodes trust between the Department of Veterans Affairs and the veterans entrusted to their care; and

WHEREAS, changes to the VA Schedule for Rating Disabilities must undergo a concurrence process requiring review by over a dozen offices prior to publishing change proposals in the Federal Register; and

WHEREAS, VA must provide the public with a 60-day period to provide comments on proposed changes after which the proposed changes must undergo an additional concurrence process requiring review by over a dozen offices prior to publishing a final rule; and

WHEREAS, during the most recent proposed VASRD changes VA did not collaborate with VSO stakeholders on changes prior to drafting and publishing proposed changes; and

WHEREAS, VA received more than 2.5 thousand comments highlighting concerns of proposed changes of the rating schedule for a single body system which VA must review and address prior to publishing a final rule; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to collaborate with VSO stakeholders prior to proposing any regulation or policy changes which impact our nation's veterans.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief
To Committee on VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

APPROVED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 622

REVIEW OF VA DECISIONS

WHEREAS, prior to April 2020, Veterans Service Organization representatives (VSOs) accredited by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) had the opportunity to review proposed VA rating decisions to ensure that all claimed conditions have been addressed and properly adjudicated prior to VA finalizing its decision and sending notification to the veteran; and

WHEREAS, there is currently no mechanism for VSOs to address development errors nor rating decision errors prior to notification of a rating decision. VSOs must file appeals on behalf of claimants to rectify clearly erroneous decisions which VSOs previously had the ability to correct with VA within days of the erroneous decision being identified; and

WHEREAS, despite VA changing the appeals process attempting to reduce the amount of time appellants must wait to have their appeals adjudicated, the appeals backlog continues to grow; and

BE IT RESOLVED, that Congress passes legislation granting representatives accredited by the Department of Veterans Affairs the ability to address development and rating errors prior to decisions being finalized, thus ensuring that accurate benefits decisions are made in a timely fashion.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief
To Committee on VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

APPROVED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 623

IMPROVE BENEFITS FOR SURVIVORS

WHEREAS, Dependents Indemnity Compensation (DIC) provide to dependents of fallen servicemembers and veterans who succumb to service-connected conditions has not had any significant increases since 1993, and

WEREAS, the DIC rate is paid at forty-three percent of one hundred percent permanent and total disability, while other federal survivor programs are paid at fifty-five percent; and

WHEREAS, the Survivors and Dependents Educational Assistance Program provides educational support to eligible dependents (spouse or children) of a service member who died on active duty or a veteran who died or is permanently and totally disabled due to a service-connected disability; and

WHEREAS, DEA benefits increase annually, they fail to increase at the same rate as tuition; and

WHEREAS, Congress recently increased the monthly allowance for DEA while also decreasing the amount of months to utilize the benefit; and

WHEREAS, nothing can replace the enormity of the loss and sacrifice of military survivors, increasing benefits that align with other federal programs will provide them the opportunity to build a meaningful and productive future for themselves and their children; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to increase Survivors and Dependents benefits on par with comparable federal survivor programs; and to reflect the rising costs of living and education expenses, with future increases indexed to reflect the average cost of living increase by the Department of Social Security and tuition costs as reported by the Department of Education.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief
To Committee on VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

APPROVED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 624

VETERAN HOUSING AND FOOD SECURITY PRIORITIES

WHEREAS, homelessness among veterans has significantly decreased due to coordinated efforts across multiple agencies of government and the ambitious goal of the Department of Veterans Affairs to eliminate homelessness among veterans; and

WHEREAS, a growing number of female veterans experience homelessness, many of whom have dependents in their care; and

WHEREAS, local and state homeless veteran agencies and programs are federally funded by the Department of Veterans Affairs Grant and Per Diem program and the Department of Labor Homeless Veterans Reintegration program; and

WHEREAS, programs such as VA's Supportive Services for Veteran Families and the joint Housing and Urban Development and VA's Supportive Housing program are showing signs of success in reducing homelessness; and

WHEREAS, research has found that among 18- to 64-year-olds, veterans are 7.4 percent more likely to live in a food-insecure household than nonveterans, while veterans also use food assistance programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) at lower rates than civilians; and

WHEREAS, the VA acknowledges its obligation to maintain comprehensive assistance to veterans who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness to the best of its capabilities; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the President and Congress to continue to address veterans' homelessness by increasing the availability of affordable housing, expanding educational and employment opportunities and training and providing gender-specific services; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Department of Veterans Affairs should periodically adjust Grant and Per Diem program rates for inflation to ensure sufficient operation of homeless veteran assistance programs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that VA compensation and non-service connected pension should not be considered countable income by the Department of Housing and Urban Development and Department of Agriculture in determining program eligibility; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Department of Veterans Affairs should annually adjust grant and per diem program rates for inflation, based on separate instances for food and housing, with the latter adjusted for local variations in housing cost based on the Variable Housing Allowance Tables used by the Department of Defense to ensure sufficient operation of homeless veteran assistance programs.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief

To Committee on VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

APPROVED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 625

ENSURE VETERAN SUCCESS IN EDUCATION

WHEREAS, our nation has consistently supported the future success of our warfighters through robust veterans' education benefits, historically molding generations of proven leaders; and

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States has worked to secure and preserve quality education benefits for all generations of veterans; and

WHEREAS, Department of Veterans Affairs enrolled nearly one million veterans across all G.I. Bill programs in the past academic year; and

WHEREAS, despite significant improvements to consumer resources for student veterans and increasing GI Bill rates by 2.8%, there is inconsistent access to quality consumer information and financial hardships that continue to drive perceptions in Washington that student-veterans are not succeeding in higher education; and

WHEREAS, many combat veterans do not fully qualify for the Post-9/11 GI Bill benefit; and

WHEREAS, certain schools and programs seek to circumvent benefit guidelines in order to reap significant financial benefit; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to ensure proper oversight of Department of Veterans Affairs educational benefit programs by developing quality metrics with which to demonstrate student veteran success in higher education, and close financial loopholes through which certain academic programs can exploit GI Bill reimbursement models; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Congress ensure veterans receive equitable access to benefits like housing payments and quality pre-enrollment educational information to ensure veterans are academically and financially prepared to succeed in higher education; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge Congress to increase book stipends and cost of living adjustments to give student veterans the proper resources and tools to be successful in their pursuit of higher education; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we work to extend full GI Bill benefits for all combat veterans and preserve quality GI Bill benefits for all current conflict veterans and future conflict veterans to ensure they have access to quality education assistance programs.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief
To Committee on VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

APPROVED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 626

VOCATIONAL READINESS AND EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

WHEREAS, the period of eligibility for Department of Veterans Affairs Vocational Readiness and Employment benefits is 12 years from the date of separation from the military or the date the veteran was first notified by VA of a service-connected disability rating; and

WHEREAS, many veterans do not understand their eligibility to VR&E services and the benefits of the program until later in life when they become so disabled that their disabilities create an employment barrier; and

WHEREAS, VR&E lacks quality performance measures that measure readiness based on the long-term effects of disability and the likelihood that a disability may require further rehabilitation; and

WHEREAS, VR&E can take more than 90 days from enrollment to the start of services; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to change the eligibility delimiting date for Department of Veterans Affairs Vocational Readiness and Employment program by eliminating the 12-year-delimiting date for eligibility to Chapter 31 benefits and allow all veterans with employment impediments or problems with independent living to qualify for VR&E services for life; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the VA must restructure performance measures to emphasize long-term readiness versus the current short-term indicators of success. Furthermore, VR&E should continually follow up with veterans considered to be rehabilitated to ensure that the rehabilitation and employment placement plans have been successful and if unsuccessful, to ensure the reasons and bases are clearly communicated to the veteran; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that VA streamlines eligibility and entitlement to VR&E programs to provide more timely intervention and assistance to all disabled veterans; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that VA must provide better information about VR&E during the Transition Assistance Program Class for separating service members.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief
To Committee on VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

APPROVED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 627

SUPPORT VETERANS EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAMS

WHEREAS, the Veterans of Foreign Wars recognizes that it is in the best interest of our nation to have a strong and viable veterans employment and training system; and

WHEREAS, Congress has recognized that veterans of all eras, especially recently separated service members and veterans with service connected disabilities find it difficult to obtain meaningful employment and careers; and

WHEREAS, while there are certain employment and educational programs in place for veterans such programs must have a proactive, long-term career focus; and

WHEREAS, programs designed to encourage federal employment of veterans, assist veterans in finding employment in their communities, and encourage federal contractors to hire veterans demand reasonable funding and responsible oversight to ensure success; and

WHEREAS, state agencies who receive federal funding are not held to the same veteran hiring standards as the federal government; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we support viable and effective veterans employment and training systems, such as the Jobs for Veterans State Grant program and other Department of Labor Veterans Employment and Training Service programs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we urge Congress to improve and enforce federal veteran-hiring mandates for contractors who do business with the federal government as outlined in Title 38 USC 4212; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that federal veteran hiring initiatives and programs must be held accountable for the effectiveness of the services provided and funding should be adjusted to reflect abilities in creating long-term meaningful careers for veterans, and state agencies that receive federal funding must be held to the same standards and report to Congress on the success of veteran hiring initiatives.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief
To Committee on VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

APPROVED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 628

VETERAN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

WHEREAS, government reports consistently indicate that many federal agencies fail to reach their three-percent contracting goal for disabled veterans; and

WHEREAS, many veterans and disabled veterans lack access to the necessary capital to invest in small business opportunities; and

WHEREAS, the federal government has failed to deliver adequate tools to veterans, offering the opportunity to fulfill the three-percent federal contracting mandate; and

WHEREAS, the Small Business Administration remains underfunded and understaffed to fulfill its mission of establishing and maintaining robust veterans' programs; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that Congress expand entrepreneurial education and networking programs for veterans via veterans small business centers and other entrepreneurship programs funded through the Small Business Administration; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Congress expand veteran's and disabled veteran's access to capital by expanding direct loan programs through the Small Business Administration; but such programs should never come at the expense of other earned veterans' benefits; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Congress hold Department of Veterans Affairs accountable for its duty to properly verify veteran entrepreneurs to help achieve the federal government's three-percent veterans contracting goal.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief
To Committee on VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

APPROVED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 629

UNDERSERVED VETERANS

WHEREAS, our nation has become more diverse, so too do our military and veterans population and understanding a veteran's gender, race, ethnicity, and orientation can help identify high risk concerns; and

WHEREAS, women, LGBTQ+, racial, and ethnic minority veterans face barriers and challenges across different life domains and access to VA benefits; and

WHEREAS, VA does not have sufficient data to fully understand the barriers these underserved veterans face; now therefore;

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge VA to improve data collection and better analyze results to identify challenges and disparities in benefits of underserved veterans; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge VA to implement favorable changes to the benefit of underserved veterans based on findings of fact and not anecdotal or arbitrary statistics.

Submitted by Commander-in-Chief
To Committee on VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

APPROVED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 630

FORT MCCLELLAN, ALABAMA, TOXIC EXPOSURE

WHEREAS, Fort McClellan was a training site for the use of military grade toxic substances. The base is now closed and designated a Superfund Site; and

WHEREAS, the VA position is *"There are currently no adverse health conditions associated with service at Fort McClellan"* even though it acknowledges that there were exposures to Radioactive Compounds, Chemical Warfare Agents and Airborne Polychlorinated Biphenyls. VA further states that *"Although exposures to high levels of these compounds have been shown to cause a variety of adverse health effects in humans and laboratory animals, there is no evidence of exposures of this magnitude having occurred at Fort McClellan"*; and

WHEREAS, these statements appear on the VA website because of claims made by veterans who served at Fort McClellan and are suffering from illnesses that can only be the result of toxic exposure; and

WHEREAS, these affected veterans have the burden of proving their illnesses were caused by service at Fort McClellan; and

WHEREAS, Congress alone has the power to include these illnesses in the list of Presumed Conditions as was done for the Agent Orange exposures of the Vietnam Veterans and the Burn Pit exposures of the Gulf War Veterans; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S., that we urge Congress to support legislation *"That the veterans who served at Fort McClellan who are suffering illnesses caused by a toxic exposure; that these illnesses be added to the list of VA's Presumed Conditions."*

Submitted by Department of New Hampshire
To Committee on VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

REJECTED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 631

IMPROVING VA MENTAL HEALTH CARE FOCUS

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW) have similar missions – the former, “[T]o fulfill President Lincoln’s promise to care for those who have served in our nation’s military and for their families, caregivers, and survivors,” and the latter “to assist worthy comrades and to perpetuate the memory and history of our dead, and to assist their surviving spouses and orphans,” and

WHEREAS, veteran death by suicide remains significantly higher than that of the non-veteran population; and

WHEREAS, in the years since the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) published the *National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide 2018 – 2028*, other strategic plans such as those issued by the White House and Department of Defense (DoD) further prioritize the prevention of servicemember and veteran suicide; and

WHEREAS, the VA *National Strategy* not only predates the aforementioned strategies and the 9-8-8 National Suicide and Crisis Hotline but was issued in a pre-COVID environment where performance expectations, offices, and assets may have since ceased to exist; and

WHEREAS, many telephone numbers, computer hot-links, and websites cited as veteran suicide prevention tools in the VA *National Strategy* have been found many to be non-operational; and

WHEREAS, the VA Office of the Inspector General issuances have cited mental health failures at numerous VA medical locations, some issuances not even referencing the VA *National Strategy* as essential criteria, but asserting that Veterans Health Administration (VHA) policy requires “all VHA policy [to be] recertified or rescinded on a 5-year cycle; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the VFW urges the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to expeditiously review and reissue the *National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide 2018 - 2028* to ensure currency and functionality, and further emphasize consistency and symbiosis with other National and DoD strategies focused on reducing suicide among those who wear or have worn our country’s uniform.

Submitted by Department of Virginia
To Committee on VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

REJECTED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 632

EXPAND PACT ACT PRESUMPTIONS TO INCLUDE CANCERS AMONG MISSILEERS

WHEREAS, in cooperation with the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW) and other Veterans Service Organizations, the Congress passed and the President signed, the *Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act of 2022*, (P. L. 117-168) otherwise known as the *Honoring our PACT Act of 2022* (hereinafter referred to simply as *PACT Act*); and

WHEREAS, Section 505 of the *PACT Act* calls for the Secretary of Veterans Affairs (VA) to conduct an open-ended, broad-ranging study on the incidence of cancer in veterans; and

WHEREAS, initial studies and anecdotal evidence suggest that toxic exposure in the course of their duties have led to increased incidence of several cancers, including cervical, thyroid, Hodgkin's Lymphoma, and Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma, at rates above those of the normal population and other military occupational specialties; and

WHEREAS, the Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine was tasked in 2023 with conducting a study of specific cancers of concern in those currently or formerly serving in missile community career fields, and specifically suspected clusters of Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma at intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) bases; and

WHEREAS, such a study must, of necessity, have a cross-Departmental element with the VA's study, as well as a cross-service focus to encompass both veterans and active-duty personnel, including those who have transitioned from the U. S. Air Force to the U. S. Space Force; and

WHEREAS, the *PACT Act* already recognizes Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma as a presumptive illness related to certain toxic exposure; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the VFW urges VA to review toxic exposures and associated medical conditions for those currently or formerly serving in missile community career fields and at intercontinental ballistic missile bases as part of the *PACT Act* presumptive framework.

Submitted by Department of Virginia
To Committee on VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

APPROVED AS AMENDED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 633

JUSTICE FOR ALS VETERANS

WHEREAS, Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), also known as Lou Gehrig's Disease, is a fatal neurodegenerative disease that destroys the nerve cells that control voluntary muscle function, eventually impacting the ability to move, speak and breathe; and

WHEREAS, numerous international institutes have been unable to determine causation or cure for ALS in more than a century of research, but have concluded that the incidence of ALS impacts veterans, especially deployed veterans, at nearly twice the rate that it impacts the general populations; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has acknowledged this disproportionate affliction in the veteran population to the effect that it has established presumptive causation between ALS diagnosis and military service of as short as 90 days duration; and

WHEREAS, under Title 38, U. S. C., Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) is available to the survivors of veterans who die due to service-related disabilities; and

WHEREAS, also under Title 38, a monthly increase of DIC is available to those survivors who were married to veterans for eight (8) years prior to their death, if the VA had rated said veteran was disabled for a full eight (8) years prior to their death; and

WHEREAS, since its discovery in 1869, the prognosis for those stricken with ALS today has largely remained the same – death within an average of only two to five years; and

WHEREAS, the survival prognosis of this aggressive, presumptive service-connected disease is insufficient to meet the eight-year rule; and

WHEREAS, legislation introduced in the 117th Congress (specifically, H.R. 5607 and S. 3483) failed to make it out of respective House and Senate Committees; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we call upon the VA to carve out an exception to the eight-year disability rule to allow survivors of veterans who die from ALS to receive the increased monthly DIC payment; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we call upon Congress to renew efforts to legislate and fund such action as a matter of extreme urgency.

Submitted by Department of Virginia
To Committee on VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

APPROVED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 634

TINNITUS & HEARING LOSS PRESUMPTIVE SERVICE-CONNECTION

WHEREAS, many veterans, whether or not they served in combat or worked in certain occupational specialties, have higher than average incidences of hearing loss or tinnitus as a result of their time in service; and

WHEREAS, in recent years, the second highest service-connected disability granted by the VA has been for hearing loss and tinnitus; and

WHEREAS, various studies indicate that the majority of servicemembers are exposed to some form of auditory trauma, including high-level repetitive noise, during their time in service leading to some level of hearing loss and/or tinnitus and given these findings, reasonable doubt must be resolved in favor of veterans who suffered hearing loss and/or tinnitus as a result of their service in the military; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress and the VA to grant service-connection on a presumptive basis for any veteran diagnosed after discharge with hearing loss and/or tinnitus when there is evidence that the veteran participated in combat operations; worked in a position or occupational specialty likely to have damaged the veteran's hearing; or was exposed to any form of auditory trauma.

Submitted by Department of Illinois
To Committee on VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

REJECTED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 635

INCREASE VETERANS' BURIAL BENEFITS

WHEREAS, the VA pays a higher level of burial benefits upon the death of a veteran who dies from a service-connected illness or disability and lesser burial benefits upon the death of a wartime veteran who dies from a non-service-connected illness or disability; and

WHEREAS, the current VA burial expense payment for a service-related death is up to \$2,000 for those occurring after September 11, 2001, or up to \$1,500 for deaths prior to September 11, 2001. For non-service-related deaths VA will pay up to \$749 toward burial and funeral expenses for deaths on or after October 1, 2016 if hospitalized by VA at time of death, or \$300 if not hospitalized by VA at time of death. Due to the dramatic increase in private sector funeral expenses, this benefit has been seriously eroded 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; and

WHEREAS, the VA should provide the resources needed to meet increasing private-sector costs of burial; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we believe there is still a serious deficit between the original value of the plot allowance benefit and its current value. Congress should increase the plot allowance for all eligible veterans and expand the eligibility for the plot allowance for all veterans who might be eligible for burial in a national cemetery, not just those who served during wartime; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United, that we urge Congress and the Administration to provide the resources required to meet the critical and sensitive nature of the National Cemetery Administration's mission thereby fulfilling the nation's commitment to all veterans who have served their country so honorably and faithfully.

Submitted by Department of Illinois
To Committee on VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

REJECTED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 636

EXPAND VETERAN TREATMENT COURTS

WHEREAS, 2023 marks the twenty-second straight year of America at war, and there are now more than 21 million U.S. veterans including nearly two million from the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan; and

WHEREAS, the United States military instills a sense of honor, duty, leadership, commitment and respect, evident in the millions of veterans who have returned home to their communities as productive citizens, strengthened by their military experience; and

WHEREAS, an estimated twenty percent of veterans has symptoms of a mental disorder or cognitive impairment, and about 1 in 10 veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan seen in the VA healthcare system have a substance use disorder and there is a well-established link between substance abuse and combat-related mental illness and an unprecedented number of veterans nationwide are appearing in the courts to face charges stemming directly from these issues; and

WHEREAS, Drug Courts evolved out of the necessity for a solution-based approach to an influx of drug abusing offenders before the courts; and the Drug Court model and the Mental Health Court model are the nation's most successful, cost effective, and scientifically validated tool to deal with substance abuse and mental health issues in the criminal justice system; and

WHEREAS, Veterans Treatment Courts are hybrid Drug Courts and Mental Health Courts and have evolved out of the growing need for a treatment court model designed specifically for justice-involved veterans to maximize efficiency and economize resources while making use of the distinct military culture consistent among veterans; and

WHEREAS, Veterans Treatment Courts build upon this camaraderie by allowing participants to go through the treatment court process with people who are similarly situated and have common past experiences; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we advocate for the continued use and expansion of Veteran Treatment Courts across the country.

Submitted by Department of Illinois
To Committee on VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

APPROVED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 637

CONTINUE FIGHTING TO END VETERAN HOMELESSNESS

WHEREAS, the streets of many American cities continue to be inhabited by veterans who lack adequate food and housing; and

WHEREAS, veteran homelessness has decreased over the last few years thanks to multi-agency efforts at the federal level; and

WHEREAS, a growing number of female veterans, many with dependent children, are joining the ranks of homeless veterans; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States wants to ensure that the issue of veteran homelessness remains a priority for both the Administration and Congress; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we encourage Congress to increase the availability of affordable housing; expand education/training programs; and provide employment opportunities until all veterans are properly housed and gainfully employed.

Submitted by Department of Illinois
To Committee on VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

APPROVED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 638

SUPPORTING WOMEN VETERANS

WHEREAS, women veterans remain the fastest growing population in the veteran community; and

WHEREAS, more women veterans are using VA health care services than ever before; and

WHEREAS, women veterans are reporting military sexual trauma at very high levels; and

WHEREAS, women veterans require specialized health care providers with expertise in women's health; and

WHEREAS, many VA medical centers still don't offer specialized treatments such as mammography, maternity care, and gynecology; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, urges Congress to support and increase the availability of high quality gender-specific services at the VA; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, urges the VA to ensure that every VA facility has a zero tolerance policy towards sexual harassment for employees and patients.

Submitted by Department of Illinois
To Committee on VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

APPROVED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 639

MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA (MST)

WHEREAS, the continued prevalence of military sexual assault continues to grow and has been the subject of numerous military reports, Congressional hearings, documentaries and media stories. Military Sexual Trauma (MST) is a heinous crime which is a disgrace to all of those who have worn the uniform of the Armed Services; and

WHEREAS, DoD and VA have made progress towards developing and implementing a policy that creates a tangible, visible deterrent to perpetrators through consistent prosecutions or other severely negative consequences to one's military careers, both departments must commit to improving their Integrated Mental Health Strategy; and

WHEREAS, the effects of untreated MST can be devastating to the overall health of veterans and in the successful transitioning back into their families and communities; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States that we call on DoD to continue to enhance its MST awareness programs, and calls on VA to continually improve its MST treatment programs and to disseminate evidence-based clinical practice guidelines to clinicians who care for veterans who have suffered from MST; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States that we call upon Congress to continue its oversight and hearings related to military sexual trauma care and benefits with the goal of improving VA and DoD collaboration and improving policies and practices for military sexual trauma care and disability compensation.

Submitted by Department of Illinois
To Committee on VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

APPROVED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 640

PROTECT THE HOMES OF SURVIVING SPOUSES

WHEREAS, The Sergeant First Class (SFC) Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act was signed into law on August 10, 2022; and

WHEREAS, as of April 28, 2023, veterans and survivors have filed more than 500,000 toxic exposure-related benefits claims under the PACT Act; and

WHEREAS, due to the addition of new presumptive conditions covered by the PACT Act, it is only logical that more veterans will be awarded a service-connected disability rating; and

WHEREAS, due to their toxic exposure, many of these veterans are among the sickest among us, so, in addition to an increase in awards there will eventually be an increase in the number of surviving spouses eligible for Dependent and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) benefits; and

WHEREAS, in 2023, compensation for 100% service connection for the veteran and a spouse equals \$3,823.89, but the DIC rate is only \$1,562.74; and

WHEREAS, the surviving spouse, in addition to suffering the loss of their veteran spouse, and faced with a decline in compensation by nearly 60%, should never be in fear of becoming housing insecure; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge Congress to establish a grant program to assist surviving spouses who become eligible for DIC benefits to remain in their homes; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this grant program be named The Sergeant. Sam Wybenga Grant Program.

Submitted by Department of Colorado
To Committee on VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

APPROVED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 641

GREEN STAR SERVICE FLAG

WHEREAS, families of Veterans lost to suicide receive little or no federal recognition or assistance in healing from the trauma of losing their Veteran; and

WHEREAS, these families suffer alongside their Veteran struggling with mental health issues, possibly for years, before most find their Veteran after completion of the suicide; and

WHEREAS, Veteran and Service member suicide can easily be linked to service-related circumstances; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we petition Congress to enact legislation that would federally recognize the families of Veterans lost to suicide as "Green Star" family members by approving the "Green Star Service Flag" currently proposed as H.R. 3076 ; To amend title 36, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a flag for next of kin of veterans who die by suicide.

Submitted by Departments of New Jersey & Pennsylvania
To Committee on VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

REJECTED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Resolution No. 642

FREE APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID

WHEREAS, prospective and current college students need to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®) form to apply for federal student aid such as federal grants, work-study funds and loans; and

WHEREAS, dependent student must report their parent's information in addition to their own on the FAFSA® form; and

WHEREAS, the FAFSA® requires parents to disclose any untaxed income to include veteran noneducation benefits such as Disability, Death Pension or Dependency & Indemnity Compensation (DIC) and/or VA Educational Work-Study allowances; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Education utilizes this Untaxed Income to calculate the parent's Expected Family Contribution; and

WHEREAS, any increase in the parent's Expected Family Contribution reduces the amount of aid awarded to the dependent student, thereby financially harming the dependent student; and

WHEREAS, the veteran and/or surviving spouse parent was awarded these benefits for injury or death related to their service, NOT to pay for the education of their dependent children; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, that we urge the Department of Education to remove any questions related to a parent's Untaxed Income related to veteran benefits from the Free Application for Federal Student Aid.

Submitted by Department of Colorado
To Committee on VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

APPROVED by the 124th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.