



Greetings AMVETS Department Leaders,

As your National Legislative Affairs Associate, I look forward to meeting you at the upcoming AMVETS 75th National Convention, August 21-24 in Louisville, Kentucky. In the meantime, enclosed are 19 resolutions for your review and consideration at state-level department conventions.

The majority originated at headquarters (HQ) and are being sent in accordance with AMVETS Constitution and Bylaws. Most are current and expiring, because they ran out at the 2017 AMVETS National Convention, but need to be renewed after two years. Since the issues they deal with remain important to veterans and our work on Capitol Hill, I hope you'll support their re-authorization. Only one of the resolutions is being proposed by HQ for the first time. It deals with post-traumatic growth and promising new approaches to treating the mental health needs of veterans.

Should you have any department-led resolutions you would like distributed to other states, please don't hesitate to send them along. I would like to email them early next month, prior to the start of state conventions.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me at thimes@amvets.org or 301-832-2982.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Th. Himes", written in a cursive style.

Thomas Himes
AMVETS National Legislative Affairs Associate

AMVETS National Legislative Agenda

TABLE OF CONTENTS

BENEFITS

Increase Veterans Burial Benefits (18-1).....	4
Concurrent Receipt (18-3).....	5
Tinnitus & Hearing Loss Presumption (18-5).....	6
VA Claims & Appeals (18-2)	7

EMPLOYMENT & HOUSING

Civilian Credentialing (18-6).....	9
Employment Rights & Housing for Veterans & Active Duty (18-7)	10
Homeless Prevention (18-8).....	11
Strengthening USERRA/Reserve & Guard Employment Rights (18-11)	12
Veteran Preference (18-10)	13

HEALTH CARE

Post-Traumatic Growth (New).....	15
Family Caregivers – Expand Eligibility for VA Caregiver Program (18-13).....	16
Military Sexual Trauma (18-14)	17
Prosthetics & Sensory Aids (18-15).....	18
Toxic Exposures (18-16).....	19
Traumatic Brain Injury (18-17).....	20
VA Drug Pricing Initiatives (18-22).....	21
Veteran Treatment Courts (18-12).....	22

RECOGNITION & SUPPORT

State of Israel (18-20).....	24
U.S. Flag Protection (18-19)	25

BENEFITS

(CURRENT AND EXPIRING RESOLUTION 18 – 1)

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, that AMVETS believes 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, that AMVETS urges 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.

CURRENT AND EXPIRING APPROVAL FROM: HQ, Departments of WA, IL, AK, NC, VA, MN, OR, MD, TX, AZ, DC, MI, CA, KY, OH, FL, NM, WI, TN, PA

(CURRENT AND EXPIRING RESOLUTION 18 – 3)

CONCURRENT RECEIPT

WHEREAS, military retirees are paying for their own disability with their military retired pay. This unfair policy has adversely impacted disabled veterans and their families for more than a century, but was partially repealed by Congress in 2004.

WHEREAS, under current law disabled veterans with 20-plus years of active military service who are also in receipt of a VA disability determination of 50 percent or higher may retain both military retirement pay and their VA compensation; and

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

WHEREAS, a disabled veteran who does not retire from military service but elects instead to pursue a civilian career after enlistment expires can receive full compensation and full civilian retired pay. AMVETS believes that a veteran who has served this country for 20 years should have that same right and not be penalized for choosing a military career rather than a civilian career; and

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

RESOLVED, that AMVETS supports legislation that would provide for the full and immediate concurrent receipt of military retirement pay and VA disability compensation, without offset, regardless of their VA rating percentage in order to end the unfair policy of forcing many military longevity retirees to forfeit some of their retired pay in order to receive equal amounts of disability compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

CURRENT AND EXPIRING APPROVAL FROM: HQ, Departments of WA, IL, AK, NC, VA, MN, OR, MD, TX, AZ, DC, MI, CA, KY, OH, FL, NM, WI, TN, PA

(CURRENT AND EXPIRING RESOLUTION 18 – 5)

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, that AMVETS 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.

CURRENT AND EXPIRING APPROVAL FROM: HQ, Departments of WA, IL, AK, NC, VA, MN, OR, MD, TX, AZ, DC, MI, CA, KY, OH, FL, NM, WI, TN, PA

(CURRENT AND EXPIRING RESOLUTION 18 – 2)

VA CLAIMS & APPEALS

WHEREAS, as of April 2017 the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has 373,519 claims pending for disability compensation and pension claims in addition to 97,592 that have been pending for more than 125 days, often referred to as backlogged claims; and

WHEREAS, due to the increasing complexity of both VA claims and appeals, the need for compliance with Court of Veterans Appeals claims decisions, continued VA requirements for repetitive and unnecessary examinations and the severe staffing shortages, progress on cases remains slow and unsatisfactory; and

WHEREAS, due to the impending drawdown, the demand for VA services and resources will continue to rise and is expected to remain high for the foreseeable future; now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that AMVETS urge Congress to ensure adequate funding and trained staff levels for the Department of Veterans Affairs to improve upon the timeliness and accuracy of all claims and appeals being filed; and be it further

RESOLVED, that AMVETS push for the Veterans Benefit Administration to process timely and accurate claims the first time they are reviewed, as well as the immediate implementation of a uniform data claims processing system, as well as, improved training for both VA claims and appeals processors to ensure a timely and accurate claims and appeals process for every veteran.

CURRENT AND EXPIRING APPROVAL FROM: HQ, Departments of WA, IL, AK, NC, VA, MN, OR, MD, TX, AZ, DC, MI, CA, KY, OH, FL, NM, WI, TN, PA

EMPLOYMENT & HOUSING

(CURRENT AND EXPIRING RESOLUTION 18 – 6)

CIVILIAN CREDENTIALS FOR MILITARY TRAINING & EXPERIENCE

WHEREAS, AMVETS recognizes that it is in the best interest of our nation to have a strong and viable veterans' employment and training system in place. Unfortunately, the unemployment rate among our nation's veterans continues to be an area of intense focus and concern, much of which is related to issues of post-service licensure and credentials; and

WHEREAS, Congress has begun to recognize the fact that veterans of all eras, especially recently separated and older veterans, find it difficult to obtain meaningful, living-wage employment. The importance of licensing and credentialing, as an integral part of the overall veteran transition process, cannot be overemphasized; and

WHEREAS, while there are certain employment programs in place for veterans, such programs must have a pro-active, long-term career focus which, not only recognize the problems of licensing and credentialing, but develops workable solutions; and

WHEREAS, every year between 240,000 and 360,000 military members make the transition from military to civilian life and employment, and as the drawdown continues, more than a million service members are expected to transition over the next few years; and

WHEREAS, as a nation we need to be prepared to do our part to assist our transitioning service members with living-wage employment opportunities so that they become valued additions to our society and economy and are able to adequately support their families; now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that AMVETS should encourage Congress to engage in a national dialogue to include the Administration, DoD, VA, DOL, governors, state adjutant generals, employers, trade and professional associations, and licensing and credentialing entities, to establish a process so military training meets civilian certification and licensing requirements for states in which veterans choose to live once they leave the military.

CURRENT AND EXPIRING APPROVAL FROM: HQ, Departments of WA, IL, AK, NC, VA, MN, MD, TX, AZ, DC, MI, CA, KY, OH, FL, WI, TN, PA

(CURRENT AND EXPIRING RESOLUTION 18 – 7)

SUPPORT FOR VETERANS & SERVICEMEMBERS EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS & HOUSING

WHEREAS, AMVETS has become increasingly aware of veterans and military members being negatively impacted by unfair and prejudicial employment and housing practices; and

WHEREAS, American veterans comprise about 7 percent of the population of the United States, this means that much of the remaining 93 percent have no personal knowledge or experience with veterans or the military. Many of these individuals, whether consciously or unconsciously, have based their opinion of veterans and the military on the overwhelmingly negative stories portrayed in the media; and

WHEREAS, not only are many American veterans behind their contemporaries in education, employment and housing solely due to their service to our nation, but large numbers of National Guard and Reserve members are unemployed, in part due to preconceived prejudices surrounding the military; and

WHEREAS, there are currently numerous laws/programs on the books meant to assist veterans in their search for employment, education and housing, those laws/programs are not meeting the needs of American veterans; and

WHEREAS, many of the laws and programs currently in place are limited to assisting very specific groups of veterans, rather than all veterans – including National Guard/Reserve members who have been deployed – and there are sufficient legal options available to veterans who experience employment, education and/or housing discrimination; now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that AMVETS uses every resource at its disposal to ensure passage of legislation supporting veterans and servicemembers in securing equitable treatment in the areas of employment, education, and housing.

CURRENT AND EXPIRING APPROVAL FROM: HQ, Departments of WA, IL, AK, NC, VA, MN, MD, TX, AZ, DC, MI, CA, KY, OH, FL, WI, TN, PA

(CURRENT AND EXPIRING RESOLUTION 18 – 8)

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 AMVETS ensure that the issue of veteran homelessness remains a priority for both the Administration and Congress; and be it further

RESOLVED, that AMVETS encourages 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.

CURRENT AND EXPIRING APPROVAL FROM HQ, Departments of WA, IL, AK, NC, VA, MN, MD, TX, AZ, DC, MI, CA, KY, OH, FL, NM, WI, TN, PA

(CURRENT AND EXPIRING RESOLUTION 18 – 11)

STRENGTHENING RESERVE & NATIONAL GUARD EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS

WHEREAS, the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA), forbids employers from discriminating or taking adverse action against an employee due to military service; and

WHEREAS, employers must give returning Reservists and National Guard personnel their old jobs back, or offer better jobs to them, and provide compensation at the level they would have received if they had been continuously employed there; and

WHEREAS, the enforcement provisions of the current USERRA legislation do not deter employers from willful violations of employment rights: Now therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that it be made unenforceable any agreement that employers may arrange with employees to require arbitration of disputes arising under USERRA; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the award of attorney fees and actions to enforce USERRA be required, rather than merely authorized as under current law; and be it further

RESOLVED, that AMVETS support federal legislation that will strengthen USERRA and lower incidents of discrimination by employers against Reservists and National Guard personnel.

CURRENT AND EXPIRING APPROVAL FROM: HQ, Departments of WA, IL, AK, NC, VA, MN, MD, TX, AZ, DC, MI, CA, KY, OH, FL, NM, WI, TN, PA

(CURRENT AND EXPIRING RESOLUTION 18 – 10)

SUPPORT VETERANS' PREFERENCE IN PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT

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

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

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

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

CURRENT AND EXPIRING APPROVAL FROM: HQ, Departments of WA, IL, AK, NC, VA, MN, MD, TX, AZ, DC, MI, CA, OH, FL, NM, WI, TN, PA

HEALTH CARE

(PROPOSED NEW RESOLUTION)

POST-TRAUMATIC GROWTH

WHEREAS, according to the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA), the veteran suicide rate has increased steadily every year since 2001 and is especially high among 18-24 year old OEF/OIF/OND combat veterans; and

WHEREAS, the current approach to mental health care is limited and flawed by focusing on pharmacotherapy and symptomatic treatment, resulting in countless veterans reporting frustration with overmedication, addiction, overdoses, side-effects and ineffectiveness of medications; and

WHEREAS, AMVETS supports complementary and alternative treatments that are not considered to be standard in the current practice of western medicine; and

WHEREAS, many veterans have had their personal or professional lives directly or indirectly impacted by the misconceptions and perceived issues of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); and

WHEREAS, this problem is clearly linked to stigma as it is a compounded assumption that every combat veteran with PTSD is a ‘damaged hero’; and

WHEREAS, post-traumatic growth (PTG) is a theory that explains the phenomenon of positive personal change that emerges in the aftermath of a traumatic experience; and

WHEREAS, PTG can be reflected by positive adjustment, closer relationships, greater appreciation of life and improved self-efficacy; and

WHEREAS, non-profit organizations across the country have designed non-clinical programs designed to cultivate and facilitate post-traumatic growth amongst veterans struggling with PTSD and/or combat stress; and

WHEREAS, studies conducted on participants of these program have shown dramatic improvements in PTSD, depression, anxiety and insomnia; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that AMVETS seek to promote and instill ‘post-traumatic growth’ rather than the narrative which is heavily embedded in American society that veterans return from war as ‘broken heroes’; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, that AMVETS urge the Department of Veterans Affairs to collaborate with non-profit mental health organizations that implement programs designed to cultivate and facilitate post-traumatic growth amongst those struggling with posttraumatic stress disorder and/or combat stress to prevent suicide among veterans.

PROPOSED BY: HQ

(CURRENT AND EXPIRING RESOLUTION 18 – 13)

EXPAND ELIGIBILITY FOR VA FAMILY CAREGIVER PROGRAM

WHEREAS, the VA's Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers Program provides a monthly stipend, respite care, mental and physical health care, and necessary training and certifications for caregivers of veterans who were severely injured or disabled on or after September 11, 2001; and

WHEREAS, the fact that severely injured or disabled veterans from other eras are ineligible to participate in the Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers Program is inequitable; and

WHEREAS, AMVETS believes that severely disabled veterans of all eras have made tremendous sacrifices and the family members who care for them are equally deserving of recognition, assistance and support; and

WHEREAS, DoD's Special Compensation for Assistance with Activities of Daily Living (SCAADL) program provides support to family caregivers of members of the military who are catastrophically disabled whether through injury or illness, the VA's Family Caregiver Program excludes veterans who require home care services as a result of serious illness; now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that AMVETS urges Congress to expand eligibility for the VA Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers Program to include veterans of all eras; and be it further

RESOLVED, that AMVETS urges Congress to fully align the VA and DoD assistance programs by including in its eligibility criteria veterans who require caregiver services as a result of a serious illness incurred in the line of duty.

CURRENT AND EXPIRING APPROVAL FROM: HQ, Departments of WA, IL, AK, NC, VA, MN, OR, MD, TX, AZ, DC, MI, CA, KY, OH, FL, NM, WI, TN, PA

(CURRENT AND EXPIRING RESOLUTION 18 – 14)

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, that AMVETS calls 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, that AMVETS calls 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.

CURRENT AND EXPIRING APPROVAL FROM: HQ, Departments of WA, IL, AK, NC, VA, MN, OR, MD, TX, AZ, DC, MI, CA, KY, OH, FL, NM, WI, TN, PA

(CURRENT AND EXPIRING RESOLUTION 18 – 15)

PROSTHETICS & SENSORY AIDS

WHEREAS, the number of veterans needing the services of the Veterans Health Administration's (VHA) Prosthetics and Sensory Aids Service (PSAS) has grown exponentially over the past decade; and

WHEREAS, the number of veterans needing PSAS care and services is projected to continue to rise due to our aging veteran population and the injuries veterans are returning with from current and recent conflicts; and

WHEREAS, the prosthetics program continues to lack consistent administration of prosthetics services throughout the VHA; now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that AMVETS ensures that Congress and VA maintain the proper growth in appropriated funds for PSAS in order to keep pace with the number of veterans requiring their services and care; and be it further

RESOLVED, that AMVETS reminds Congress that centralized budgeting, adequate funding and appropriate staffing for PSAS will continue to be of the utmost importance in properly caring and providing for our wounded warriors, and, be it further

RESOLVED, that AMVETS encourages VHA to require all Veteran Integrated Service Networks (VISNs) to adopt consistent operational standards in accordance with national prosthetics policies.

CURRENT AND EXPIRING APPROVAL FROM: HQ, Departments of WA, IL, AK, NC, VA, MN, OR, MD, TX, AZ, DC, MI, CA, KY, OH, FL, NM, WI, TN, PA

(CURRENT AND EXPIRING RESOLUTION 18 – 16)

TOXIC EXPOSURES

WHEREAS, military bases have historically used and disposed of chemical degreasers and other toxic substances that were later determined to contaminate drinking water and pose multiple health risks including cancers; reproductive disorders; birth defects; and numerous other serious difficulties, and;

WHEREAS, countless combat deployed military personnel or those stationed on any of the 141 toxic bases within CONUS have been exposed to a wide variety of contaminants, through drinking water, general water usage, exposure through vapor seepage, soil contact, as well as exposure to toxic smoke from oil field fires or burn pits, and

WHEREAS, Vietnam veterans have been granted presumptive service-connection for conditions related to Agent Orange exposure; many other veterans, including Ft. McClellan; Blue Water Navy; Korean DMZ; C-123 air crews; Gulf War; and Iraq & Afghanistan are still arbitrarily and unfairly denied recognition of their exposures and therefore access to healthcare and compensation benefits; now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that AMVETS aggressively urge Congress and the Department of Veterans Affairs to invest adequate resources to fully research, diagnose and treat conditions associated with toxic exposures. And that any significant developments stemming from the previously mentioned activities be shared with veterans as it becomes available; and it be further

RESOLVED, that AMVETS continues to seek system-wide changes related to military environmental hazards and toxic wounds, including:

- seeking improvements to the pre- and post-deployment health monitoring and assessment program to address all currently recognized and emergent environmental hazard and toxic wound health issues;
- seeking improvements to the DoD-VA health research systems so that they aggressively focus on treatments, diagnostic biomarkers and mapping out bio- pathology and symptoms for the full range of environmental hazard and toxic wound health issues;
- seeking the implementation of a seamless DoD-VA environmental health evaluation/ treatment system to ensure medical evaluation, evidence-based treatment, and ongoing medical surveillance for current and former servicemembers suffering from toxic wounds; and be it finally

RESOLVED, that AMVETS encourages the Department of Veterans Affairs to extend presumptive service-connection to all veterans suffering from conditions associated with toxic exposures while serving in the military.

CURRENT AND EXPIRING APPROVAL FROM: HQ, Departments of WA, IL, AK, NC, VA, MN, OR, MD, TX, AZ, DC, MI, CA, KY, OH, FL, NM, WI, TN, PA

(CURRENT AND EXPIRING RESOLUTION 18 – 17)

TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY (TBI)

WHEREAS, servicemembers continue to be deployed to areas where they are at risk for experiencing blast exposures from improvised explosive devices (IEDs), suicide bombs, land mines, mortar rounds, rocket-propelled grenades and similar weapons systems; and

WHEREAS, traumatic brain injuries (TBI), the signature injury of modern combat, is a complex injury to the physical structure of the brain, and effects about 20 percent of Iraq and Afghanistan servicemembers; and

WHEREAS, the overarching issue faced by the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is identifying symptoms resulting from TBI which are often difficult to definitively diagnose and document and which may not be immediately evident; now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that AMVETS encourages VA and DoD to coordinate their efforts to better address the consequences of mild-to-severe TBI and other concussive injuries, including improvements in: screening and treatment protocols; coordination of care; and support services for injured servicemembers; and be it further

RESOLVED, that AMVETS convey to Congress that it is of the utmost importance for VA to have all of the necessary policies, procedures and personnel in place to provide the care for all service members having sustained blast related brain injuries and the corresponding effects that will either immediately, or over time, accompany them.

CURRENT AND EXPIRING APPROVAL FROM: HQ, Departments of WA, IL, AK, NC, VA, MN, MD, TX, AZ, DC, MI, CA, KY, OH, FL, NM, WI, TN, PA

(UPDATED CURRENT AND EXPIRING RESOLUTION 18 – 22)

VA DRUG PRICING INITIATIVES

WHEREAS, the VA is the primary source of medication for those veterans who are eligible for and receive services from the VA based upon their military service to our country; and

WHEREAS, recently there are efforts in various states, such as Washington, Louisiana, South Dakota and Maine, to require state governments to not pay more for their drug purchases for state employees and other state medical recipients than those paid by the VA; and

WHEREAS, in 2016 this issue was on the November 2016 California ballot as Proposition 61 where it was opposed by over 30 veterans' organizations; and

WHEREAS, California voters listened to the veterans' service organizations and overwhelmingly defeated Proposition 61 by a margin of 53.79 percent to 45.39 percent; and

WHEREAS, there is currently a ballot measure similar to Proposition 61 on the November 2017 ballot in Ohio; and

WHEREAS, in 2017, Issue 2, a ballot measure similar to Proposition 61 was on the ballot in Ohio and was opposed by over 15 veterans' organizations; and

WHEREAS, Ohio voters supported the veterans' service organization's position, as well as other non-profit organizations, overwhelmingly defeated Issue 2 by a margin of 79% to 21%; and

WHEREAS, these VA price controls were previously tried by Congress in the 1990s and after they proved to be unworkable, they were cancelled by Congress; and

WHEREAS, the VA stated that if Proposition 61 had passed it would have cost the VA an additional \$3.8 billion per year in increased drug prices and administrative costs; and

WHEREAS, if any of these ballot or legislative measures pass, it will undoubtedly require the VA and Department of Defense to raise medication co-payments and/or reduce services based upon their current budgetary constraints; now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that AMVETS shall oppose any effort to require any governmental agency, in any state, to align its drug pricing structure with the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(CURRENT AND EXPIRING RESOLUTION 18 – 12)

EXPAND VETERAN TREATMENT COURTS

WHEREAS, 2017 marks the sixteenth 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, that AMVETS advocates for the continued use and expansion of Veteran Treatment Courts across the country.

CURRENT AND EXPIRING APPROVAL FROM: HQ, Departments of WA, IL, AK, NC, VA, MN, MD, TX, AZ, DC, MI, CA, KY, OH, FL, NM, WI, TN, PA

RECOGNITION & SUPPORT

(CURRENT AND EXPIRING RESOLUTION 18 – 20)

SUPPORT FOR THE STATE OF ISRAEL

WHEREAS, on 14 May 1948, the people of Israel proclaimed the establishment of the sovereign and independent State of Israel, and the United States government established full diplomatic relations with Israel, and

WHEREAS, for nearly 70 years, the United States and Israel have maintained a special relationship based on mutually shared democratic values, common strategic interests, mutually beneficial trading alliances, strong bonds of friendship, as well as mutual trust and respect; and

WHEREAS, the State of Israel maintains a strong and well-trained military force, has extensive air and naval facilities and, therefore, is a vital ally and link in the Middle East defense chain; now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that AMVETS supports and encourages a just and comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace, by promoting peaceful dialogue amongst the stakeholders in the region and avoid any actions which could lead to military conflict; and be it further

RESOLVED, that AMVETS urges Congress and the Administration to continue to support the State of Israel through the sale of state-of-the-art military equipment and technology to help them maintain an adequate defense of their borders and independence.

CURRENT AND EXPIRING APPROVAL FROM: HQ, Departments of WA, IL, AK, NC, VA, MN, MD, TX, MI, CA, KY, OH, FL, NM, WI, TN, PA

(CURRENT AND EXPIRING RESOLUTION 18 – 19)

U.S. FLAG PROTECTION

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

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS, Congress should be permitted to protect the American flag from desecration; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that AMVETS petition Congress to allow United States citizens to consider approval for a flag protection amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

CURRENT AND EXPIRING APPROVAL FROM: HQ, Departments of WA, IL, AK, NC, VA, MN, OR, MD, TX, MI, CA, KY, OH, FL, NM, WI, TN, PA