

in the VA hospital, and at that time, as I understand it from the testimony we have heard around the country, there was question as to what specifically would happen with funds of that nature—whether they would go back into the general fund of the U.S. Government or specifically what would be the ultimate disposition of these funds.

I don't think it is a question that has not been looked into. I think that it is a case, or it has been a case where, in the past, it just has not been possible to present legislation that could be passed that would satisfy all of the ramifications of that particular program.

Your question is: Why should the VA hospital be treated any differently than Chicago Central Hospital or other hospitals?

Mr. PUCINSKI. My question goes deeper. I am sure we can all agree here, no member of this committee that I know of would ever want to shortchange any veteran whether he is disabled or otherwise. In other words, this committee, I think, under the excellent leadership of Congressman Teague and members of this committee, has been tremendously responsive to the needs of our veterans.

This is as it should be. After all, the country certainly owes a debt of gratitude to the men that risk their lives for our freedom.

As you can see, the cost of these programs is constantly going up. We realize that, too. We are going to have a whole new generation of young fellows from Vietnam and we have a generation already of fellows from Korea, and this country is committed to defend freedom wherever it is necessary, and I don't think we ever, ever want to get ourselves into the posture where we cannot meet our commitments to our veterans.

But having said this, it would then appear to me that the program that you laid out here is an excellent program and one that I can support and would want to support but, you know, there is an end to the line somewhere. We don't have that magic horn of plenty, and so it would seem to me that we and you veterans' organizations ought to address ourselves to the problem of where is the money going to come from? You can help us. You can be a big help to us. I think you ought to reexamine that policy.

Now, if a veteran pays into a Blue Cross program and his employer pays into a Blue Cross program, I cannot understand why that veterans hospital should be treated any differently from any other hospital. It is different if the veteran didn't have Blue Cross. We have no question there. But it just seems to me totally incongruous and illogical that here is a man who is paying into a health protection program and he may be paying it for many years, I don't know, but then he needs medical care and he wants to go to a VA hospital because he feels more secure there, he feels he will get better care there.

That is his privilege, if otherwise qualified, and it seems to me you people could help us raise some of the money that we need for some of these new programs that are being brought in by establishing a greater degree of equity in the distribution of funds, and I would like you to look into this.

Counsel here tells me we have looked into this before but, you know, we are living in a changing world. What might have been impractical 3 years ago may be necessary today. With this generation of Vietnam boys coming in, their needs coming in, we are going to have to look for new sources of money someplace to meet these needs, and I would like