

## **Resolution No. 177**

### **Support Changes to Highly Rural Transit Grant Requirements**

WHEREAS, the current Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) policy states that a veteran may be eligible for beneficiary travel services if the following criteria are met; the veteran:

- Has a service-connected rating of 30% or more;
- Is traveling for treatment of a service-connected condition;
- Receives a VA pension, or income does not exceed the maximum annual VA pension;
- Is traveling for a scheduled compensation or pension exam;
- Has vision impairment, spinal cord injury or disorder, double or multiple amputation, enrollment in VA Rehab Programs; and

WHEREAS, the VA has modified where medical treatment can be provided based on distance from a VA medical facility; and

WHEREAS, in rural areas, there has been no subsequent adjustment in travel for medical care at the VA, community-based outpatient clinic or care in the community; and

WHEREAS, service-connected veterans below 30% disability deserve the right to transportation for medical care as those that are service connected at 30% or more; and

WHEREAS, it has been shown that the current transportation system has proven to be almost non-effective in rural areas (and some urban areas); and

WHEREAS, there are shortages of volunteer drivers, inadequate Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant VA vans (for mobility impaired/handicapped) and too few VA Veterans Transportation Service (VTS) vehicles; and

WHEREAS, over 75% of ridership in urban areas is on VA VTS vehicles and only 25% by DAV vans, that are non-ADA compliant in rural areas; and

WHEREAS, early prevention and intervention could improve the veteran's medical outcomes, by having timely access to the VA health care system; and

WHEREAS, allowing service-connected disabled veterans to be more proactive in their care will allow the VA medical team to catch medical issues before they become more serious; and

WHEREAS, in rural areas, travel costs are prohibitive; and

WHEREAS, the current VA transportation system does not work in rural areas; and

WHEREAS, the VA transportation system does not meet the requirements of the ADA; and

WHEREAS, in rural areas most volunteer drivers are over the age of 65 and are not trained to handle medical emergencies; and

WHEREAS, due to age, volunteer drivers are physically incapable of rendering medical assistance, and

WHEREAS, the veterans being transported are more likely in a higher risk category and the VA vans are not equipped with automated external defibrillators; and

WHEREAS, in rural areas, VTS transportation trips cannot be over 250 miles round trip and exceed eight hours; and

WHEREAS, veterans that are less than 30% service-connected disabled who live in rural areas are not reimbursed for travel; NOW

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Phoenix, Arizona, August 3–6, 2024, urges VA to modify and expand the definitions of eligibility for transportation and travel reimbursement needs; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that eligibility for veterans be expanded for beneficiary travel services if the following criteria are met: “A veteran may be eligible for beneficiary travel services if the following criteria are met; the veteran:

- has a service-connected rating of 0% percent or more;
- Receives a VA pension, or income does not exceed the maximum annual VA pension rate, is traveling for a scheduled compensation of pension, or if not otherwise eligible as noted above;
- Is traveling for treatment for a treatment approved and scheduled by the VA at a VA medical facility, a CBOC, or an approved care in the community appointment; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that VA must expand transportation system with affiliates and local community partners, to include ADA compliant modes of transportation.

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