**RESOLUTION 1-07**

**RESOLVED,** that the National President shall send letters of appreciation to those organizations and individuals contrib­uting to the success of the 62nd National Convention, as well as to those other individuals and organizations assisting and supporting the BVA during the past year.

**RESOLUTION 2-07**

**WHEREAS,** the Visual Impairment Service Team (VIST) approach to service delivery was established in 1967 to provide much needed outreach services to blinded veterans, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** because of staffing and funding problems, these services have not been provided to all eligible blinded veterans, or in equal proportions, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the VIS Team Coordinator is the TEAM member responsible for initiating aggressive outreach activities and the timely delivery of comprehensive services, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** in several stations, VIS Team Coordinators have other respon­sibilities in addition to the VIS Teams, thus precluding the provision of needed services to all eligible veterans, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the quality and quantity of services are directly dependent upon the amount of time that the Coordinator has to devote to this assignment and upon that person's knowledge and motivation to provide the needed services, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** in some stations these services have been even further eroded by decisions made by supervisors regarding the selection, placement and changing of Coordinators, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** it is understood that direct funding from the Department of Veterans Affairs Central Office has been provided to such programs as: alcohol abuse, drug abuse, day treatment centers, spinal cord injury centers, etc., **AND**

**WHEREAS,** more efficient and timely services could be provided to eligible blinded veterans if a similar approach was taken to the funding of Full-Time Coordinators for VIS Teams, **THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED,** that the Blinded Veterans Association, in convention assembled in Albuquerque, New Mexico on this 18th day of August, 2007, hereby strongly urges the Depart­ment of Veterans Affairs to take prompt, positive action to provide funding for Full-Time Coordinators of all remaining VIS Teams presently not so funded in the Department of Veterans Affairs system, **AND**

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** that the Director of Blind Rehabilitation Service, Department of Veterans Affairs Headquarters, should concur in the selection, placement and assignment of staff personnel filling the positions of VIS Team Coordinators.

 **RESOLUTION 3-07**

**WHEREAS,** visual impairments are the third most prevalent factor in limiting the activities of individuals, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the prevalence of visual impairments of those aged 65 and over is eight times the rate for those under 65, and 50% of all visually-impaired persons in the United States are over the age of 65, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** 70-80% of individuals over age 65 currently classified as legally blind can be helped to perform daily living functions by low vision or vision rehabilitation services, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** financial resources are often a key factor in receiving such assis­tance, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** under current law, vision rehabilitation services and aids for the blind are excluded from coverage by Medicare or Medicaid, **THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED,** that the Blinded Veterans Association, in convention assembled in Albuquerque, Mexico, on this 18th day of August, 2007, supports coverage under Medicare and Medicaid programs of vision aids for visually-impaired persons eligible for Medicare and Medicaid.

 **RESOLUTION 4-07**

**WHEREAS,** federal funding for stipends and fellowships for students in personnel training programs to be teachers of the visually handicapped, orientation and mobility instructors, rehabilitation teachers, and counselors for the blind have been reduced each year since 1976, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the reduction of funding has caused many professional preparation programs to reduce faculty positions, has closed many programs, and has frustrated development of high caliber personnel, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** these reductions in funds have forced the programs to reduce the number of students accepted, and the reduction in stipends has made it diffi­cult to recruit applicants for study in numbers equal to program capacity, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the incidence of blindness and visual impairment is expected to dramatically increase over the next fifteen years, while the number of qualified gradu­ates continues to decrease, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the shortage of qualified professionals in work with blind persons has in some instances caused a shift to service provision by persons with general education who have no knowledge of the unique needs of blind persons, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the only certain means of assuring stipends and fellowships for students to alleviate the shortage is through categorical funding, **THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED,** that the Blinded Veterans Association, in convention assembled in Albuquerque, New Mexico on this 18th day of August, 2007, urges the U.S. Con­gress to enact legislation to fund categorical programs for profes­sional prepara­tion of education and rehabilitation personnel serving people who are severely visually impaired and blind, **AND**

**FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED,** that the BVA encourage the Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Academic Affairs to explore partnering with University Preparation Programs to assure an adequate supply of professionally trained Vision Rehabilitation specialists.

 **RESOLUTION 5-07`**

**WHEREAS,** the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law in July 1990, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** blind and visually-impaired individuals historically have experienced extreme difficulty in finding meaningful employment or advancing beyond entry level positions when employment is found, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the provisions of ADA require reasonable accommodations for disabled persons, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) employs disabled people, many of whom are blind or severely visually-impaired, **THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED,** that the Blinded Veterans Association, in convention assembled in Albuquerque, New Mexico on this 18th day of August, 2007, urges DVA to insure that all visually-impaired and blind employees have reasonable accommodations, including necessary training on essential access technology, **AND**

**FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED,** that DVA establish an aggressive outreach program to hire more disabled individuals, especially disabled veterans.

 **RESOLUTION 6-07**

**WHEREAS,** currency is used by virtually everyone in everyday life including blind and visually-impaired persons, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the currency of the United States is, at the present time, impossible to identify without vision or electric device, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** most blind and visually impaired persons are therefore required to rely upon others to determine denominations of such currency, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** this constitutes a serious impediment to independence in everyday living, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** electronic means of bill identification will always have more potential for fallibility than purely tactile means, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** readily identifiable currency is consistent with the spirit of the Americans with Disabilities Act, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** a suitable method of visual identification has been introduced for visually-impaired persons, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** no tactile means of identifying currency has yet been developed or introduced; **THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED,** that the Blinded Veterans Association, in convention assembled in Albuquerque, New Mexico on this 18th day of August, 2007, strongly supports efforts to make currency of the United States tactually identifiable within a reasonable period of time.

 **RESOLUTION 7-07**

**WHEREAS,** members of the Armed Forces of the United States of America are on duty 24 hours a day and may be subject to multiple hazards, hostile environments and unknown health conditions as a matter of course during their tours of duty in the Department of Defense, **THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED**, the Blinded Veterans Association in Convention assembled in Albuquerque, New Mexico on this 18th day of August, 2007, that these veterans shall not be innocent victims of indiscriminate budget-cutting efforts by attempting to change the method for service-connected compensation for injury or disease to performance of duty; **AND**

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** that the current line of duty approach shall remain as the standard applied to veterans’ claims.

 **RESOLUTION 8-07**

**WHEREAS,** nonpayment of both retirement pay and veteran’s disability is an injustice to the veteran, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** retirement pay is for the time served in any military branch, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** veterans’ disability compensation is for a disability or injury while on active duty, **NOW THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED,** the Blinded Veterans Association in convention assembled in Albuquerque, New Mexico on this 18th day of August, 2007, strongly seek appropriate legislative change to permit veterans simultaneous receipt of disability compensation and military retirement pay without reduction of the retirement pay.

**RESOLUTION 9-07**

**WHEREAS**, the Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration has been forced to operate with decremental budgets for years, **AND**

**WHEREAS**, the administration proposed in its 1998 thru 2006 fiscal year budget for VA, that Veterans Health Administration appropriations for health care be substituted for by allowing VA to retain collections from third party payers through their Medical Care Cost Recovery program, **AND**

**WHEREAS**, this action sends a clear message to the VA and veterans that VA must rely more heavily on revenue sources other than appropriations for funding veterans health care, **AND**

**WHEREAS**, the VA has proposed a demonstration project that would allow VA to be reimbursed for medical care provided to certain veterans who have dual eligibility for VA and Medicare, **AND**

**WHEREAS**, the design of the demonstration project is a win/win for both veterans and the Medicare Trust Fund; veterans would have increased choices for receiving health care and the Medicare Trust Fund would save money because the VA has agreed to provide care at a discounted rate to Medicare recipients, **AND**

**WHEREAS**, the Department of Health and Human Services has agreed to a similar opportunity for the Department of Defense to be reimbursed by Medicare, **NOW THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED**, that the Blinded Veterans Association, in convention assembled in Albuquerque, New Mexico, on this 18th day of August, 2007, strongly urges the VA and Committees on Veterans Affairs in both the Senate and the House, aggressively pursue separate legislation, providing VA with the authority to establish a demonstration project for Medicare Subvention.

 **RESOLUTION 10-07**

**WHEREAS,** blinded veterans referred to one of the ten VA Regional Blind Rehabilitation Centers (BRC) for comprehensive residential blind rehab services must travel long distances to receive these rehabilitative services, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** certain blinded veterans because of their income level are not eligible for Beneficiary Travel Benefits, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** these same blinded veterans are required to pay the Social Security co-payment and daily per diem rates to receive VA residential blind rehabilitation, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** these veterans are required to pay their own travel to receive essential rehabilitative services, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the expense of air transportation can be very high and serve as a strong disincentive for the veteran to take advantage of the VA BRC training, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the Network hosting the BRC is reimbursed at the high or complex rate for these blinded veterans, **THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED,** that the Blinded Veterans Association, in convention assembled in Albuquerque, New Mexico, on this 18th day of August, 2007, urges the U.S. Congress to amend Title 38 USC section on Beneficiary Travel requiring VA to pay travel for all veterans accepted for care in one of the VA Special-Disabilities Programs.

 **RESOLUTION 11-07**

**WHEREAS,** new technological improvement in products in the field of Blindness Rehabilitation appear almost daily, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** currently, there is no standardized method for BREWS to systematically evaluate, test and review emerging technology, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** it is likely that some of these technological innovations will offer benefit to some portion of the blinded veteran population, **THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED,** that the Blinded Veterans Association in convention assembled in Albuquerque, New Mexico on this 18th day of August, 2007, strongly urge the Veterans Health Administration and Congress to do the following:

Instruct BRS to formulate and implement an organized method of researching and testing new technological innovations in the field of Blindness Rehabilitation using actual blinded veterans as part of the test for the viability of training and issuance of the new devices to blinded veterans. The testing procedure should include review of usage of new technology by agencies and organizations dealing with sight loss outside the Department of Veterans Affairs, **AND**

**FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED,** the VHA explore Partnering with the American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) Technology Center in Huntington West Virginia to achieve the goals outlined in this resolution.

**RESOLUTION 12-07**

**WHEREAS,** the Americans with Disabilities Act guarantees the right of access to information to persons with disabilities; **AND**

**WHEREAS,** many signalized intersections provide information to pedestrians with sight which is not provided to pedestrians with visual impairments, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** it has been demonstrated (Crandall, W. Bentzen, B.L., and Myers, L., 1998) that competent, independent, blind pedestrians at unfamiliar signalized intersections may initiate as many or more than 34% of crossings during the clearance of **DON’T WALK** intervals if those intersections are not equipped with accessible pedestrian signals, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** accessible pedestrian signals have been widely used for more than ten years in countries including Australia, Japan, Sweden and the United Kingdom and are considered by traffic engineers to be widely effective not only in providing information to blind pedestrians but also in decreasing general pedestrian delay and facilitating vehicular flow at signalized intersections, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** increasing numbers of quiet vehicles, including electric vehicles and those with quiet internal combustion engines, make acoustic information from vehicles inconsistent, resulting in the inability of pedestrians who are blind to reliably detect the onset of the **WALK** interval by listening for a surge of vehicles, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** inexpensive technologies exist to make Accessible Pedestrian Signals which are automatically responsive to ambient sound, being very quiet at night and in low traffic situations, while still loud enough to be heard above vehicular sound in high traffic situations; **AND**

**WHEREAS,** accessible vibrotactile and speech transmission signal systems exist which add no noise to the environment, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century provides that “Transportation plans and projects … shall include the installation, where appropriate, and maintenance of audible traffic signals and audible signs at street crossings”; **NOW THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED,** that the Blinded Veterans Association, in convention assembled in Albuquerque, New Mexico on this 18th day of August, 2007, urges the U.S. Federal Highway Administration to develop recommended practices for installation of pedestrian signals which make information which is regularly provided to other pedestrians, accessible to pedestrians who are visually impaired, including but not limited to: information specifying **WALK** and **DON’T WALK** intervals; information indicating the presence and location of push‑buttons; and information unambiguously indicating the street to which the signal applies.

 **RESOLUTION 13-07**

**WHEREAS,** the loss of hearing in combination with loss of eyesight is very disabling and negatively effects the quality of life of veterans suffering from this combination of disabilities, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** current law enables veterans with service-connected loss of vision in one eye to obtain service-connection for both eyes if loss of vision in the other eye should occur, **THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED,** that the Blinded Veterans Association, in convention assembled in Albuquerque, New Mexico on this 18th day of August, 2007, urge Congress to amend Title 38 providing the loss of hearing in one or more ears be ruled service-connected if a veteran has service-connected blindness.

 **RESOLUTION 14-07**

**WHEREAS,** current voting machines allow most people to cast their votes for their choice of political candidates in a confidential setting, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the same private situation is not offered to most blind voters in the United States, **THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED,** that the BVA in convention assembled in Albuquerque, New Mexico on this 18th day of August, 2007, urge the U.S. Government to enforce laws mandating the use of accessible voting machines throughout the United States, **AND**

**FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED,** all voting places are fully accessible to disabled persons, **AND**

**FINALLY BE IT RESOLVED,** that every polling place have at least one voting system that is fully accessible, providing people who are visually impaired or blind the opportunity to cast their vote independently and with full privacy if they so choose.

**RESOLUTION 15-07**

**WHEREAS,** most current automatic teller machines (ATM’s) are not accessible to blind people and whereas technology is now available to make ATM’s completely accessible to blind people, **THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED,** that the Blinded Veterans Association, in convention assembled in Albuquerque, New Mexico on this 18th day of August, 2007, legislation be adopted to insure that ATM machines be available at every ATM site for blind and otherwise visually impaired individuals.

**RESOLUTION 16-07**

**WHEREAS,** Non Service-Connected (NSC) veterans whose income exceeds the means test threshold are required to pay the Social Security Co-pay for inpatient episodes of care as well as a daily per diem rate during that episode, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the means test assumes veterans have sufficient discretionary income to offset the cost of services in the VA, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** catastrophically disabled veterans are not likely to be employed or have the potential for meaningful employment, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the charges assessed for care by the VA may serve as a significant deterrent to receiving essential care, **THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED,** that the Blinded Veterans Association, in convention assembled in Albuquerque, New Mexico on this 18th day of August, 2007, seek legislation that would waive the means test requirements for NSC catastrophically disabled veterans assuring they have access to the Special-Disabilities Programs so crucial to their rehabilitation and well being.

 **RESOLUTION 17-07**

**WHEREAS,** it has become evident that formal education and experience in the field of blind rehabilitation is not being used as a qualifying factor in the selection of the position of Chief at the Blind Rehabilitation Centers, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the position of Manager/Chief of a residential Blind Rehabilitation Center is a critical role in providing services for Blinded Veterans, the individuals selected for these positions must have a solid foundation in the field of blind rehabilitation, **THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED,** that the Blinded Veterans Association, in convention assembled in Albuquerque, New Mexico on this 18th day of August, 2007, strongly request that the VA make every effort to recruit qualified individuals with backgrounds in blind rehabilitation for the positions of management in a blind rehabilitation center. The VA is encouraged to give special consideration to qualified blinded veterans for these positions, as they would serve as excellent role models.

 **RESOLUTION 18-07**

**WHEREAS,** there is an increasing number of veterans with low vision, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the VA currently has only 3 VICTORS Programs nationwide, **THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED,** that the Blinded Veterans Association, in convention assembled in Albuquerque, New Mexico on this 18th day of August, 2007, support the creation of additional VICTORS Programs and present this support in the testimony to Congress.

 **RESOLUTION 19-06**

**WHEREAS,** Veterans are waiting an excessive length of time to receive hearing aids, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the loss of both hearing and vision creates a hazardous situation for some veterans, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** giving priority to blind and visually impaired Veterans to receive hearing aids would lessen this hazardous situation, **THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED,** that the Blinded Veterans Association, in convention assembled, in Albuquerque, New Mexico on this 18th day of August, 2007 urge the Veterans Health Administration Audiology & Speech Pathology Service direct Audiology Services throughout the VHA system to provide priority for visually impaired or blind veterans who are in need of evaluation for hearing aids.

Rationale for Hearing Aid Resolution:

Presently veterans are waiting an excessive amount of time to get hearing tests and receive hearing aids. Blind and visually impaired veterans rely heavily on hearing to function safely in today’s environment. Whether traveling or just avoiding the many dangers involved with the environment these days, the loss of both vision and hearing makes it difficult and, in many instances, extremely dangerous. If blind and visually impaired veterans were given priority when receiving hearing aids, it would tremendously decrease the dangers involved with the loss of both these senses.

 **RESOLUTION 20-07**

**WHEREAS,** veterans health care is funded annually by discretionary appropriations decided by the House and Senate Appropriations Committee, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** each year the Department of Veterans Affairs fails to receive adequate funding for Veterans Medical Care from Congressional appropriations, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** this lack of adequate funding causes veterans of all categories, delays and denials of critical medical care services, **THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED,** that the Blinded Veterans Association in convention assembled in Albuquerque, New Mexico on this 18th day of August, 2007, hereby supports HR 2514, the Assured Funding for Veterans Health Care Act of 2007.

 **RESOLUTION 21-07**

**WHEREAS,** the VA has agreed to provide access to VA electronic medical records at VA medical centers to BVA Field Service Representatives, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** currently this access is only available if the field service representative goes to the medical center, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** this is an inefficient system wasting the time of the field service representative by requiring unnecessary trips to the medical center, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** this is especially difficult since the field service representatives are not always located close to a medical center, **NOW THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED,** that the Blinded Veterans Association in convention assembled in Albuquerque, New Mexico on this 18th day of August, 2007, work with the VA to allow BVA Field Service Representatives to be able to access needed medical information via remote access technology.

**RESOLUTION 22-07**

**Resolution- Clerical support for VIST Programs**

**WHEREAS,** most VIST Coordinators across the country have no clerical support, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** this causes these program managers to spend a significant amount of time doing clerical and administrative duties, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the implementation of the full continuum of Vision Rehabilitation Services will clearly result in an increased work-load for VIST Coordinators, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** with the increased work load imposed by the Continuum of Vision Rehab services and the requirement to enter increased amount of information into the National BRS Data base**, AND**

**WHEREAS,** the BVA feels this time would be better-spent performing clinical duties and direct patient care, **THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED,** that the Blinded veterans Association in convention assembled in Albuquerque, New Mexico on this 18th day of August, 2007,requests the VA authorize the provision of at least .5 FTEE GS 4/5 clerical support for all full time GS-12 VIST Coordinators with a caseload of 300 or more blinded veterans and 1.0 FTEE for programs having both a full time VIST Coordinator with a minimum of 300 caseload and a GS-12 Blind Rehabilitation Outpatient Specialist (BROS), **AND**

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** that VISN Directors be required to provide funding to local facilities to support these positions, **AND**

**FINALLY BE IT RESOLVED,** that the VIST and BROS Handbooks and documents pertaining to VIST and BROS contain language supporting the intent that such support is to be provided.

 **RESOLUTION 23-07**

**Resolution- BRC Staffing of Nurses**

**WHEREAS,** an increasing number of veterans have complex medical issues, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** it is felt that many veterans with special needs cannot participate in residential blind rehabilitation due to lack of adequate staffing in BRCs, particularly nursing staff, **THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED,** the Blinded Veterans Association, in convention assembled in Albuquerque, New Mexico on this 18th day of August, 2007 partner with BRS to encourage VA to review the staffing levels of nursing at residential blind rehabilitation centers to determine the correct number of nurses needed at each site and to ensure that corrective action is taken at those site found to be lacking adequate staffing levels, **AND BE IT FURTHER**

**RESOLVED,** that this be made a national priority for BVA to ensure that corrective action is taken by the VA if a review reveals inadequate staffing does exist, **AND**

**FINALLY BE IT RESOLVED,** that this issue be placed on the agenda of the BVA/BRS Strategic Work Group and presented in the annual testimony to Congress.

**RESOLUTION 24-07**

# Resolution: CAT Training

**WHEREAS,** there is currently a lack of standardization in the BRC computer training programs across the country in both curriculum and staff qualifications to teach veterans to use a computer, **AND**

**WHEREAS**, this leads to inconsistent teaching methods and outcomes, **THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED,** The Blinded Veterans Association in convention assembled in Albuquerque, New Mexico on this 18th day of August, 2007, that VACO BRS in partnership with the BVA work together to bring about corrective action, **AND**

**FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED,** that the BVA/BRS Strategic Work Group be used for the purpose of such problem solving, **AND FINALLY BE IT**

**RESOLVED,** that the use of subject matter expert consultants from outside the VA be explored as a viable resource in the problem solving and training process to help analyze, develop national standards and provide training for those VA staff providing computer instruction.

**RESOLUTION 25-07**

ESTABLISH A NATIONAL TRUST FUND TO COMPENSATE VETERANS FOR SERVICE CONNECTED ILLNESSES CAUSED BY ASBESTOS EXPOSURE

**WHEREAS**, asbestos use in the military was prevalent during and after World War II, **AND**

**WHEREAS**, veterans who served in the military before mid-1970 continue to be diagnosed with asbestos related diseases due to long latency periods from exposure to the first symptoms of diseases, **AND**

**WHEREAS**, recent data reflects that claims from individuals exposed to asbestos in military service and ship yard construction accounted for 26% of all mesothelioma cases, 16% of all other lung cancer cases and 13% of all disabling lung diseases, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the Department of Veterans Affairs continues to receive claims from veterans for illnesses related to asbestos exposure however, less than one third of known VA asbestos claimants receive service connected compensation for their asbestos diseases, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the Department of Veterans Affairs acknowledges that 50% of veterans with asbestosis will eventually develop lung cancer, approximately 17% will develop mesothelioma and approximately 10% will develop gastrointestinal and urogenital cancers, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** all veterans with significant asbestosis will develop cor pulmonale and those who do not die from cancer often die from heart failure secondary to cor pulmonale, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** veterans have limited avenues to seek compensation for service connected illnesses caused by mesothilioma and asbestosis resulting from asbestos exposure and, further, the existing tort system is cumbersome and time consuming with varying recoveries that often depend on the locality where the claim is filed, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** replacing the existing tort system with a national trust fund that would pay veterans, their families and others suffering from asbestos related illnesses – a fund that does not replace, offset or alter current benefits available to veterans through the Department of Veterans Affairs compensation system – would be beneficial to veterans, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** a National Trust fund would be an additional avenue of recovery for veterans and their families and provide them prompt, fair and certain payment for asbestos related diseases, **NOW THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED,** that the Blinded Veterans Association in convention assembled in Albuquerque, New Mexico on this 18th day of August, 2007, supports passage of legislation which establishes a national trust fund to replace the existing tort system for compensating veterans, their families and others suffering from mesothilioma and asbestosis resulting from exposure to asbestos, **BE IT FURTHER**

**RESOLVED,** the national trust fund will fairly compensate veterans suffering from asbestos related illnesses, and as appropriate, their dependents and survivors, **AND**

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** that veterans will be compensated through the national trust fund on a no-fault basis thereby ending the vagaries and lengthy delays of the current tort/bankrupt system, **AND**

**FINALLY BE IT RESOLVED,** that the National trust fund established to compensate asbestos victims shall not replace, offset or diminish current benefits available to veterans through the Department of Veterans Affairs compensation system.

**The intent of this resolution is: To support the creation of a national trust fund to pay the claims of veterans and their dependents suffering from asbestos related illnesses without altering the current benefits available through the VA compensation system.**

**RESOLUTION 26-07**

**TRAINING OF EYE CARE PROFESSIONALS IN BLIND**

**AND LOW VISION**

**WHEREAS,** there is a national shortage of Optometrist and Ophthalmologist educated and trained in the field of blind and low vision, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** a continuum if blind and low vision care requires eye care professionals trained in blind and low vision, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the provision of local blind and low vision services are essential to meet the needs of the vast majority of blind and low vision veterans who cannotattend a VA BRC for whatever reason, or who are waiting for admission to a BRC, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the VA currently has no comprehensive plan to provide training for VA eye care professionals in the provision of blind and low vision services, **THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED,** that the Blinded Veterans Association in convention assembled in Albuquerque, New Mexico on this 18th day of August, 2007, urges the BVA meet with top management of the VA, Ophthalmology, Optometry and the Director of BRS to encourage the development of a plan of action to train eye care professionals in blind and low vision, **AND**

**FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED,** that the BVA be a full partner and as such be included as a member of a team planning and enacting such training.

**COMMENT: This Resolution attempts to alleviate the existing shortage of Eye Care Professionals trained in Blind and Low Vision within the VA.**

**RESOLUTION 27-07**

**VIST AND BROS ALIGNMENT AT BLIND REHABILITATION CENTERS**

**WHEREAS,** at VA blind rehabilitation centers (BRCs) the VIST Coordinator and Blind Rehabilitation Outpatient Specialist (BROS) are aligned under the BRC chief, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the VIST Coordinator and BROS need to be able to independently serve veterans without the BRC Chief exercising undo influence or placing undue restrictions upon the provision of local services to veterans, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the BRC Chief should not be in a position to deny the provision of prosthetics such as daily living aids and optical devices to blinded veterans who choose to not attend a BRC, or do not need to attend the BRC, when such devices have been properly prescribed by an eye care professional**, AND**

**WHEREAS,** the BRC Chief having supervisory control over the local VIST Coordinator and BROS may tend to stifle the development of local services to veterans in the community and may give the appearance of an apparent conflict of interest, **THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED,** that the Blinded Veterans Association in convention assembled in Albuquerque, New Mexico on this 18th day of August, 2007, will meet with the management of the VA and the Director of BRS to make them aware of the BVA’s concern regarding these issues and encourage changes that will align the VIST Coordinator and BROS under local management other than the BRC Chief to enable the VIST Coordinator and BROS to act in the best interest of the blinded veterans independent of undue influence.

**COMMENT: This Resolution will assist in alleviating the perception that needed services and issuance of prosthetics may be denied or delayed by a BRC Chief in an attempt to persuade a veteran to enter the BRC.**

**RESOLUTION 28-07**

**WHEREAS,** U.S. Military Operations in Afghanistan (OEF) and Iraq (OIF) have resulted in numerous casualties, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** DOD does not have a centralized system in place to track eye casualties, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** an unknown number of service members have been blinded in these operations, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the Department of Defense & the Department of Veterans Affairs are committed to assuring a Seemless Transition from the DOD to VA, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** service members blinded in OEF & OIF are not being identified to VA by DOD in a timely manner, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** these severely injured and blinded service members are not receiving the information and support from the VA designed to facilitate acceptance of and adjustment to loss of vision, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the blinded Veterans Association (BVA) the only Federally Chartered Veterans Service Organization (VSO) exclusively dedicated to assisting blinded veterans and their families, is not being effectively utilized by DOD & VA to facilitate the Seemless Transition, **THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED,** that the Blinded Veterans Association in convention assembled in Albuquerque, New Mexico on this 18th day of August, 2007, urge the DOD and VA to develop a more effective method of identifying severely visually impaired and blinded service members returning from OEF and OIF insuring these severely disabled service members receive the most appropriate information and support available, **AND**

**FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED,** The Blinded Veterans Association be notified and directly involved in the “Seemless Transition” process.

**RESOLUTION 29-07**

**WHEREAS,** the Congress of the United States adopted legislation providing a “Free Mailing Privilege” for the Blind and physically handicapped, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the U.S. Postal Service has rendered decisions prohibiting the Blinded Veterans Association’s use of the Free Matter For the Blind mailing privilege to mail National Convention pre-registration packages, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** this prohibition has resulted in unreasonable increased costs **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the BVA believes the Postal Service has to narrowly interpreted the intent of Congress regarding the use of the “Free Matter” mailing privilege, **THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED,** that the Blinded Veterans Association in convention assembled in Albuquerque, New Mexico on this 18th day of August, 2007, join with other organizations of and for the blind to petition Congress to clarify Congressional intent with respect to the Free Matter Mailing Privilege, **AND**

**FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED,** if necessary, seek an amendment to the U. S. Postal Service Regulations relaxing the Postal Services interpretation of the “Free Matter” privilege particularly with respect to “Advertising”.

**RESOLUTION 30-07**

**WHEREAS,** the Blinded Veterans Association supports expansion of Medicare to include Vision Rehabilitation Services as covered services under Medicare, **AND**

**WHEREAS**, BVA strongly supports Vision Rehabilitation Specialists (Orientation & Mobility O&M Specialists, Rehabilitation Teachers RT’s and Low Vision Therapist LVT, being authorized for reimbursement under Medicare, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** legislation has been approved to establish a pilot Project to test the feasibility of including Vision Rehabilitation Services and Specialists as covered services and professionals under Medicare, **AND**

**WHEREAS, t**he Legislation requires that Vision Rehabilitation Specialists would have to be Certified by the Academy for Certification of Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (ACVREP), **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the Department of Veteran’s Affairs (VA) does not currently require Certification of its Blind Rehabilitation Specialists, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** Legislation adopted in the 108th Congress approved Blind Rehabilitation Specialists to be employed under Hybrid Title 38, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the new designation as Hybrid Title 38 will enable VA BRS to develop new hiring qualifications standards for Blind Rehabilitation Specialists, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** VA employees a large number of Vision Rehabilitation Specialists, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** BVA strongly supports employing the most highly qualified professionals to provide comprehensive vision Rehab services to America’s visually impaired and blinded veterans, **THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED,** that the Blinded Veterans Association in convention assembled in Albuquerque, New Mexico on this 18th day of August, 2007, urge VA to require Certification through the Academy (ADVREP) as a condition of employment, **AND**

**FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED,** that the VA provides a suitable time period for new uncertified employees to obtain Certification.

**RESOLUTION 31-07**

**WHEREAS,** fundamental to the comprehensive rehabilitation of veterans who are severely visually impaired or blind is the development of wholesome and healthy attitudes about blindness, the acquisition of adaptive skills to overcome the handicap of blindness and reintegration into the family and community, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the Department of Veterans Affairs ((VA) pioneered the comprehensive residential Blind Rehabilitation Center (BRC) approach to the delivery of such comprehensive services to facilitate adjustment to and acceptance of sudden and traumatic loss of vision, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the VA BRC model has evolved to include the comprehensive rehabilitation of veterans whose visual impairment and blindness may be associated with aging, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the VA is internationally recognized as the premier provider of comprehensive blind rehabilitation services, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** non VA blind rehabilitation programs have recently begun to seek referral of visually impaired and blinded veterans away from VA Blind Rehabilitation Services (BRS) in an effort to obtain VA contract funding, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** America’s visually impaired and blinded veterans have earned the right to have access to the highest quality blind rehabilitation services available, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** only in rare instances would referral to a non VA BRC be appropriate, **THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED,** that the Blinded Veterans Association, in convention assembled in Albuquerque, New Mexico on this 18th day of August, 2007, that visually impaired and blinded veterans only be referred to VA BRc’s for comprehensive residential blind rehabilitation services, **AND**

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** that should it ever be necessary to refer a visually impaired or blinded veteran to a non VA BRC, that Non VA BRC should be accredited by either (NAC) the National Accreditation Council for Agencies Serving the Blind and Visually Handicapped or CARF, the Commission For Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities, and that employ Blind Rehabilitation Specialists Certified by the Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (ACVREP).

**RESOLUTION 32-07**

**WHEREAS,** VA is currently experiencing difficulty in recruiting and retaining blind rehabilitation specialists, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** there is a national shortage of qualified blind rehabilitation specialists, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** VA has developed effective recruitment and retention programs for other scarce disciplines, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** VA has designated blind rehabilitation specialists as “HARD TO RECRUIT”, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** BRS succession planning has been established as a high priority in their Strategic Plan, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** two effective tools to enhance Workforce recruitment and Succession Planning have been established by VA: The Employee Incentive Scholarship (EIS) Program, and the Education Debt Reduction (EDR) Program, **THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED,** that the Blinded Veterans Association in convention assembled in Albuquerque, New Mexico on this 18th day of August, 2007,that VA encourage Networks and local facilities to provide funding for the BRS programs essential to BRS Workforce Recruitment and Succession Planning, **BE IT FURTHER**

**RESOLVED,** that the Blinded Veterans Association strongly urge VA to approve BRS prospective and current employees for the EIS program as well as the EDR program, **AND**

**FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED,** that VA encourages Networks and Local facilities to provide funding for the EIS and EDR Programs critical for BRS Workforce Recruitment and Succession Planning.

**RESOLUTION 33-07**

**WHEREAS**, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has committed to a continuum of vision rehabilitation services, **AND**

**WHEREAS**, these services will include programs such as VICTORS, VISOR, VA and community based low vision clinics and computer access training programs, **AND**,

**WHEREAS,** the Blinded Veterans Association (BVA) feels there is need for standardization and quality assurance in services provided, **AND**

**WHEREAS**, accreditation of programs will assist the VA and veterans in identifying qualified programs, **AND**

**WHEREAS**, the National Accreditation Council for Agencies Serving People with Blindness or Visual Impairment (NAC) is an internationally recognized accreditation body solely dedicated to service standards for vision rehabilitation, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** consumer involvement and input is a core value of the National Accreditation Council (NAC) and is addressed throughout the NAC Standards as well as the self-assessment process used by organizations seeking accreditation, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the BVA feels strongly in the involvement of consumers in any accreditation process, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the NAC has a long history of providing accreditation to agencies, schools and programs serving the blind and visually impaired, **THEREFORE** **BE IT**

**RESOLVED,** that the Blinded Veterans Association, in convention assembled in Albuquerque, New Mexico on this 18th day of August, 2007, strongly recommends to the VA that low vision clinics and computer training programs be required to undergo accreditation, **AND**

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** that VA recognize and include NAC as a provider of accreditation for any organization and service serving blind and low vision veterans in order to ensure standardization, quality of services and consumer confidence.

**RESOLUTION 34-07**

**A Resolution in support of the Expansion or Construction of another National Cemetery in Puerto Rico.**

**WHEREAS,** Puerto Rican veterans have served with honor and distinction in the Armed Forces of the United States in all wars and conflicts since 1917 to this day. When they die, they should be buried with all the honors they deserve, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the National Cemetery is filled to capacity. According to its Director, it has one year left. After that there will be no space left to bury veterans, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** our State cemeteries are not suitable. The veterans deserve a better place to rest after sacrificing their lives to defend our Democracy, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** there are 200,000 veterans in Puerto Rico and every year 5,000 veterans including spouses and children are buried in this cemetery, **THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED,** by all veterans, members of the Puerto Rico Regional Group assembled in San Juan, Puerto Rico, August 11, 2006 to request the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the Congress, and the President of the United States to support the expansion or the construction of another National Cemetery in Puerto Rico, **AND**

**FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED,** that the Blinded Veterans Association in convention assembled in Albuquerque, New Mexico on this 18th day of August, 2007, supports our fellow veterans in Puerto Rico in their request for an expansion or construction of another National Cemetery.

**(First 34 resolutions considered as a block)**

**RESOLUTION 35-07**

**WHEREAS,** seventeen years ago Congress passed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) by an overwhelming bipartisan margin, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the Supreme Court, during the intervening years has rendered decision that have significantly reduced the protections under ADA for people who are disabled, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** courts have been quick to side with businesses and employers in cases of alleged discrimination based on disability, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** people with disabilities that utilize adaptive equipment or medications to overcome their handicapping conditions are determined not to be disabled enough for protection under ADA, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** disabled people continue to be fired or not employed because of their disabilities and perception that cannot carry out the responsibilities of the job, **THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED**, that the Blinded Veterans Association in convention assembled in Albuquerque, New Mexico, on this 18th day of August, 2007, strongly support passage of the ADA Restoration Act 2007, which seeks to enforce Congressional intent when the ADA was originally passed in 1990.

**RESOLUTION 36-07**

**WHERE AS**, it has been clearly documented there is a shortage of professionally trained Blind Rehabilitation Specialists to provide services to an ever increasing number of visually impaired and blind Americans, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the number of visually impaired and blinded veterans is increasing at a dramatic rate due to increased prevalence of visual impairment and blindness associated with aging, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** there are an increasing number of visually impaired and blinded service members from Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) who will be in need of vision rehabilitation services, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** additionally, there is an ever growing number of OEF & OIF service members suffering visual consequences from Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) that will benefit from vision rehabilitation services, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the U. S. House of Representatives has passed HR. 1240, the Visual Impairment Specialists Training Act of 2007 authorizing the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish Scholarships for students to pursue graduate degrees in Blind Rehabilitation, either Orientation & Mobility (O&M) specialists or Vision Rehabilitation Therapists, **AND**

**WHEREAS**, the recipients of such scholarships will be required to work within the VA Health Care system for a period of three years following receiving their Masters Degrees, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** a companion bill S.1672 has been introduced in the U. S. Senate,

**THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED,** that the Blinded Veterans Association in convention assembled in Albuquerque, New Mexico, on this 18th day of August 2007, strongly urge the Senate of the United States to adopt S. 1672 as expeditiously as possible.

**RESOLUTION 37-07**

**WHEREAS,** The Department of Defense (DOD) and the Department of Veteran’s Affairs (VA) have reported relatively few visually impaired and blinded service members from Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), **AND**

**WHEREAS,** BVA has received numerous anecdotal reports of hundreds of eye casualties returning from OEF and OIF, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** DOD has no centralized tracking for eye casualties in the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT), **AND**

**WHEREAS**, many service members suffering serious traumatic eye injuries will not be seamlessly transitioned to the VA for vision rehabilitation services, **THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED,** that the Blinded Veterans Association in convention assembled in Albuquerque, New Mexico on this 18th day of August, 2007, urge the Congress of the United States to require DOD to establish a centralized tracking system for all branches of the military for eye casualties from OEF & OIF, **AND**

**FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED**, that the DOD establish a Center of Eye Care Excellence for the expressed purpose of developing innovative and effective procedures for treatment of serious eye casualties, research into prevention, treatment and rehabilitation of service members with serious traumatic eye injuries as soon as possible.

**RESOLUTION 38-07**

**Resolution on Employment:**

**WHEREAS,** the continuing Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) is resulting in a new generation of veterans with severe vision impairments**, AND**

**WHEREAS,** there is concern that many of these individuals will face problems obtaining gainful employment, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** veterans and their families are seeking return to gainful employment and meaningful re-integration in society, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the BVA feels a concerted effort must be made by both the Government and the private sector to assist these individuals due to the special nature of the disabilities, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the BVA is dedicated to the principle of “blinded veterans helping blinded veterans”, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the BVA strongly feels that return to meaningful employment enhances mental health and overall quality of life, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** these fallen warriors have sacrificed their vision protecting this country against terrorism, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** history has shown, that veterans with loss of vision will require assistance in returning to substantial gainful employment, **THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED,** that the Blinded Veterans Association in convention assembled in Albuquerque, New Mexico on this 18th day of August, 2007, include in the legislative package an effort to secure training and employment of GWOT blinded veterans, **BE IT FURTHER**

**RESOLVED,** that the BVA will partner with industry and the Government to develop and implement special innovations and incentives to facilitate work opportunities for visually impaired heroes of the GWOT, and, these shall include but not be limited to concentrated vocational counseling, scholarships, internships, on the job training opportunities, **AND**

**FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED,** that BVA request the VA assess the status of employment of veterans with severe vision loss in the Agency to determine if there is under representation of visually impaired individuals and it there are missed opportunities for employing visually impaired veterans of the GWOT in all VHA and VBA positions for which the qualify, **AND**

**FINALLY BE IT RESOLVED,** that the BVA strongly urges and recommends that the Randolph-Sheppard Act be preserved and expanded to the greatest extent possible in order to afford maximum employment opportunity for Blinded Veterans.

**RESOLUTION 39-07**

**Issuance of Hearing Aids Resolution:**

**WHEREAS,** there are currently no written guidelines from VA Audiology regarding the provision of backup hearing aids to blinded veterans, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** there is inconsistency across the VA in the provision of backup hearing aids, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the BVA feels there should be written guidelines to the Audiologist in the VA, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** standardized guidelines by Audiology Service in VACO to the field staff is seen, as needed, **THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED,** that the Blinded Veterans Association in convention assembled in Albuquerque, New Mexico on this 18th day of August, 2007, request that VA management provide clear written guidelines to the VA audiologist specifically and clearly clarifying the issuance of backup hearing aids to blinded veterans.

**RESOLUTION 40-07**

**Tablet Splitter Resolution:**

**WHEREAS,** the VA provides medication tablets that often require splitting by the end user to produce the correct dose, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** there are currently no national written guidelines for providers and pharmacist to use when a veteran cannot split tablets due to physical, mental or vision related reasons**, AND**

**WHEREAS,** this causes lack of standardization across the VA and inconsistent decisions regarding this issue, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** BVA feels a consistent policy is required to insure proper identification of veterans who cannot split tablets, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** a system needs to be in place to identify such individuals in the pharmacy, **THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED,** that the Blinded Veterans Association in convention assembled in Albuquerque, New Mexico on this 18th day of August, 2007, resolves that the national BVA ensure this problem is made known to top management in the VA and request written guidelines be provided to all VA facility providers regarding the issue.

**RESOLUTION 41-07**

**Continuum of Vision Rehabilitation Care Resolution:**

**WHEREAS,** the VA has entered into providing a continuum of care for all visually impaired veterans, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the BVA supports this expanded services model, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the BVA feels that existing Visual Impairment Service Coordinators should focus on providing services to blinded veterans**, AND**

**WHEREAS,** BVA feels requiring VIST coordinators to also case manage non legally blind veterans will negatively impact the ability to provide adequate time to blinded veterans, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** there is a lack of capacity in the BRS program model for VIST Coordinators that would allow time to assume these expanded responsibilities, **THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED,** that the Blinded Veterans Association in convention assembled in Albuquerque, New Mexico on this 18th day of August, 2007, request that National BVA work with VA top management to explore a partnership between VA Blind Rehabilitation Service (BRS) and VA Social Work Service to develop a comprehensive model where the two Departments of the VA would work together to ensure a comprehensive continuum of vision rehabilitation services across the VA where Social Work Service would be responsible for case management of visually impaired veterans who are not legally blind and VA Blind Rehabilitation Service (BRS) would focus on services to the legally blind.

**RESOLUTION 42-07**

**Cell Phone Accessibility Resolution:**

**WHEREAS,** Section 255 of the Communications Act requires telecommunications service providers and manufacturers to ensure their products and services are accessible to people with disabilities, **AND**

**WHEREAS**, generally, there are very few phones with meaningful access features, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) handles Section 255 complaints, and it has not been very responsive when complaints have been filed, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the BVA expect an accessible phone that provides features like comprehensive audio output of information on the screen, displays that can be adjusted to make them more readable with limited vision and keys and controls that are identifiable by touch, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** in addition BVA feels manuals should be in accessible format (with descriptions of images and graphics), **THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED,**  that the Blinded Veterans Association in convention assembled in Albuquerque, New Mexico on this 18th day of August, 2007, include this issue in the legislative package and work with the appropriate committees in Congress to bring about corrective action by the FCC.

**RESOLUTION 43-07**

**Transportation Resolution:**

**WHEREAS,** the VHA is currently authorized to provide transportation to VA appointments for Veterans confined to wheelchair and those who require transportation by ambulance, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** blind veterans have significant problems with obtaining transportation to VA appointments, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the disability of blindness causes barriers in mobility similar to those in a wheelchair, **THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED,** that the Blinded Veterans Association in convention assembled in Albuquerque, New Mexico on this 18th day of August, 2007, request that the membership directs the National BVA to advocate in Congress that blindness be included as a justification for VA to authorize transportation to VA appointments when appropriate.

**RESOLUTION 44-07**

**Coalition of Organizations for Accessible Technology Resolution:**

**WHEREAS**, the recently established Coalition of Organizations for Accessible Technology (COAT) is a consortium of over 100 national, regional and community-based organizations committed to promoting dramatically expanded access for people with disabilities to state-of-the-art telecommunications and video programming technologies and services, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the principal objective of COAT is to affect positive policy change to ensure that people with disabilities, especially those with sensory disabilities such as vision and hearing loss, can be full beneficiaries of the telecommunications and video programming revolution, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the Coalition of Organizations for Accessible Technology COAT (AFB, ACB, and other blind organizations and associations) is going to be working on several key objectives with both congress and various federal regulatory agencies that control these technologies, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the BVA strongly supports the objectives of COAT that include:

1.   Accessible User Interfaces- All devices with the capacity to receive or display television or other video programming must be designed to allow nonvisual and other alternative control of all device features

2. Video Description-The mandate on broadcasters and others to provide at least a minimal amount of description accompanying their television programming, a mandate overturned by a wrongly-decided federal court of appeals ruling, must be restored, and the Federal Communications Commission must also promulgate regulations to guarantee appropriate descriptive access to emergency information

3. Equipment Availability- The existing Universal Service Fund should be tapped to provide equipment meeting the unique and profoundly undermet needs of people with deaf-blindness.

4. Internet-Based Telecommunications- Every effort must be made to ensure that the current requirements of law mandating access to traditional telecommunications equipment and services (such as cell phones and standard office telephone systems) are strengthened and fully extended to newer telecommunications technologies that use the Internet, such as voice over Internet protocol (VOIP), **THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED,** that the Blinded Veterans Association in convention assembled in Albuquerque, New Mexico on this 18th day of August, 2007, partner with the Coalition of Organizations for Accessible Technology to support the achievements of the above objectives by adding this project to the BVA legislative package.

**RESOLUTION 45-07**

**Auto Grant Resolution:**

**WHEREAS,** the VA provides a one time auto grant to eligible veterans, **AND**

**WHEREAS**, such vehicles become unserviceable after years of use, **THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED,** that the Blinded Veterans Association in convention assembled in Albuquerque, New Mexico on this 18th day of August, 2007, request that VA change the auto grant authorization from once in a lifetime to every 10 years, **AND**

**FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED**, that the BVA add this to the legislative package and advocate for such in the Congress and the VA.

**RESOLUTION 46-07**

**Auto Grant & Adaptive Housing Resolution:**

**WHEREAS,** the veterans benefits Administration (VBA) provides certificates of eligibility for auto grant and special adaptive housing, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** eligibility for such benefits is established at the time of rating, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** VBA now requires an eligible veteran to submit an additional application for the auto grant and special adaptive housing grants even though eligibility has been established at the time of rating, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** this causes unnecessary re applications and delays in receiving auto grants and special adaptive housing grants**, AND**

**WHEREAS,** OIF/OEF veterans do not need additional aggravation and unnecessary delays in obtaining benefits, **THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED,** that the Blinded Veterans Association in convention assembled in Albuquerque, New Mexico on this 18th day of August, 2007, make as part of the agenda to have the VA Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) automatically provide certificates of eligibility for auto grant and special adaptive housing at the time of the rating decision, **AND**

**FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED,** that such certificates of eligibility be mailed to the veteran at the same time as the notification of rating

**RESOLUTION 47-07**

**Provision of Eye Exams and eyeglasses to NSC Veterans Resolution:**

**WHEREAS,** when a NSC Veteran is determined by the Primary Care Provider to require an eye exam to determine the probability that the issuance of eyeglasses will permit the said veteran to participate in their medical care without risk, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the VHA currently has established guidelines provided by Prosthetics Service regarding the provision of eyeglasses, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the guidelines are not consistently interpreted due to lack of clarity regarding the issuance of eyeglasses to NSC Veterans, resulting in confusion and a lack of conformity in policy, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the NSC Veteran that is duly enrolled and vested is put in unnecessary risk by the inability to participate due in their medical care, by being unable to read their medication labels or insulin syringe measure indicators, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the BVA strongly feels that any NSC Veteran that has been determined by their Primary Care Provider to require an eye exam and/or the issuance of eyeglasses should be authorized an eye exam and should be issued the appropriate eyeglasses to enable participation in their own medical care, **THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED**, that the Blinded Veterans Association in convention assembled in Albuquerque, New Mexico on this 18th day of August, 2007, request that VHA provide written clarification to VA Field Staff including Eye Care Professionals and Primary Care Providers of whether any NSC Veteran is authorized an eye exam and the provision of eyeglasses if such is required to participate in their medical care and treatment, **AND**

**FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED,** to request written clarification as to whether a local facility can deny a NSC Veteran an eye exam and the provision of eyeglasses as appropriate when the Primary Care Provider has determined that such exam is required to insure the safe participation in the veterans own medical care.

**RESOLUTION 48-07**

**Provision of Hearing Exams and Hearing Aids to NSC Veterans:**

**WHEREAS,** the VHA currently has established guidelines regarding who is authorized hearing exams and aids, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the guidelines are not consistently interpreted due to lack of clarity regarding the issuance of such items to NSC Veterans, resulting in confusion and a lack of conformity in policy, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** when a NSC Veteran is determined by the Primary Care Provider to require a hearing exam to determine the probability that the issuance of hearing aids, will permit the said veteran to participate in their medical care without risk, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the NSC Veteran that is duly enrolled and vested is put in unnecessary risk by the inability to participate due in their medical care, by being unable to communicate and understand their medical providers**, AND**

**WHEREAS,** some VA facilities Audio logy Departments have included language instructing Primary Care Providers that no NSC Veteran is authorized a hearing exam, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the BVA strongly feels that any NSC Veteran that has been determined by their Primary Care Provider to require a hearing exam and/or the issuance of hearing aids should be authorized a hearing exam and should be issued the appropriate hearing aids to enable participation in their own medical care, **THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED,** that the Blinded Veterans Association in convention assembled in Albuquerque, New Mexico on this 18th day of August, 2007, request that VHA provide written clarification to VA Field Staff including Audiologists and Primary Care Providers of whether any NSC Veteran is authorized a hearing exam and the provision of hearing aids if such is required to participate in their medical care and treatment, **AND**

**FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED,** to request written clarification as to whether a local facility can deny a NSC Veteran a hearing exam and the provision of hearing aids as appropriate when the Primary Care Provider has determined that such exam is required to insure the safe participation in the veteran’s medical care by enabling the veteran to communicate and understand the Primary Care Provider.

**RESOLUTION 49-07**

**WHEREAS,** a study conducted by a Medical Professional and a data researcher has evidenced that a large population of visually impaired Native Americans residing on a variety of reservations do not have access to VA medical care, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the members of this identified group are veterans entitled to be enrolled and vested in a VAMC medical care program, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** these visually impaired veterans have not been afforded the opportunity to receive medical care in a VA facility; attend a VA facility for rehabilitation training, or receive equipment or prosthetics to which they are eligible and qualified for, **THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED,** that the Blinded Veterans Association in convention assembled in Albuquerque, New Mexico on this 18th day of August, 2007, recommend and strongly urge Congress to enact legislation that will result in the identification, location and education of the Native American Veteran population that is eligible to medical care and benefits from the VA, **AND**

**FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED,** that the Congress be strongly urged to establish oversight to insure that all visually impaired Native American Veterans do receive the VA Medical Care and all other benefits to which they are so richly eligible.

**RESOLUTION 50-07**

For far too many years, we the Blinded Veterans Association of the Pan Handle of Florida have not received the same services and benefits that our counterparts throughout the rest of the state.

For many years, prior to 1996, there was at least a part time Visual Impairment Service TEAM (VIST) Coordinator, at the VA Outpatient Clinic in Pensacola. In 1995, the Blinded Veterans Association obtained, through Congress, funding for 22 new full time VIST Coordinator positions. Subsequently, John Olson was appointed full time VIST Coordinator at the Biloxi VAMC. Shortly thereafter, the individual holding that part time VIST Coordinator position in Pensacola was transferred to other duties, even though he had been serving the specialized needs of the Blinded Veteran, from Panama City to Pensacola.

**WHEREAS,** currently a VIST Coordinator arrives at the Outpatient Clinic in Pensacola from Biloxi Mississippi only one day a month, in his attempt to serve the needs of the Blinded Veterans of the Pan Handle of Florida. This is totally inadequate to coordinate the VIS Team Program or the services Blinded Veterans need and deserve**, AND**

**WHEREAS,** the VIST Coordinator is stationed in Biloxi, and is responsible for serving the blinded veterans of Southern Mississippi, parts of Alabama, and all of the Pan Handle of Florida, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** of approximately 320 blinded veterans that the VIST Coordinator has in that catchment area, more than one third of them are located the Pan Handle of Florida, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the VIST Coordinator arrives in Pensacola only once a month to serve the Blinded Veterans, even though these veterans constitute more than one third of the Blinded Veterans in his area, **AND**

**WHEREAS**, according to several reports, the Pan Handle has the largest concentration of veterans in the country, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** it has been demonstrated throughout the rest of Florida, that where full time VIST Coordinators are in place, there is almost immediate improvement in the services provided. Further, through the VIST Coordinators outreach, a significant increase occurs in the number of Blinded Veterans eligible for VIST services, **THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED,** that the Blinded Veterans Association, in convention assembled in Albuquerque, New Mexico on the 18th day of August, 2007, do hereby request that the Department of Veterans Affairs take the necessary steps to establish a full time VIST Coordinator at the new Outpatient Clinic, to be opened in April of 2008, **AND**

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** that the Department of Veterans Affairs, attempt to provide more adequate VIST services to the blinded veterans of the Pan Handle of Florida during the interim, while the new clinic is still under construction.

**RESOLUTION 51-07**

**WHEREAS,** fundamental to the comprehensive rehabilitation of veterans who are severely visually impaired or blind, is the development of wholesome and healthy attitudes about blindness, the acquisition of adaptive skills to overcome the handicap of blindness and reintegration into the family and community, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Visual Impairment Services Team (VIST) coordinator is at the hub of identifying, offering and coordinating these services to America’s severely visually impaired and blinded veterans, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the VAMC in Asheville, North Carolina has currently identified over 200 severely visually impaired and blinded veterans that are in need of services from the VIST Coordinator, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the VAMC in Asheville, North Carolina has only a part-time VIST Coordinator under the Chief of Social Services that can offer approximately 20 hours per week to the severely visually impaired and blinded veterans, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** It is estimated that the Asheville VIST role will increase to 450 (based on estimated and rate of identification) within the next 5 years, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** America’s visually impaired and blinded veterans have earned the right to have access to the highest quality of blind rehabilitation services available, **THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED,** that the Blinded Veterans Association, in convention assembled in **Albuquerque** New Mexico on this 18th day of August, 2007, request that the VA Medical Center (VAMC) in Asheville North Carolina provide a full-time Visual Impairment Services Team (VIST) Coordinator position to be filled with the best qualified applicant, **AND**

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** that the full-time Visual Impairment Services Team (VIST) Coordinator position is structurally located so as to provide the freedom to coordinate with all of the Asheville VAMC Departments and Department Chiefs in order to provide the best service possible to the severely visually impaired and blinded veterans.

**RESOLUTION 52-07**

**WHEREAS,** the Blinded Veterans Association has over ten thousand members, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** there are an estimated 167,000 blind and visually impaired veterans in the United States who are not affiliated with BVA, **AND**

**WHEREAS,** the number of blind and visually impaired veterans are increasing due to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as with the aging veteran population**, AND**

**WHEREAS,** these veterans who are blind or visually impaired utilize the services of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), **AND**

**WHEREAS,** these veterans receive correspondence including, but not limited to information about their benefits, appointment reminders, surgical preparation and treatment instructions only in standard print, **THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED,** that the Blinded Veterans Association in convention assembled in Albuquerque, New Mexico on this 18th day of August, 2007, collaborate with other organizations serving blind and visually impaired veterans and communicate with the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Honorable R. James Nicholson and insist that he direct VA agencies, hospitals and facilities to provide all information and correspondence in accessible formats including but not limited to, large print, braille, cassette tape, computer disk or via e-mail to veterans who are blind or visually impaired,