

As there has not been an increase in the old pension rates since the enactment of Public Law 82-211 in 1959, we strongly believe that, in view of the high increase in the cost of living since that date, an increase for those persons still receiving under the old law is long overdue.

It is our understanding that it is the intent of this committee to consider legislation pertaining to the national cemetery program during this session of Congress. We are strongly in favor of an expansion of national cemeteries, but regardless of what action might be taken in connection with this, there will be many instances in which it would not be possible for various reasons for the veteran to be buried in a national cemetery. Therefore, we support the proposal contained in H.R. 691 which provides an amount not exceeding \$100 for the purchase of a burial plot for veterans who are not buried in a cemetery under the jurisdiction of any department or agency of the United States.

In my personal views, as far as the welfare of the elderly and more seriously disabled veteran is concerned, there has not been a more important law enacted in recent years than Public Law 88-450, which created the VA nursing care program. Words cannot adequately express our appreciation for the efforts and work of this committee in bringing about this new program. Under the existing law there is a limitation of 6 months for the period of time that the VA may defray the expenses for the care of a veteran in a private nursing home. H.R. 692 proposes to increase the 6 months to 9 months, which we strongly support as we believe that this would take care of a great majority of problem cases of these seriously disabled veterans.

H.R. 693 contains a provision to eliminate the so-called "pauper's oath" for admission to a VA hospital similar to the one which is contained in H.R. 372. H.R. 693 further provides that those veterans who are permanently housebound shall be furnished drugs and medicine on the same basis as are now furnished to a veteran in receipt of the special aid-and-attendance allowance. It is often a very fine line between the housebound and aid-and-attendance case. To be eligible to the special housebound allowance, a person must be suffering from a very severe disability and often it is just a matter of time before the disability progresses to the point that the veteran meets the requirements for the special aid-and-attendance allowance. To provide this medication for the housebound case, we believe, is in keeping with the philosophy of this committee in reference to the seriously disabled, and by providing medication on an outpatient basis which the veteran is most often not financially able to purchase, we believe, in many instances will not only be a humane act but one of economics for the VA as it will tend to eliminate the necessity of many periods of hospitalization for the veteran.

I wish to again commend this committee for a law which you passed in the last Congress to provide the special \$50 monthly aid-and-attendance allowance for widows who are in receipt of non-service-connected pension and we believe that this allowance should also be provided for the eligible widows who are in receipt of service-connected death compensation or DIC benefits, as propose by H.R. 693.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, may I add a personal note of appreciation to the committee and its staff for the many courtesies afforded me and