



# National Lieutenant Governors Association

## **Resolution to Improve Outreach to Veterans and Their Families on Mental Health and Readjustment Issues**

**WHEREAS**, Hundreds of thousands of Americans have proudly served in the United States military and the armed forces in combat zones in Iraq, Afghanistan and other parts of the world; and

**WHEREAS**, These brave men and women will face normal challenges readjusting from the stress of combat to their civilian lives; and

**WHEREAS**, Family members of military personnel in combat areas experience emotional challenges coping with a loved-one in danger; and

**WHEREAS**, Recent national data reveals higher than average suicide rates and mental health issues for U.S. Armed Forces personnel returning from Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom and their families and further reveals that returning veterans and their families oftentimes face additional stress and pressures upon their return due to financial and housing difficulties; and

**WHEREAS**, Overcoming the stigma associated with mental illness and readjustment issues seeking treatment is something that poses serious challenges to veterans and their families; and

**WHEREAS**, Every state in the Nation has existing state and local community resources that can assist returning combat veterans and their families dealing with readjustment issues; and

**WHEREAS**, In Massachusetts the Department of Veterans' Services supports intense peer-to-peer veterans outreach initiatives such as the Statewide Advocacy for Veterans Empowerment program, where trained teams of recently separated Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines seek out fellow veterans to prevent suicide and mental health distress, to inform them of the numerous resources, benefits and services that are available, and to provide follow up outreach efforts for them and their families; and

**WHEREAS**, In Vermont the Vermont Military Department, that includes the State Veterans Affairs Office, has created a Department of Defense funded program that has become the model for rural veteran support programs. Called "The Veterans and Family Outreach Program," it is unique in that it is based on a cooperative funding agreement with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Its purpose is to contact all veterans and family members, identify possible problems, and direct support services to the individual; and

**WHEREAS**, in Maryland an outreach and referral initiative – Maryland’s Commitment to Veterans – connects veterans to essential behavioral health services offered by the USVA. The initiative, a partnership between the State’s Departments of Health and Mental Hygiene and Veterans Affairs, ensures that Veterans are provided with direct services and counseling while awaiting access to USVA services. A state advisory board identifies barriers to service and develops solutions that will provide veterans with higher quality care.

**WHEREAS**, These programs are successful examples for other states to follow; and

**WHEREAS**, Nationwide organizations exist which provide dedicated, complimentary and confidential mental health counseling to veterans and their families; and

**WHEREAS**, As NLGA Members we have a responsibility to coordinate and improve the response to veterans and their families within the mental health systems in our respective states;

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED,**

That the National Lieutenant Governors Association supports and encourages Federal, State, and Local governments to utilize outreach methods to contact, counsel, and refer recent veterans and their family members to the critical health, career, and social services they have earned and require at this time; and

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED,**

That the National Lieutenant Governors Association urges the Governors and Veterans Affairs and Mental Health Leadership teams in their respective states and territories encourage more health care and social service professionals to enhance their understanding of mental health and reintegration issues facing veterans and their families and to consider volunteering their services in support of veterans and their families; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,**

That copies of this resolution be sent by the NLGA to the President of the United States, the Vice-President of the United States, the Speaker of the House and House Minority Leader, the Majority and Minority Leaders of the U.S. Senate, and that the NLGA make all state elected officials aware of passage of the resolution through a notice in StateNews magazine, and that the NLGA further post the full text of the resolution to its web page making the resolution available at all times for all NLGA members, state elected officials, and other interested parties.

**Finally passed the 13<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2009.**

Sponsored by: Lt. Governor Timothy P. Murray, (D-MA)

Co-Sponsors: Lt. Governor Brian E. Dubie, (R-VT)

Lt. Governor Patty Judge (D-IA)

Lt. Governor John Bohlinger (R-MT)

Lt. Governor Michael Fedele (R-CT)

Lt. Governor Jack Dalrymple (R-ND)

Lt. Governor Diane Denish (D-NM)

Lt. Governor Barbara Lawton (D-WI)

Lt. Governor Elizabeth Roberts (D-RI)

Lt. Governor Anthony Brown (D-MD)

Lt. Governor John Garamendi (D-CA)

Lt. Governor Brian Krolicki (R-NV)

Lt. Governor James “Duke” Aiona (R-HI)

Lt. Governor Barbara O Brien (D-CO)

Lt. Governor Carol Molnau (R-MN)

Sec. of State Max Maxfield (R-WY)

Lt. Governor Gregory Francis (D-VI)

Lt. Governor Bill Bolling (R-VA)