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For God and Country

Office of the
National Commander

October 31, 2019

The Honorable Robert Wilkie, Jr.
Secretary of the Dept. of Veterans Affairs
Office of the Secretary, U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Ave. NW., Room 1000
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Wilkie,

Those who made the Greatest Generation truly great are nearly gone. According to VA's 2018 statistics, of the 16 million U.S. veterans who served during World War II, only half a million remain, and by 2020 only 282,000 of these heroes will still be alive. Most of these veterans are already using VA services – The National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics notes that in 2016 VA's benefits utilization rate for male World War II veterans was 73.6% and 67.3% for female veterans.

You can recognize these remaining heroes with actions far more meaningful than words. The Veterans Health Care Eligibility Act of 1996 exempted all Spanish American War and World War I veterans from the means test required to enter the VA health care system. It's time to do the same for our World War II veterans.

The American Legion has spoken loudly in support of this proposal. Delegates at our 2017 National Convention in Reno, Nev., unanimously passed a resolution calling for an amendment to the 1996 law which would open access for these elderly veterans.

Earlier this year, you spoke of Gen. Matthew Ridgeway's reading of the Book of Joshua on D-Day. "I will not fail thee and I will not forsake thee," was God's promise to his faithful warrior. Mr. Secretary, The American Legion has confidence that you will not fail or forsake the heroes who literally saved the world three quarters of a century ago. Please act now to open the VA's great system to all of our nation's World War II veterans.

Most Sincerely,

James W. "Bill" Oxford
National Commander

**NINETY-NINTH NATIONAL CONVENTION
OF
THE AMERICAN LEGION
Reno, Nevada
August 22, 23, 24, 2017**

Resolution No. 3: WWII Veterans Hospital and Medical Eligibility

Origin: Kentucky

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Through working with World War II veterans throughout the Commonwealth of Kentucky, the department service director has discovered a disservice to the veterans who served during that war; and

WHEREAS, Of the sixteen million Americans serving in World War II, less than one million survive today; and

WHEREAS, Those World War II veterans served honorably and continue to serve us today; and

WHEREAS, Many of those veterans were in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) system prior to activation of a means test or the setting up of the priority groups and some have subsequently been dropped from the VA system or are now being subjected to a means test; and

WHEREAS, HR 3118, Veterans Health Care Eligibility 1996, was passed exempting all Spanish American War and World War I veterans from the means test required by the VA; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By the American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 22, 23, 24, 2017, That The American Legion shall support legislation to amend HR 3118, Veterans Health Care Eligibility 1996, to extend the exemption from a means test to World War II veterans; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the Department of Veteran Affairs be urged to place all World War II veterans in Category 5.

WWII Veterans Hospital and Medical Eligibility Act

- The American Legion unanimously passed a resolution at its 99th National Convention calling for an amendment to the Veterans Health Care Eligibility Act of 1996 to extend the exemption from a means test to World War II Veterans.
- The Veterans Health Care Eligibility Act of 1996 opened the VA healthcare system to all veterans of the Spanish American War and World War I by eliminating the means testing for eligibility.
- According to the VA, 389,292 of the 16 million Americans who served in World War II were alive as of 2019ⁱ
- Approximately 73.6 percent of male and 67.3 percent of female World War II veterans were already using VA benefits in 2016.
- This legislation opens the VA healthcare system to all World War II veterans, eliminating the VA's means test.
- Sadly, our Nation mourns the loss of 294 World War II veterans who pass away each day.ⁱⁱ
- As a grateful Nation, we must fulfil our promise to our Heroes to ensure that they receive all the benefits they earned and deserve.

Bill Text:

Title: To amend title 38, United States Code, to expand eligibility for hospital care, medical services, and nursing home care from the Department of Veterans Affairs to include veterans of World War II.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. EXPANSION OF ELIGIBILITY FOR HOSPITAL CARE, MEDICAL SERVICES, AND NURSING HOME CARE FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO INCLUDE VETERANS OF WORLD WAR II.

Section 1710(a)(2)(E) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by striking “of the Mexican border period or of World War I;” and inserting “of—

“(A) the Mexican border period;

“(B) World War I; or

“(C) World War II;”.

ⁱ <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/wwii-veteran-statistics>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/wwii-veteran-statistics>