



THE AMERICAN LEGION | LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Support VA's suicide prevention efforts

As our nation deals with the effects of nearly two decades of war, the need for mental health services for our veterans will no doubt increase in the years to come. It is imperative to combat VA's staffing shortage by increasing recruitment and retention budgets, while also expanding direct hiring authority to medical center directors to expedite the hiring process of mental health professionals. All health care possibilities should be explored and considered to find the appropriate treatments, therapies and cures for veterans suffering from visible and/or invisible wounds. The American Legion strongly advocates for complementary and alternative therapy and urges Congress to provide VA the necessary funding to increase its Integrative Health and Wellness Program. (Resolutions 28 and 165)

Fully fund a superior national defense as the global war on terror continues

It is critical to maintain a well-funded national security strategy to ensure a strong national defense. The United States must enhance foreign policy, improve military intelligence, and increase cyber operations and capabilities. The American Legion advocates for a good quality of life for our troops and an improved transition process from military service to civilian life. The Legion vows to fight against those who desire to reduce the benefits of veterans, servicemembers, and their families to obtain short-term budget gains. (Resolutions 17 and 86)

Create lifetime electronic health record

The American Legion supports VA in implementing a quality electronic health record (EHR) system in concert with the Department of Defense system to ensure that veterans' medical documents transfer seamlessly from active service to VA and community providers. (Resolution 83)

Institute gender-specific health care for women veterans

Women veterans face remarkably different experiences than their male counterparts when transitioning in and out of combat roles, in between services or back to civilian life. VA must ensure an improved quality of life for women veterans with gender-specific health care to meet their needs. (Resolution 147)

Limit outsourcing, unify VA's programs

Continued focus is needed to ensure VA can meet challenges in delivering high quality benefits and health care. It is a critical policy to ensure primarily the funding of the Choice Program, which expands the community care option is now a basic expectation for enrollees in VA's health-care system. Excessive outsourcing would render VHA too small to function economically or preserve quality of care and essentially dismantle it. Congress should pass legislation to unify VA's multiple non-VA care programs with VA as the coordinator and guarantor of care. (Resolution 372)

Support those who care for wounded veterans

There are 5.5 million caregivers who are injured while they care for a veteran. Many caregivers suffer from depression and health problems of their own. The American Legion is committed to supporting these hidden heroes. (Resolution 146)

Reclassify cannabis for medical research

The American Legion supports increased research into cannabis as part of the larger effort to develop complementary and alternative treatments and therapies. Cannabis is classified as schedule I drug and drugs such as cocaine, methamphetamine and methadone are classified as schedule II drugs. The American Legion urges Congress to amend legislation to remove Cannabis from schedule I and reclassify it in a category that, at a minimum, will recognize cannabis as a drug with potential medical value, and further urge the Drug Enforcement Agency to license privately-funded medical cannabis production operations in the United States to enable safe and efficient cannabis drug development research. (Resolutions 11,160,165)

Defend veterans education benefits

As the primary author of the original GI Bill, The American Legion has fought to ensure the sustainability of the benefit earned benefit, while ensuring that veterans receive the most benefit possible from it. (Resolution 349)

Repeal unfair offsets that penalize disabled veterans and widows

Many military retirees must forfeit some of their retirement pay to receive their VA service-connected disability compensation. It is equally outrageous VA survivor benefits (DIC) are offset from military Survivor Benefit Plan annuities. The American Legion supports legislation to repeal both of these unjust offsets. (Resolutions 85 and 224)

Provide mandatory end-of-service exams for reservists

Active-duty servicemembers have the right to physical examinations when separating. After all, servicemembers retiring from active duty are required to have such examinations. This same right to an end-of-service exam is only partially authorized for reserve component servicemembers. This unfair treatment must be changed. (Resolution 85)

Create an American Legion Commemorative Coin

The American Legion has requested approval in 2018-2019 for the American Legion Centennial Commemorative Coin by the U.S. Mint. Timely congressional authorization is needed and your support is requested. (H.R. 2519 & S. 1182)

Ensure those returning from active duty retain re-employment rights

The Uniformed Services Employment and Re-employment Rights Act protects the rights of servicemembers to be re-employed after returning from active duty, including reserve or National Guard members. The American Legion wants to prohibit employers from pressuring a veteran into waiving his or her veteran's employment rights and protections. (Resolution 315)

Continue funding programs to end veterans homelessness

To fully implement VA's pledge to eradicate veterans homelessness, Congress must continue making responsible investments in affordable housing and programs such as Supportive Services for Veteran Families that move veterans and their families off the street and into stable housing. (Resolution 340)

Disclaimer: The American Legion's work is never done! These legislative priorities have been marked "achieved" because we were able to get the U.S. Congress to pass legislation that the President of the United States signed into law. It is important to note that after passage, your American Legion professional staff often participates in the federal rulemaking that translates law into VA or government policy. We are always vigilant in ensuring our veterans receive the healthcare and benefits they have earned through their service to our great nation, and we will fight every effort to reduce or curtail them. Ensuring the protections, benefits, and rights of our servicemembers, veterans, and their families, has and will always be a primary focus of the National Legislative Commission and Division."