

Some of these have already been considered by the President in his message on veterans. Others, I feel certain, are being considered by the Veterans' Advisory Commission.

One program which was not mentioned by the President is compensation for the service-connected disabled, and the dependents of service-connected deceased. Although increases have been granted, the compensation program has not kept pace with the ever-mounting costs of living in the American economy during the past decade. The VFW continues its support for the proposition that this program deserves the highest priority of favorable consideration. We believe that such compensation payments should be well above Government standards for other assistance programs. We believe also that payments for disability should reflect an extra measure of compensation for combat or extra-hazardous service.

We do, however, especially commend your Subcommittee on Compensation and Pensions for the many improvements and the cost-of-living pension increase which it recommended, and which was approved by your full committee, and adopted last year.

Mr. TEAGUE of Texas. Mr. Commander, I might tell you that H.R. 12555 passed the Senate without amendment yesterday.

Mr. SCERRA. Thank you. I was just going to comment on that bill. [Applause.]

Again, in keeping with your commitment to prevent disproportionate losses in pension payments because of social security and other income increases, your Pension Subcommittee has recommended a bill, H.R. 12555, to which you just referred, which will restructure the pension program. This bill should provide a solution to the recurring problems created for the veteran by a few dollars increase in retirement pay. We believe this bill represents a giant stride in the right direction.

The VFW has been the leader for many years in the campaign to effect the continuation and expansion of our national cemetery system. We vigorously opposed the policy which closed five national cemeteries and produced the illegal restrictive regulation which now bars the burial of most veterans at Arlington.

We were happy to note that the President took the initial step essential to the reversal of this policy in his message to Congress on January 30, when he said:

Every veteran who wants it—those who risked their lives at Belleau Wood, Iwo Jima, and the DMZ—should have the right to burial in a National Cemetery situated reasonably close to his home. I have asked the Administrator of Veterans Affairs to make certain that the recommendation of the Commission include proposals to assure this right . . . [Applause.]

The VFW is gratefully aware, Mr. Chairman, of the important contribution you have made in this area by your willingness to assume jurisdiction of legislation dealing with national cemeteries. It was your leadership which sparked the reversal of the closure policy, when you went before the Rules Committee last year and convinced them that such legislation is primarily a veterans matter within the province of your own committee. We now look forward with abiding faith that our own mandate of a national cemetery in every State will one day be achieved. [Applause.]

Veterans preference has always been a matter of paramount concern to the Veterans of Foreign Wars. It is one of the most precious rights