

wheelchair homes, we recommend legislation which would make these seriously disabled eligible for the direct loan privilege of the Veterans' Administration which is now available to veterans in rural communities only.

(4) We urge consideration of a plan whereby financial assistance might be given those veterans who require specially adapted wheelchair housing, but are not eligible for the special Veterans' Administration grant, and do not have the financial means to alter an existing home or apartment to which they can move after hospitalization.

Mr. Chairman, those members of our organization who are married and have children are particularly concerned about the economical crisis which our wives and children become heir to upon our demise, which is, more often than not, very sudden. Any check that is received after the veteran's death must be returned.

Several months may pass before the proper paperwork is completed enabling the widow to receive dependency and indemnity compensation. We have a thought for some relief of the economical plight of these survivors. As we have said, veterans with our disabilities cannot get life insurance, and we cannot get mortgage insurance on our homes.

Would it prove too costly to establish some program whereby the Veterans' Administration, or some other branch or department of the Federal Government, could provide such mortgage insurance? It would indeed be a great service in time of extreme need. In many cases, it would actually save the home of these survivors.

CABINET RANK FOR VETERANS' ADMINISTRATION

We strongly support the establishment of cabinet rank for the Veterans' Administration. This department solely represents a large segment of the population and administers an annual budget greater than the majority of departments now of Cabinet rank.

It operates the largest single medical program in the country, if not the world, and is the third largest employer among our Federal agencies. We believe that the inclusion of the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs among the President's closest advisers, will add strength, integrity, and sagacity to that already esteemed group.

SUMMARY

The other legislative interests of our organization, Mr. Chairman, have been individually recorded with the appropriate subcommittees of your whole committee.

Mr. Chairman, we are gratified by the attention this committee affords the programs for the paralyzed veteran. We are humble but pleased and honored that the U.S. House of Representatives has recognized our organization's service to and responsibility for the spinal cord injured veteran by passing H.R. 11131, a bill to grant a Federal charter to the Paralyzed Veterans of America.

We pledge our continued efforts to better serve our members and to support our country in the cause of freedom wherever or whenever it may be challenged.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.