

the one on science and aeronautics, and this is where he is this morning.

Also, I might say, I wish I personally could be with you Saturday night, but it looks doubtful right now with this committee in its annual program in which you honor great Americans, and I wish I could be with you for Mr. McCormack's presentation; and, of course, if the President gets back, we don't know.

But we are glad to have you and appreciate this splendid statement and are grateful for your fine staff here who are always extremely cooperative.

Again, your program presented here today is a rational one. It is middle of the road and we appreciate it. It is reasonable.

Mr. Pucinski—and may I say this about my good friend here: I do not know of anyone in Congress who has been working harder on the floor and elsewhere to promote peace in this world, but peace through strength and honor. So I am glad to present to you Mr. Pucinski.

Mr. PUCINSKI. That is very kind of you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Commander, I would like to join the chairman in his commendation. I think you spelled out the needs, but more important, I think you have brought up to date the modern needs of the veteran. I think this is important. I think this is the important thing about organizations like yours.

You are down in the field. You see the day-to-day problems that veterans are confronted with. I think it is important for this committee to get this report from you. I certainly would like to associate myself with the deep concern that you show for the veterans.

One question I would like to ask you, and perhaps I am getting into some real controversial territory here, but I have always had a great interest in the VA hospital program, and during the last recess I visited the VA hospitals in Illinois. I took a trip around the State because I wanted to see what was going on in the hospitals and how these people were getting along. I was interested to learn that veterans who exercise their right and are otherwise qualified for care in veterans hospitals who subscribe to either Blue Cross or some other private insurance program do not have their services paid for in the VA hospitals.

I have often wondered, and perhaps somebody can give me an answer, why the Federal Government has to provide this service and not be reimbursed for it. It would seem to me that when a veteran who belongs to a hospital care insurance plan chooses to get his hospital care in a VA hospital because he feels more secure in that hospital he should have that privilege if he wants it, but it also seems to me that since the man has paid into a health insurance plan, that the health insurance company ought to pay the Government just the way they pay any private hospital.

I was wondering if there is any reason why we don't do that.

Mr. CASERTA. Mr. Hall is a member of the U.S. Veterans Advisory Commission and has traveled all over the country, and I am sure this argument has come up many a time.

Mr. HALL. Mr. Pucinski, in answer to your question, it is my understanding that this point was very thoroughly discussed; in fact at one point a few years back there was extensive legislation and quite a lengthy fight to try to get Blue Cross payments into the services