

years, only total loss of hearing in both ears in combination with total loss of sight was specifically compensated as a statutory award. In 1965, Congress liberalized the statutory awards for loss of hearing in combination with loss of vision. However, there is still a need to revise the method used by VA to determine the percentage of disability for impaired hearing when it occurs in combination with blindness.

Similarly, an artificial hand or hook is easier to use effectively when an individual has the sight to direct it. A blind person depends heavily on the sense of touch. A sighted person with an artificial leg or legs can manage more easily than a blind person with this difficult handicap because the sighted person can see where he is going and does not have to depend on the tactile sense to be in touch with his environment. We recommend that loss of a hand or foot be compensated at a higher rate when it occurs in combination with blindness.

Entitlement to the special award for aid and attendance under section 314(r) of title 38 requires entitlement to compensation under section 314(o) as a prerequisite. There are blinded veterans with additional severe disabilities who do in fact require aid and attendance but who are ineligible for the special award because their combination of disabilities entitles them to awards under section 314 (l), (m), (n), or intermediate rates less than (o). We would recommend basing entitlement to section 314(r) on the actual need for aid and attendance for individuals receiving awards less than those under section 314(o).

The Blinded Veterans Association also recommends that veterans with service-connected disabilities be entitled to vocational rehabilitation training regardless of whether or not they have previously used up their entitlement if their physical condition changes to prevent them from performing in their accustomed occupation or if their job is abolished because of automation or technological advances.

Since numerous health conditions, notably those affecting hearing, ambulation, and touch, have a more pronounced deleterious effect upon the efficient functioning of a blind person, the 23d Annual Convention of the Blinded Veterans Association adopted a resolution urging the Veterans' Administration to accept veterans with service-connected blindness for treatment on an outpatient basis for all types of medical and dental conditions.

Since veterans who were prisoners of war were frequently subjected to physical and mental hardships which undoubtedly have long term implications for the health of these individuals, the 23d Annual Convention of the Blinded Veterans Association adopted a resolution recommending legislation which would grant service-connected disability on a presumptive basis to former prisoners of war.

In conclusion, the Blinded Veterans Association would like to express its appreciation to this committee for its sympathetic and sound development of veterans legislation since World War II. Many of the programs established by this legislation have contributed to upgrading the educational and economic level of a substantial portion of the population. We sincerely hope that the committee will give favorable consideration to the recommendations we are making so that various inequities in the benefit structure affecting veterans