

Senator LONG. Don't some of the States have veterans' agents something like we have in Missouri?

Mr. GUY WILLIAMS. That is correct.

Senator LONG. Which actually is nearly a State ombudsman; isn't that right? Isn't that the type of work they do?

Mr. GUY WILLIAMS. That is correct. But we feel when we are talking to a man, and we have knowledge that he may be eligible for some benefit from a State agency, we will cue him in on this and help him to get to the person who can give him further assistance.

Senator LONG. But the State agency, though, assists the man, as I understand it, in preparing his claim for benefits or in getting him into a Veterans' Hospital.

Mr. GUY WILLIAMS. That is correct.

Senator LONG. Even though there is no State benefit available?

Mr. GUY WILLIAMS. Right. He determines what additional benefits the claimant may be eligible for beyond those specifically requested and assists in the preparation of the proper claim.

The contact representative also determines the actions necessary and files claims for veterans who are too ill to act in their own behalf, many of these claimants are patients in hospitals who have no one else immediately available to act for them.

Of the 2.5 million personal interviews conducted by contact representatives during fiscal year 1967, thousands were conducted with persons who were not satisfied with the outcome of their claims for benefits. Many of these were resolved to the complete satisfaction of the claimant by setting down and going through the VA file with him and explaining the requirements of the law and regulation and, where indicated, assisting him in obtaining the evidence that might result in favorable action.

Unique and effective services are also provided claimants for VA benefits by the national service organizations, the American Red Cross and recognized State service organizations, which the chairman mentioned. Accredited representatives of these organizations number nearly 3,200.

Any claimant may file a power of attorney with one of these organizations and be assured that a skilled technician representing that organization in the VA regional offices and insurance centers will assist him fully in the presentation of his claim, and will review each action taken often as the claim is in process, to assure that the claim is fully developed and fairly and properly disposed of. If the claimant or the organization representative expresses disagreement with the decision and finally appeals it, a representative of the service organization appears in the claimant's behalf before the Board of Veterans' Appeals.

Field representatives of these service organizations visit all VA offices and VA hospitals regularly and submit written reports of their findings to their national headquarters which in turn submits them to our central office for any indicated investigation and reply.

This completes my formal presentation and I will be pleased to answer any questions of the subcommittee on the proposal.