

RESOLUTION 18: IN SUPPORT OF THE VA COVENANT, PROTECTING VETERAN BENEFITS, AND SAFEGUARDING THE FEDERAL WORKFORCE

WHEREAS, the Armed Forces of the United States serves as a true microcosm of the American republic, drawing brave men and women from every race, creed, background, and zip code, blending them into a singular, cohesive force dedicated to the defense of democracy; and

WHEREAS, the diverse community of union veterans and their families represent this shared sacrifice, proving that our nation's strength lies in its unity and its collective promise to care for those who have borne the battle; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is the nation's largest integrated healthcare system, uniquely structured to provide specialized, culturally competent care that the private sector is unequipped to replicate or absorb; and

WHEREAS, the integrity of this vital public institution is under direct assault from "stealth privatization" agendas, including hiring freezes and managed attrition that have left over 40,000 Veterans Health Administration (VHA) positions vacant, resulting in critical staffing shortages and delayed care; and

WHEREAS, the Department bypassed public, veteran, and labor stakeholders by attempting to implement an Interim Final Rule on February 17, 2026, which sought to slash disability ratings based on medication use without a prior comment period—a directive only rescinded after aggressive pushback from the labor movement; and

WHEREAS, the VA's recently abandoned plan to utilize automated tools to retroactively audit over 1 million approved claims dating back to 2010 created systemic anxiety among veterans, and the Department's ongoing deployment of unproven algorithmic tools to flag newly submitted medical evidence and Disability Benefits Questionnaires (DBQs) threatens veterans' due process without clear "human-in-the loop" safeguards; and

WHEREAS, the stability of the VA workforce remains under severe threat of termination of Master Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBAs) for over 400,000 frontline VA employees, stripping the very nurses, physicians, and social workers who care for our veteran community of their workplace rights and due process;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the AFL-CIO, in convention assembled, condemns these coordinated attacks on the Department of Veterans Affairs and firmly declares its unwavering opposition to any efforts to privatize, downsize, or dismantle the VA healthcare and benefits systems; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the AFL-CIO demands the immediate reinstatement of all canceled collective bargaining agreements, recognizing that protecting the rights, voice, and safety of the frontline healthcare workforce is inextricably linked to ensuring high-quality care

for veterans; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the AFL-CIO stands firmly against the unvetted use of automated claims-processing algorithms, demanding full transparency and strict human oversight to ensure technology is used to expand access to benefits, not to quietly reduce or deny them; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that the AFL-CIO and the Union Veterans Council will mobilize their collective legislative and grassroots power to defend the “VA Covenant,” ensuring the VA remains a fully funded, fully staffed public institution capable of honoring the diverse melting pot of heroes who answered the call to serve.

[SUBMITTED BY THE UNION VETERANS COUNCIL]