

I might point out that the cost of blindness, in addition to the human tragedy, runs to more than \$1 billion per year. The only answer is a vastly expanded program of research.

And the means to achieve this is the creation of a separate eye institute within the National Institutes of Health.

We now have nine distinct national institutes for cancer, heart, allergy and infectious diseases, arthritis and metabolic diseases, dental research, mental health, neurological diseases and blindness, child health and human development, and general medical sciences.

And, I think the evidence proves that blindness ranks in equal importance to all of these.

The present administrative structure at the National Institutes of Health for blindness research is not as efficient as it could be. Blindness is only one of many other diseases given any attention within the Institute of Neurological Diseases and Blindness.

In 1967, only 15 percent of the total budget for the Institute of Neurological Diseases and Blindness was allocated for eye research—or only \$18 million out of \$116 million.

I submit that if a separate eye institute were created, it would reduce the total administrative cost for National Institute of Neurological Diseases and Blindness by more than 10 percent.

At the present time you find that many ophthalmologists at NIH are working under neurologists. And while I have high praise for the work these neurologists are doing in the fields of cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, epilepsy, and for other muscle disorders, I would question whether they should be responsible for administration of eye research.

Eye disease is unique and is not necessarily as closely related to the central nervous system as those I have just mentioned. It requires a program of research apart from the other diseases of the nervous system. It requires a staff of professionals trained specifically in this field.

You will hear testimony later from some of the leading ophthalmologists who will be explaining this. It is not my purpose to get into it now.

I submit that the increased efficiency in administration among both clerical, professional, and paraprofessional personnel within the National Institute of Neurological Diseases and Blindness, will provide enough savings to finance a separate eye institute.

If this bill were passed tomorrow, it would not cost the American taxpayer any more money. It would merely require the transferring of funds within the National Institute for Neurological Diseases and Blindness to a separate structure.

In other words, taking the fiscal year 1968 for example, the \$20 million obligated for vision out of the total budget for NINDB would go for setting up the eye research institute.

In fact, through ophthalmological self-direction, which could be the result of a separate eye institute, it should be possible to secure greater private ophthalmic research productivity for every Federal dollar invested.

In most of our medical schools throughout the country, the departments of ophthalmology are unable to compete with larger departments and Government grants.