

ported legislation which this committee reported and the 89th Congress passed, which told the President we wanted 125,000 beds.

Well, some of the members of this committee dig a little bit and we are not taken in by all of the nice messages that we get from the White House; we follow the words of old Al Smith, we look at the record. And lo and behold, I looked at the record and I have discovered that the Veterans' Administration has closed a good many beds and we don't have 125,000 beds. We've only got about 113,000 beds with 26 million veterans in this country.

Now, this is something that I have called to the attention of your national officers and Smoky Stover has worked very closely with me in trying to get an answer out of the Veterans' Administration as to why they are not operating 125,000 beds.

We have to operate 125,000 beds, because every day we are having more and more men coming back from Vietnam that are hospital cases. They are now in Bethesda, Walter Reed, and some of the other military hospitals. But they are going to be in veterans hospitals and we need a minimum of 125,000 beds and I sure hope that our organization will go forward and insist that the Veterans' Administration operate 125,000 beds 365 days of the year. [Applause.]

You know, Commander, a veteran is the only person I know of that can't get to court with his case. He must live with the fact that the Veterans' Administration is the prosecutor, the defender, and the judge. They decide whether or not you get anything and how much you get. I am one of those that believe that even though we have done a good job and even though we have improved the Board of Veterans' Appeals, we should have a Court of Veterans' Appeals, and I plead with you as the national commander and the members who are here with you to see that the next national convention insists that the Federal Government establish a Court of Veterans' Appeals so that veterans can get into court and not have to be dependent entirely upon the Veterans' Administration.

There are men who are being denied their rights merely because the Veterans' Administration is the sole judge and jury. It is sort of a pet project of mine and I want to see it established. I can tell you this, some of the past national commanders sent me a note up here and said:

Are you going to needle the present Commander the same way you did us?

I say to them:

I don't needle you, I just remind you there are a few things beyond your program that still ought to be done, because we are all interested in taking care of the veteran, his widow, his children.

Commander, I commend you on your statement. I wish you well and I think for the record you ought to have explained that hour before the dinner. You have 50-some young children here, and I don't think they knew what you were talking about. They don't know or understand your whole message.

Maybe you ought to tell them what we do out there before dinner. [Laughter and applause.]

MR. TEAGUE OF TEXAS. Congressman Charles Teague of California.

MR. TEAGUE OF CALIFORNIA. My cousin Olin usually says we get mixed up and people get us mixed up. That is true. The other morning I arrived at my office and the FBI was calling. [Laughter.]