

LEGISLATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS OF  
VETERANS' ORGANIZATIONS, 1973

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DEPOSITORY

HEARINGS  
BEFORE THE  
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS  
UNITED STATES SENATE

NINETY-THIRD CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

ON

LEGISLATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS OF NATIONAL COM-  
MANDERS OF THE AMERICAN LEGION, VETERANS OF  
FOREIGN WARS, DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS, PARA-  
LYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA, AMVETS, VETERANS OF  
WORLD WAR I OF THE U.S.A., INC., AND BLINDED VET-  
ERANS ASSOCIATION

FEBRUARY 27; MARCH 5, 21, AND 29, 1973

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# LEGISLATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS OF VETERANS' ORGANIZATIONS, 1973

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 1973

UNITED STATES SENATE,  
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS,  
*Washington, D.C.*

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2 p.m., in the auditorium, room G-308 of the Dirksen Office Building, the Honorable Vance Hartke, chairman, presiding.

Present: Chairman Vance Hartke, presiding, and Senators Jennings Randolph, Clifford P. Hansen, Strom Thurmond, Robert T. Stafford, and James A. McClure.

Also present: Frank J. Brizzi, staff director and Guy H. McMichael III, general counsel.

## OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. VANCE HARTKE, CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Chairman HARTKE. The committee will come to order.

This hearing today is for the purpose of receiving the testimony from the American Legion, which is the Nation's largest veterans' organization, and I am proud to be a member of that organization in Evansville, Ind. I believe it is especially fitting that we begin with the testimony from the American Legion because rarely has the challenge to the veteran been greater than today or the need for a strong voice on behalf of veterans more evident. Faceless bureaucrats who answer to no one but themselves have made and continue to make vital decisions affecting the well-being of our Nation's veterans. These are men whose names are rarely known, and when they are identified, refuse to appear before Congress to justify decisions that they and they alone have made. Meanwhile, officials at the Veterans' Administration who often have little or no say in the decisions arrived at, are left with the task of attempting to defend these proposals or accepting the blame when certain outrageous schemes go awry. The end result of this Government without accountability is all too evident and stark.

The budget for the coming fiscal year is clearly inadequate to meet the needs of our veterans. Veteran benefits are either being cut back drastically or the modest increases proposed in the budget are insufficient to cover inflation and the increased needs and services particularly in the area of medical care. Although Vietnam has produced almost 6 million veterans since 1963, the proposed budget as a percentage of total budget outlays is actually lower for the coming fiscal year than it was in 1963.

Medical care is again being cut back with arbitrary reductions in the average daily patient census which if unchecked threatens the very integrity of the VA hospital system. VA medical employment is scheduled for a 1.8 percent cutback at a time when a minimum of an additional 6,000 personnel are needed. Medical research and hospital construction have also been cut back drastically. The budget also contains vague and as yet unrevealed plans to realine VA regional offices and to cut back 1,500 employees in the Department of Veterans' Benefits. There are also proposals to reduce pensions for older veterans by almost \$223 million in the coming year, and to cut back veteran burial allowances by some \$54 million. And, of course, there was the most notorious cutback of all, the bureaucrats' plan to cut \$160 million out of disability compensation payments.

All of these decisions were arrived at by men who have never appeared before this committee, and who probably never will. Faced with the prospect of unilateral action by the executive branch in disability ratings and its unrestricted authority to change them at will, today, tomorrow, or the next day, I introduced S. 882, co-sponsored by each and every member of this committee which would require congressional agreement to any proposed changes in the disability rating schedule.

Given the threat that is posed to our Nation's veterans, I am now convinced that even more comprehensive legislation is required to bring these faceless bureaucrats out of the closet and into the light of public scrutiny. As a result, tomorrow I will introduce the Veterans' Administration Accountability Act of 1973. Under this bill, major changes affecting our veteran population will not be permitted without prior submission to Congress and no change will be effective if either House by resolution within 90 days of the submission of these proposals expressed its disapproval of the changes. Under the bill I propose to introduce, no VA hospital, domiciliary, or VA regional office may be closed without the concurrence of Congress. Disposition of thousands of acres of VA land, a subject of increased activity by the executive branch in recent years, would also require congressional approval. In addition, the executive branch would be required to submit proposals and plans for construction or major alterations of VA hospitals to Congress. Finally, the executive branch, as under S. 882, would be required to submit to Congress any proposed changes in the disability rating schedule. I have reluctantly come to the conclusion that this bill is necessary if Congress is to exercise its proper constitutional authority and discharge its obligation to the veterans of this Nation.

The success or failure of our efforts in this regard, on a large measure, depends upon the American Legion. Thus, I wish to extend my warm appreciation for their appearance here today.

I might also point out, before we have the testimony of National Commander Matthews, we are starting today with a new ranking minority member on the committee, Senator Clifford Hansen. Senator Strom Thurmond has become the ranking minority member of the Armed Services Committee, but remains a valued member of this committee as well. As you know in this committee, we have had absolute complete bipartisanship. I will say to you honestly, in my first 2 years as chairman of this committee, no man could have been

more dedicated to the interest of veterans than Senator Thurmond in the leadership he has displayed. I find the same leadership now being demonstrated by Senator Hansen.

Senator HANSEN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Let me say that the reason I happen to be ranking minority member on the committee comes about because of some rules we Republicans have imposed upon ourselves. Senator Thurmond becomes ranking member of the Armed Services Committee, and as a consequence of that decision, a decision important to all Americans, had to relinquish the position I now occupy. I am going to yield to him because I think it is entirely appropriate as I reflect upon his background of service to our country in the military and as I think of his contributions as a strong member of this committee, he might bring you the greeting that I know he would like very much to do.

I am pleased to present Strom Thurmond of South Carolina.

Senator THURMOND. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, Senator Hansen, other members of the committee, and my fellow veterans and my fellow Legionnaires.

First, I want to express my deep appreciation to Senator Hartke for the courtesy extended to me while I was ranking minority member. It has been a great pleasure to work with Senator Hartke. He has shown a true, sincere interest in our veterans that I think is unequalled by anyone I know.

Next, I want to congratulate this committee for having a man like Senator Hansen to be the ranking minority member. I want to tell the American Legionnaires today that a finer man could not have been selected. You will be well pleased with this outstanding American.

I want to say that I am honored to be a member of the Legion, it is the first organization I joined after coming back from World War II and as soon as I was eligible. I always looked upon the American Legion as synonymous with what is best for America.

I am confident that if our Government had followed what the American Legion has advocated down through the years, we would have avoided World War II, we would have avoided the Korean conflict, and we would have avoided the war in Vietnam. I am certain that the strong preparedness program for which you have stood, our great organization has stood, is a bulwark to prevent wars.

I just say to you now, I hope that the American Legion will grow by leaps and bounds and become strong in numbers and every other way. I hope you will maintain your interest in government because you stand for good government and that is the reason I am proud of you. Thank you.

Chairman HARTKE. Thank you.

We also have a distinguished member of this committee doing outstanding work for veterans in Senator Jennings Randolph, who is chairman of the Public Works Committee. If he were not chairman of that committee he would be chairman of this committee. He has been and continues to be a dedicated member of this committee.

Senator RANDOLPH. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I join, not reluctantly, but very earnestly, in commending you, as have my colleagues, for your leadership on the minimum of partisanship in our committee. I say "minimum." There may exist, at times, just a tinge, but I think there is almost a complete objectivity of the members of

this committee. That is because of your desire that that be the rule under which we operate and we commend you for it.

I have a desire, of course, to move quickly to the testimony and I even hesitate to take perhaps 60 seconds before our distinguished colleague, Senator Lloyd Bentsen of Texas, introduces the National Commander Joe Matthews.

I regret, and here again there is no partisanship, that the President, in his judgment, vetoed two very important bills last year that I think were of keen interest to veterans and to the members of the American Legion and to all of those who have served in our Armed Forces. I think he made a mistake and I think he failed, upon the advice of those who counsel him, to understand the strength that was embodied in the two bills.

I might remind those in the audience that the two measures passed unanimously, remember, in the Senate. Not a dissenting vote. Those two measures were our medical care expansion bill and our bill for the further development within the national cemeteries system. Those two measures, you will recall, were vetoed.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I have been working very closely with the American Legion on legislation that I have presented for a national "Employ the Older Worker Week." It is a bill which is supported by the American Legion, actually. Although it is not a national employ veterans week, we realize the considerable population that is veteran in nature to whom it would be helpful.

I report to you, Mr. Chairman, that the Subcommittee of Judiciary has reported the bill and, hopefully, the full committee will do what the subcommittee has done, and it will be on the Senate floor within a very few days.

I do recall, also, that I have had the most cooperative leadership in the American Legion in the Middle Aged and Older Workers Act. That, as my colleagues know, passed the Senate some 2 weeks ago and it had provisions in it that I had sponsored to create better opportunity for middle aged and older workers than they have at the present time.

I am gratified that I can be today with the spokesman for the Legion and many of their leaders throughout the country. We are intensely interested in your counsel, and I say, as others have said, that the American Legion, as an organization, and as you, as members and as members of the auxiliary, you have a group of citizens certainly dedicated to not only the best interest of yourselves as individuals and the organization of which you are a part, but to the building of a better America in time of trouble and in time of peace.

Chairman HARTKE. Thank you, Senator Randolph.

We have from the State of Vermont a distinguished, hardworking member of this committee, Senator Robert Stafford.

Senator STAFFORD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

It is a real pleasure and privilege to be here and to serve as a member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee under the leadership of Senator Hartke and my other colleagues. I had the pleasant experience of being with the national commander in Vermont last fall when we reviewed the Cadet Corps of one of our institutions of higher learning there, and then he addressed us at the dinner. I am looking forward to hearing him present the legislative message of the American Legion to us today.



I won't take any further time, Mr. Chairman, except to say, like Senator Thurmond, I have been a member of the Legion since the end of World War II and I am very proud to be associated with the American Legion.

Chairman HARTKE. The newest member of this committee comes from the State of Idaho. A new member of the Senate, Senator James A. McClure.

Senator McCLURE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I suspect it goes without saying that I am here not because I would have been ranking anywhere else in the Senate. But I do appreciate the chance to be here and I think the fact that you are here and will present a very responsible message to us as to the needs of the veteran, underscores a commitment that every man and woman who is a member of the American Legion has held for many years. That is, you serve your country, not for what you can get out of it, but because you wanted to serve your country and that the actions you take in representing veterans before us now is not a self-seeking action but an action on behalf of people who have given of themselves to this country, and I am proud to join in that effort. Thank you very much.

Chairman HARTKE. I would also like to acknowledge the fact that Senator Hughes wants to extend his apologies for not being with you today. He just came in late last night from a 24-hour trip from Israel and he really needed the rest. I hope you can understand that. Senator Cranston, who had a long standing commitment, also regrets that he is unable to attend today.

Now, to present our witness today, we have another distinguished Member of the U.S. Senate, Senator Bentsen.

#### **STATEMENT OF HON. LLOYD BENTSEN, A U.S. SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF TEXAS**

Senator BENTSEN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased to be before your very distinguished committee and certainly acknowledge and recognize your distinguished leadership and what you have done for the veterans of this country.

It is an honor for me to present a fellow Texan, but I present him not just because he is a fellow Texan but he is a man of ability and integrity. He is an exceptional man who has done much for the men who serve this country. He is from northwest Texas. As Commander of the American Legion he has chosen a slogan that I think explains the tenor of the Legion. That is "Reach out to Americans in Service to America." He believes America shouldn't be treated as though it is on the psychiatrist's couch. We ought to be talking about the good things about America, about the things we have done right and not just trying to concentrate on some of the things where we have missed the mark. He has gone about this country giving that kind of a message and I think he has lifted the hearts of all Americans.

I congratulate him and I bring to you not, again, just because he is a fellow Texan of whom I take great pride, but because of the job the American Legion has done since 1919.

I was a post commander in the American Legion, I never reached the exalted position of the National Commander who I am presenting here today, but I know of their work and contribution. I know what

they have done in influencing the legislation we passed just this last session. Doing what we did on the survivors' benefit bill, in doing what we did on veterans and medical hospitals, in education, a 10-percent increase in compensatory rates, a 25-percent increase in educational allowances. I don't think we would have accomplished all of that if we hadn't had the spur, inspiration, and counsel of the American Legion.

So, it is with a great deal of pleasure that I bring to you what I think is a great American, the Commander of the American Legion, Mr. Joe Matthews.

Chairman HARTKE. Thank you, Senator Bentsen, I want to say, Commander, we welcome you and we will be pleased now to hear your testimony.

**STATEMENT OF JOE L. MATTHEWS, NATIONAL COMMANDER, THE AMERICAN LEGION, ACCOMPANIED BY CLARENCE C. HORTON, WILLIAM LENKER, HERALD STRINGER, AND E. H. GOLEMBIESKI**

Mr. MATTHEWS. I will identify those with me at the head table at this time:

Clarence Horton, chairman of the legislative commission; Bill Lenker, chairman, veterans affairs and rehabilitation commission; Herald E. Stringer, director, national legislative commission; and Edward H. Golembieski, director, veterans affairs and rehabilitation commission. All of them are at the head table with me.

Also, at this time, I would like to recognize members of my own staff, who are here with me: national vice commanders Moeler from New Jersey; Novak from South Dakota; Gruenbaum from Ohio; Craig from North Carolina; and Grey from California.

Also, my Historian, Leddy Philips, from California, and my national sergeant at arms, Howard Larson from New York.

We are also privileged to have with us some ladies from the American Legion Auxiliary: Mrs. T. G. Chilton of Arizona, national president; Mrs. B. M. Jarrett of North Carolina, national vice president; Miss Doris Anderson from Texas, national secretary; Mrs. Deverre Harper of Iowa, chairman, national legislative committee; Mrs. Maurice Kubby of Texas, chairman, national veterans affairs and rehabilitation committee; Mrs. Jack Smith of Arizona, vice chairman and director of field service volunteers; Mrs. Keith Gaines of Kansas, director of hospital volunteers; Mrs. John J. Powel, Jr. of Delaware, national VAVS representative; Mrs. Thomas Geer, chairman, national community service, from Virginia; and last but not least, at least in my book, Mrs. Joe L. Matthews, wife of the National Commander of the American Legion.

Mr. Chairman and members of this committee: I certainly appreciate the opportunity of appearing here today before this great committee of the Congress—a committee that is doing so much for the war veterans of this Nation. The American Legion is proud of this committee for the programs it has initiated. You have recognized the unique status and specific needs of those who fight our Nation's wars. You have demonstrated a full awareness of the problems confronting today's veterans in this complex, difficult, and demanding society in which we live.

I want to congratulate the new members of this committee and pledge to each of you our full cooperation and support. We look forward to a close and friendly association with you and your staff.

I would also not want this opportunity to pass without paying tribute to my own Senator, who has presented me here today. Senator Bentsen is a former post commander of the American Legion from the Department of Texas and a champion of the veteran during his public life.

The American Legion, in 1972, with a membership of over 2,700,000 veterans in 16,000 posts throughout the country, is now approaching its 54th anniversary of service to America and its veterans. The organization in 1972 recorded its eighth consecutive year of membership growth. For 54 years we have worked to protect the rights of the war veterans and their dependents and to assist them in making a better life for themselves and their families. We are proud of our close and friendly association with this committee.

I cannot compliment this committee without at the same time expressing our thanks and appreciation to your staff director, general counsel, and the entire committee staff. Their expertise in the field of veterans' affairs, and their cooperation with the American Legion and its staff, are invaluable to us as we carry out our responsibilities to the Nation's veterans.

Before speaking to some of the major concerns that will occupy our energies and attention in 1973, I again invite each of you to be the Legion's guest tomorrow evening at our annual dinner honoring the Congress. Legionnaires gathered in Washington from every part of the country, many of whom are with me here today, look forward to meeting with Members of their congressional delegations in an atmosphere of hospitality and friendship. We hope that we shall have the pleasure and privilege of seeing you at our congressional dinner tomorrow evening. Congressman George Mahon will receive the American Legion Award for Distinguished Public Service at that time, and many of his friends and colleagues in the Congress will be present to honor him on this occasion.

I shall now direct my remarks to some of our major areas of concern in the field of veterans' affairs.

The American Legion is deeply disturbed over the current and projected funding of the medical and hospital program for which the Veterans' Administration is responsible. Although the Veterans' Administration budget for fiscal year 1974 is the second highest in the history of the agency, the American Legion considers it to be insufficient in several respects, particularly in the appropriation requests for medical care and medical and prosthetic research.

To illustrate this conclusion, we refer to the 1973 medical care appropriation. Approved by the President, the appropriation request, as increased by the Congress, authorized \$2.606 billion, an amount sufficient to maintain the average daily patient census at 85,500 and to continue the approved staff-patient ratio at all VA hospitals at 1.49 to 1—1.64 in medical bed sections, 2.07 in surgical bed sections, and 1.05 in psychiatric bed sections—with an increased average daily operating bed level of 98,500. To provide the added staffing for the increase in average daily patient census from 83,500, Congress had increased the medical care appropriation by \$54.808 million.

According to the 1973 budget request for medical care, the end of the year full-time permanent employment target was 144,745. Actually, as a result of continued Administration control over Federal employment and an announced reduction effort to decrease full-time permanent civilian employment, the 1973 end-of-the-year figure will be 142,678, with a further reduction to 142,404 on June 30, 1974, a reduction of 2,341 full-time permanent employment below the Administration appropriation request for fiscal year 1973.

Staff-patient ratios for the general medical, surgical, and neuropsychiatric bed sections show an increase from 1.49 to 1 in 1973 to 1.5 to 1 in the appropriation request for fiscal year 1974. While this is a small improvement, it was accomplished at the expense of a 5,500 decrease in the average daily patient census, the equivalent of 11 600-bed hospitals. The Administration staff-patient ratios for 1974 are projected on an ADPC of 80,000.

Similarly, it can be shown that full-time permanent employment in medical and prosthetic research suffered a reduction from 3,945 in the 1973 authorized appropriation request to 3,669, a loss of 276.

As you know, the medical research program is a necessary functional ingredient in providing quality medical care for veterans. Research, training, and treatment go hand in hand in any system of quality medical and hospital care.

This program is also essential for the development and testing of prosthetic, orthopedic, and sensory aids to improve the care and rehabilitation of disabled eligible veterans, including amputees, paraplegics, and the blind.

And last but not least, the knowledge gained in VA medical and prosthetic research is made available to other public and private health care and rehabilitation programs.

Mr. Chairman, there are other areas of dissatisfaction to us in the VA fiscal year 1974 budget request. These will be covered in our statements before the Appropriation Subcommittees in both Houses.

In his appearance before this committee last year, my distinguished predecessor, National Commander John H. Geiger, of Illinois, discussed the potential impact of national health insurance legislation on the VA medical care program. The continuing development of the debate on the subject of national health insurance makes it necessary to once again bring this matter to the attention of the committee.

The American Legion believes the national health insurance proposals are a threat to the VA medical care program. Last year an American Legion special committee on veterans medical care studied the situation exhaustively. The committee's work included meetings with many different persons, agencies, and organizations considered knowledgeable in this area. It met, of course, with officials of the VA, and with members and staff of this committee. Its conclusions were incorporated into a policy statement that was approved by our national executive committee last April and ratified by our national convention in August. Copies of the statement were provided to all of the Members of the 92d Congress. The statement is brief, concise, and clear as to its findings. A copy is attached to this statement, and I respectfully request that it be made a part of the record of this hearing. Additional copies are available to any Members who would like to have them.

Chairman HARTKE. Without objection, that will be made a part of the hearing and will appear in the record at the conclusion of the hearing.

Mr. MATTHEWS. Thank you, sir.

The principal conclusion of the committee was that there is a threat to the VA medical care program posed by any national health insurance plan that may be enacted into law.

While it may seem premature to express this concern, we feel there is solid ground for our apprehension. And experience has taught us through 54 years of legislative activity in the field of veterans' affairs, that it is unwise to wait until a danger has become imminent before taking defensive measures.

Our estimate of the existence of a threat to the VA medical care program is based essentially upon the conviction that when national health insurance, in whatever form, has become a reality, at some time thereafter efforts will be made to incorporate the VA medical care program into it in the interest of economy, efficiency, and the achievement of the ultimate goal of cradle to grave medical care for all citizens, perhaps at public expense. As a matter of fact, this idea has already been discussed. And while the suggestion did not receive a great deal of attention when it was made, in the absence of any existing national health insurance program, it is our firm conviction that the idea will be restated, and that it will receive attention when there is a national health insurance program in existence, and when the national interest in the welfare of veterans may have waned as time passes following the conclusion of the Vietnam war.

With an eye to the growing debate on the acceptable form of a national health insurance program, the National Convention of the American Legion, meeting in Chicago last August, authorized the appointment of a veterans medical care advisory committee as a continuing part of the committee structure of our national organization. I have appointed the committee, and two of its members are here with me today, Mr. W. F. Lenker and Mr. Clarence Horton, both of whom were introduced earlier.

It is the responsibility of the veterans medical care advisory committee to monitor the debate on national health insurance, to keep our members informed about the progress of that debate, and to lead the necessary effort by the American Legion against any threat that may develop to the integrity of the VA medical care program.

If and when such a threat does take form, whether it happens in the near or distant future, the American Legion will be prepared to meet it with the support of our friends in the Congress. I know this committee and each of its members will do whatever is necessary to maintain the present VA medical care program as one that is dedicated to the care of veterans and to maintain its present status as the finest single medical care program in the world today. I pledge to you our continuing support in this endeavor.

Although by the direction of the President, the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs has recalled the proposed draft revision of the Veterans' Administration disability rating schedule, we are not assured that this is the end of efforts to reduce budget outlays for service-connected compensation.

In outlining veterans benefits and services, the budget for fiscal year 1974 states:

"New compensation rating schedules will be implemented and other structural reforms will be proposed to relate payments more equitably to earning impairment."

Under perspectives for Veterans' Administration outlay savings from program reductions and terminations, 1973-75, the following appears:

"Reform veterans benefits administratively to align benefits and need—outlay savings—\$160 million, fiscal year 1974 and 1975."

Commencing with the War Risk Insurance Act of 1917, each of the schedules for rating disabilities was issued under authority of law approved by the Congress. The current 1945 schedule, as amended, was prepared and promulgated under authority of Public Law 458 of the 79th Congress. A provision of this law, as codified into title 38, United States Code, states that the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs shall from time to time readjust this schedule of ratings in accordance with experience.

In transition from one schedule to another, the Congress provided protection or savings provisions. As an example, a change from a rating under the 1925 schedule to one under the 1945 schedule could be effected only where there was an improvement as shown by physical examination of the condition when reviewed under the old schedular provisions or if the disability warranted a higher rating under the new schedule.

Prior to publication of the 1957 looseleaf edition of the 1945 disability rating schedule, 9 extensions effected a variety of changes and since publication of the looseleaf edition, 15 revisions were published.

In the main, these amendments and revisions were instructional or added or changed disability diagnostic terminology. Percentage reductions generally were based on more precise and up-to-date diagnostic terminology and examination findings.

Given the full implications of the proposed revisions and the unrestricted authority of the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs by law—in title 38, United States Code, section 355—to change the disability rating schedule at will, we are convinced that congressional approval should be mandatory before any changes or revisions may be incorporated in the rating of disabilities.

Mr. Chairman, we support legislation which would amend the law so as to provide that any revisions or adjustments in disability evaluation be submitted to the Congress and that such changes or revisions shall not become effective if either House by resolution within 90 days expresses disapproval of them.

The American Legion's position on the subject of national cemeteries is stated in resolution No. 17 adopted by our national convention last August. A copy of this resolution is appended to this statement.

The Legion was dismayed at the Presidential veto of H.R. 12674, the National Cemeteries Act of 1972. We are greatly pleased that a bill has been introduced in the Senate entitled the National Cemeteries Act of 1973. We hope that the new bill will receive speedy congressional approval and that this time the President will sign it when it reaches his desk.

The American Legion has worked for years to achieve the enactment of national cemetery legislation. Our arguments, and our specific proposals have been stated and restated to the appropriate committees

of each Congress. Enactment of this legislation is long past due. By their actions through all of the years following the end of the Civil War, Congresses have consistently extended the honor and privilege to veterans of being buried in a national cemetery if that is their desire. Many thousands of veterans have received the final honor of being interred on hallowed ground in company with their former comrades in arms. A privilege extended to so many for more than 100 years should now be considered a right. It is unfair that now, when so many have been accorded the honor of burial in a national cemetery, the privilege should be withdrawn from the present veteran population.

National cemetery burial is an honor the Nation can afford. It is one that is desired by many of today's veterans. National cemeteries are rapidly filling and being closed. Some parts of the country have no remaining national cemeteries with space available. Some areas have never had a national cemetery—another inequity.

The American Legion believes that all evidence on this subject is on the record and that the case has been made. All of the arguments have been advanced; all of the objections have been answered and overcome. We urge the Congress to reaffirm its intention that the national cemetery system be placed under the Administrator of Veterans Affairs where it belongs, and that a plan shall be developed for the orderly expansion of the system to the end that the honor of burial in a national cemetery shall be accorded to those veterans who desire it, in a cemetery reasonably near to their place of residence at time of death.

Veterans' Administration death and disability pension and parents' dependency and indemnity compensation are income maintenance programs. They are a means of supplementing the income of eligible war veterans, widows, children, and dependent parents of those who died of service-connected causes.

Entitlement to these monetary payments is determined by a needs test, that is, income and corpus of estate.

Because of fixed income from public or private retirement plans or programs or annuities based on age, disability, or dependency, these beneficiaries are beyond the reach of normal inflation balancing factors.

Recognizing that pension and dependency and indemnity compensation are income maintenance plans, the Congress from time to time enacts legislation to restore this dollar loss in purchasing power by both increasing the amount of the dollar payments and the annual income limitations.

On January 1, 1973, because of social security increases granted by Public Law 92-336, these beneficiaries were subject to reductions in monthly payments.

According to Veterans' Administration information, over 1.2 million pensioners and dependent parents had their monthly checks reduced and another 20,000 were dropped from the rolls entirely. Of these, 15,000 sustained an aggregate income loss ranging from \$3.14 a month to \$14 a month.

The American Legion believes that veterans and their dependent survivors should have the full measure of any social security or other retirement or annuity increase without suffering reductions in their Veterans' Administration income maintenance payments.

Failure to act to protect the VA beneficiaries against these reductions will in effect penalize them while granting nonveterans the full measure of cost-of-living social security benefit increases.

Mr. Chairman and members of this committee, we urge your early consideration of legislation to increase the applicable annual income limitations by \$400 and to increase the monthly rates of pension and dependency and indemnity compensation.

Before leaving the subject of pension, I must say that the American Legion is unalterably opposed to that provision of the Veterans' Administration fiscal year 1974 budget which proposed legislation to reduce the budget authority by \$233 million by amending the law so as to provide for the inclusion of the spouse's income in computation of the veteran's income in determination of his entitlement to pension.

It seems to me appropriate, before concluding my remarks to the committee, to mention the present situation of the Vietnam veterans in our country.

Members of the American Legion join with all of their fellow citizens in prayerful thanks that the shooting has stopped in Vietnam. Nearly 6 million men and women have served the Nation in its Armed Forces, either in Vietnam or at other stations during the course of this long and costly conflict. The American Legion is very much aware that the return to civilian life of these veterans has been markedly different from that of the veterans of other wars in which our country has engaged. It is not necessary for me to recite the reasons why this is so, but that it is true is undeniable. However, as far as the American Legion is concerned, the veterans of the Vietnam war are entitled to the same honor that has been accorded to all other war veterans in the history of our Nation. While it is true that the end of the Vietnam war has not been marked with victory parades and ceremonies, the valor displayed, and the sacrifices made by the brave men and women who served in Vietnam has been in the highest tradition of American arms. The American Legion is keenly conscious of that fact. And while parades and welcoming ceremonies may not seem to be in fashion today, we are determined that all of the men and women who have returned and are returning from service shall receive the respect and the attention to which they are entitled, and that they shall have available to them all of the rehabilitative services that are needed to enable them to make a satisfactory readjustment to civilian life.

American Legion service officers throughout the country are making every effort to establish contact with Vietnam veterans and to offer to them the assistance of our organization in whatever ways we can be helpful. Our veterans affairs and rehabilitation commission and its staff are monitoring the operation of all of the veterans benefits programs as they are applied to Vietnam war veterans. Where we see the need for adjustments, changes, and improvements in those programs we are calling them to the attention of the Veterans' Administration and to the appropriate committees of the Congress.

The American Legion, with a membership composed of veterans of four wars in the 20th century, believes that it has a direct and immediate responsibility to help all Vietnam veterans in whatever ways are possible. On behalf of our membership, I pledge to you here today that we shall do all in our power to meet that responsibility to the fullest degree.



We are confident too, that the committee shares our determination to do everything possible to facilitate the readjustment of the Vietnam veterans and the rehabilitation of those who have suffered injury in service. We shall continue to work with you to see that this goal is met.

While our primary purpose here is to present to this committee the American Legion's legislative program on behalf of the rehabilitation and care of America's veterans, their dependents, and survivors, we also feel it appropriate to reaffirm our opposition to proposals for amnesty for draft dodgers and deserters of the Vietnam era. While we have this congressional forum, I feel we would be remiss not to restate our opposition to amnesty, and to place on the public record our view that America's obligation is to those who served, not to those who ran.

Mr. Chairman, time does not permit a more detailed presentation of our legislative objectives in veterans affairs. I have spoken, however, to our major areas of concern. Attached to this statement is a list of resolutions pertaining to our veterans affairs and rehabilitation program and I respectfully request that it be made a part of the record of this hearing.

In closing, may I again express appreciation to the Congress, and particularly to this committee, for your support and understanding of the problems of our Nation's veterans. I pledge to you on behalf of the millions of legionnaires and members of the auxiliary throughout the country, our continuing cooperation in the development and maintenance of our veterans benefits program.

Chairman HARTKE. These resolutions will appear at the conclusion of the hearing.

Mr. MATTHEWS. Thank you.

May I close by saying that I was very pleased with the comments that were made preceding my remarks, and I feel very strongly that we are in front of a friendly committee. Thank you.

Chairman HARTKE. Thank you, Commander Matthews, for a comprehensive and well documented statement, and we certainly appreciate hearing from you. I might say for the benefit of the people here, you heard some buzzers in the hall while you have been here. Just for your information that did cause some concern here because the buzzers are supposed to correspond with the lights on the clock. The two lights indicate a quorum call which does not necessarily mean the Senators' presence are required on the floor. But if you look at the clock you can hardly tell whether that is one light or two lights. I might also explain to you that frequently we have visitors who come and object to the fact that they do not always find their Senator on the floor of the Senate. Most of the time while the Senate is in session the Senators are engaged in hearings similar to the one we are having here at the present time. So, the mere fact that they are not on the floor of the Senate does not mean they are not attending to your business.

I also want to note Commander Matthews, much as I respect the State of Texas, I want to tell you that your national headquarters is in a greater State and that is Indiana.

We are very proud to have the home of the American Legion in Indianapolis and we want to extend to all of the other 49 States an invitation to come and visit those wonderful headquarters.

In regard to your apprehension expressed in your statement concerning the effect of any national health insurance plan, I want to point out that the Mediredit plan, which I am the principal Democratic sponsor, and the ranking minority member of this committee, Senator Hansen, is the chief Republican sponsor of the Mediredit plan. I want you to know this preserves in every respect the present medical treatment and hospital plan of the Veterans' Administration. It would in no way interfere with its present or future operations.

With regard to your concern about the social security increase which was granted by Public Law 92-336 last year and the effect it has had upon many pensions, we are painfully aware of it. Painfully aware of it because of the mail that comes in to us showing the concern. But at the same time I want to note that we have introduced S. 275, a measure to correct this inequity and it has been cosponsored by every member of this committee, so that matter, we hope, will be straightened out in short order.

The question you raised about the proposed reduction in disability compensation is one which we have directed our attention. We are glad that the President did see in his wisdom the desirability of withdrawing the planned revision, but as it was indicated previously, we are not satisfied that there may not be an attempt to do that in the future.

Let me also point out a rather discomfoting factor. Those of us in the World War II age group are getting older. We can't turn back the clock. The fact of it is, that with the proposed cutback in VA medical care, fewer of us are going to have the opportunity to receive adequate care.

As we get older, we find the need of care more frequent, and the length of care becomes more extended. That is just one of the things that happens to people as they get older. But with approximately 28 million veterans themselves directly affected in this Nation, and if you also include their families, we will have probably the largest responsibility and constituency concerned with the future of this Nation.

So, I want to thank you again, Commander, for a fine statement, and thank all of these people in attendance here to give you support. I remember a statement by the late Senator Ellender, commenting on the number of people who attend—and you know we had to come to a special hall to accommodate the size of your crowd today. He said: "Maybe it is not right, but it is true that frequently the size of the audience that comes to back up a member who testifies is indicative of the type of support that he would like to see registered on the record." So we want to thank those people who came. You did not come in vain.

Now, I would like to recognize Senator Randolph for any comment or questions he has.

Senator RANDOLPH. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I hope it is not inappropriate in mentioning Texas and, now Indiana, to say that I personally remember my association with Louis Johnson of Clarksburg, W. Va., who was your national commander, and my personal association with Mrs. Ruby Ward, who was the president of the women's auxiliary. At her request I served 1 year as director of Girl's Nation. I remember that.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for permitting me to ask two questions of the commander, and to preface those questions with my commendation to him and the organization which he represents for the clarity of your positions, and to say that in general I cannot only commend you but offer you my complete support and assistance in the matters that you have brought before us.

Commander Matthews, while we are working to improve the current medical care program and fighting what we call, some of us, the battle of the budget that is upon us—and I think it is a major battle I would ask this question. It is long ranged in nature.

In the years ahead, and you were mentioning the change in age that comes with time, Mr. Chairman, I believe that the demands on the Veterans' Administration medical care system will grow to substantial proportions beyond that which we visualize today. I think the members of this committee, responsive to their responsibilities as individuals, are thinking in terms of VA and national veterans organizations moving perhaps in concert. You want to do that, I know, as we want to do that. We want to do it with the House. Because the medical care demand is going to be here and we must approach it with a long look, not just the close-up problems that exists today. So your comment on this would be appreciated because I know your medical advisory committee is working on this sort of program and I think that they have some proposals for meeting the increased demand in the years ahead, 5 to 10 years from now.

We must, as I understand it, be meeting these problems. Would you care to comment?

Mr. MATTHEWS. Senator, you are absolutely correct, we of the American Legion are cognizant of the fact that the veteran population is going to grow, particularly the population we are going to be concerned about, the disabled veteran or indigent veteran who is going to need help. We have made studies on this and have projected it into the future. I don't have those figures at my fingertips, but I will see that my staff supplies them to you.

Senator RANDOLPH. Any material that you can provide the committee that bears on this point would be helpful to us.

A final question. I commend your efforts and those of your fellow officers and members, to aid the returning veterans—and I agree with you that we accord to these veterans of the Vietnamese conflict the same strength that can be given through governmental aid that we have given all others—there must be no distinction whatsoever. That is not said with any attempt to wave the flag, it is only an attempt to let you know that by and large I think the membership of the Congress will do exactly what you have requested be done.

Mr. MATTHEWS. Thank you, sir.

Senator RANDOLPH. I think perhaps you have found a need for reemployment rights legislation, under Federal law, to protect the rights of veterans who were employed in State and municipal governments. It is my feeling that this is a concern. I am not fully informed, but I believe that whereas the Federal employees do have certain protection, that this is not so at the present time for State and municipal workers. Have you looked into this matter, any of your officers or members of the Washington staff?

Mr. MATTHEWS. That would come under our economic commission, I am going to ask Herald Stringer if he knows.

Mr. STRINGER. We are doing some studies on that, Senator, at the present time. We are getting into that area now.

Senator RANDOLPH. I appreciate that and I am sure the members of the committee do, because here again is a matter of justice for returning veterans who had that type of employment, not Federal, but State and municipal.

I thank you, Commander Matthews, and you, Mr. Chairman, for allowing me to ask these questions.

Chairman HARTKE. Thank you, Senator Randolph.

Senator Hansen.

Senator HANSEN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Commander Matthews, I would like to compliment you for very clearly and succinctly enunciating the goals of the Legion. I think they are goals that all Americans ought to be able to subscribe to wholeheartedly and without reservation. I most certainly do.

I want to say three of the members of this committee, Senator Hartke, Senator Talmadge, and I, are also on the Finance Committee and we have had many different issues to discuss and consider as members of that committee. While we don't always agree on everything, I think we do agree on certain things, and that is that we want to keep this country strong. We want to make certain that American workers have an opportunity to compete with other workers around the world on an equal-footing basis. We are concerned about jobs in this country. We think, that the average decent American isn't asking for handouts, he simply wants a chance to go to work, and we want to make certain he always has that chance in this country.

I have every reason to believe that we do need to take stock of the situation that America today finds itself in. We have been as generous a nation as any nation I know throughout all of history in helping to rebuild this world that has been torn and return from time to time. But there comes a time, I am certain, when we need also to look at America. I think that the peace offensive that you have so courageously led and that all of us would like to help further in the years ahead can be successful to the degree that America remains strong, and I pledge to you that we will do our best to see, insofar as we are able, that there shall be no diminution in the ability of this country to move forward from a position of strength.

I want to say that we have many obligations in this country. We have considered welfare reform bills and all kinds of bills, and if I were to single out one group of people that I think all Americans owe a special debt of gratitude, it would be to those Americans that you so proudly represent this afternoon.

Thank you very much.

Chairman HARTKE. Thank you Senator Hansen.

Senator Thurmond.

Senator THURMOND. Mr. Chairman, Commander Matthews, it is indeed an honor to have you with us. Your goals are worthy. I hope they can be attained. I shall be pleased to support them.

Chairman HARTKE. Thank you Senator Thurmond.

Senator McClure.

Senator McCLURE. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I don't think there is anything that I can add to the remarks that have been made by my colleagues. I think the legislative message you

have given to us is responsible. I think you will find that the Congress will respond to it as it always has in the past.

Certainly, your organization is the preeminent one in the field of representing the views and aspirations of a great mass of men and women who serve their country honorably and well. I was particularly pleased that you took a very forthright stand on the question of amnesty. As we now get into a time when we are going to be called upon to extend a sympathetic forgiving hand to people who have been less than sympathetic to their country, we need the support that your organization, that my organization, can give. I certainly for one, along with the rest, commend you for your position.

Chairman HARTKE. Commander Matthews, I want to thank you for your testimony and your help. We need support. There is a tough fight ahead of us, we need your support and we are anxiously looking forward to it. In the meantime, I hope you have a good time while you are here in the Nation's Capital, I hope you enjoy yourselves and I hope you don't get in any trouble.

I do want to say, however, that, in case you have any difficulty with anyone wanting to search you at the airport, don't call on me.

[Laughter.]

Chairman HARTKE. So, I say to you again, have a good time while you are here. We appreciate your support, and we are looking forward to a good year this year, and we will have it as long as we work together.

Without objection, at this point in the record, I ordered to be printed all prepared statements, resolutions of the American Legion, and other pertinent documents submitted for the record.

The Committee on Veterans' Affairs stands adjourned, subject to the call of the Chair.

(Whereupon, at 3:20 p.m., the hearing was adjourned, subject to the call of the Chair.)

(The previously mentioned resolutions of the American Legion follow:)

#### AMERICAN LEGION RESOLUTIONS THAT REQUIRE LEGISLATIVE ACTION POLICY

##### A. CABINET RANK FOR ADMINISTRATOR OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

1972 Convention Resolution No. 12 (Ky.) seeks legislation to raise the office of the Administrator of Veterans Affairs to that of Cabinet rank.

##### B. AUTHORITY OF CONGRESS TO ALTER OR CLOSE VA FACILITIES

1972 Convention Resolution No. 59 (Ariz.) supports legislation as will vest in the Congress authority to limit the VA and the Office of Management and Budget with respect to the construction, alteration, or closing of VA facilities.

##### C. PROVIDE EQUAL BENEFITS TO CANADIAN VETERANS AND THEIR WIDOWS

1972 Convention Resolution No. 201 (Minn.) seeks legislation to provide benefits to Canadian Armed Forces veterans and their widows equal to those presently provided by the Dominion of Canada to veterans of our Armed Forces and their widows residing in the Dominion of Canada.

##### D. OPPOSITION TO HOSPITALIZATION OF NONVETERANS IN VA HOSPITALS

1972 Convention Resolution No. 215 (Okla.) urges opposition to legislative and administrative efforts to authorize the hospitalization of nonveterans in VA hospitals; and, to authorize hospital and outpatient care in civilian medical facilities at Government expense to surviving dependents of war veterans who die of service-connected disability after discharge, as well as the wives and children of permanently and totally service-connected disabled veterans.

## E. FULL MILITARY HONORS AT BURIAL OF VETERANS

1972 Convention Resolution No. 249 (S.C.) seeks legislation to require the military services to render military honors, where such honors are requested, and the burial takes place within reasonable distance of the military installation from which assistance is requested.

## F. CONTINUE VA HOSPITAL AND MEDICAL PROGRAM AS A SEPARATE ENTITY

1972 Convention Resolution No. 269 (Wis.) urges opposition to any plan, legislative or administrative, which would take from the VA any of its responsibility of serving veterans, or which would cause the VA to share this responsibility with other health care programs.

## G. TRANSPORTATION COSTS FOR BURIALS OF CERTAIN VETERANS

1972 Convention Resolution No. 364 (Georgia) seeks legislation to provide that when any retired member of an Armed Force dies while a patient in a United States hospital, the cost of transporting the body to the place of burial shall be borne by the Secretary of such Armed Force.

1972 Convention Resolution No. 401 (Nebr.) seeks legislation to provide that where an eligible veteran dies in a State Veterans Home, the Administrator of Veterans Affairs shall pay the cost of transporting the remains to place of burial.

## H. MUSTERING-OUT PAYMENTS FOR VIETNAM ERA VETERANS

1972 Convention Resolution No. 409 (Ohio) seeks legislation to provide that each member of the Armed Forces who served on active duty during the Vietnam Era, and who is discharged or released from active duty under honorable conditions, shall be eligible for mustering-out payments.

## I. CONDITIONAL DISCHARGES

1972 Convention Resolution No. 448 (Va.) seeks legislation to establish eligibility to VA benefits of those veterans conditionally discharged or released from active service who immediately reenter such service.

## NATIONAL CEMETERIES

## A. THE NATIONAL CEMETERY POLICY OF THE AMERICAN LEGION

1972 Convention Resolution No. 17 (Ky.) seeks legislation to: (1) transfer to the Administrator of Veterans Affairs existing national cemeteries presently under the jurisdiction of the Department of the Interior, and Department of the Army; (2) provide the Administrator of Veterans Affairs with authority and responsibility of the operation, care, and maintenance of these cemeteries; (3) direct the Administrator of Veterans Affairs to plan a system of national cemeteries and to establish a program of expansion of existing national cemeteries and creation of additional ones so that the capacity and distribution of national cemetery sites shall, at all times, be sufficient to assure burial in a national cemetery for those who so desire; (4) authorize the Administrator of Veterans Affairs to acquire such lands as are needed—by gift, purchase, condemnation, transfer, or by any other means; and, (5) petitions the President, the Congress of the United States, and the Secretary of Defense to rescind the discriminatory order of February 10, 1967 which limited burials in Arlington National Cemetery.

## CLAIMS AND RATINGS

## A. ARMED FORCES RETIREMENT PAYMENTS

1972 Convention Resolution No. 261 (France) seeks legislation to remove the restriction against the receipt of Armed Forces retirement pay due to length of service concurrently with VA compensation.

## B. BURIAL ALLOWANCE

1972 Convention Resolution No. 366 (Georgia) seeks legislation to provide that the burial allowance be increased to \$500.

## C. PAYMENTS TO HOSPITALIZED INCOMPETENT VETERANS

1972 Convention Resolution No. 402 (Nebr.) seeks legislation to provide that in any case in which an incompetent veteran having neither wife nor child is

being furnished hospital treatment, institutional or domiciliary care without charge or otherwise by the United States, or any political subdivision thereof, and his estate from any source equals or exceeds \$2000, further payments of pension, compensation, or emergency officers retirement pay shall not be made until the estate is reduced to \$1000.

#### D. GUERRILLA RECOGNITION PROGRAM OF THE PHILIPPINES

1972 Fall NEC Resolution No. 11 supports legislation for the reopening of the Guerrilla Recognition Program of the Commonwealth of the Philippines by the Department of Defense of the United States.

#### E. IMPROVE THE DISABILITY COMPENSATION PROGRAM

##### *Special Compensation for Veterans Requiring Hemodialysis*

1972 Convention Resolution No. 14 (Ky.) seeks legislation to provide that a special monthly compensation be payable to those veterans who require renal dialysis for their service-connected chronic kidney disease.

##### *Increase Statutory Awards Rate*

1972 Convention Resolution No. 16 (Ky.) seeks legislation to increase the statutory awards of compensation payable under 38 USC 314(k) from \$47 to \$75.

##### *Increase Monthly Rates of Compensation*

1972 Convention Resolution No. 57 (Ariz.) seeks legislation to amend section 314 of title 38, USC, to increase the monthly rates of disability compensation.

##### *Award All POW's a Disability Rating of No Less Than 10 Percent*

1972 Convention Resolution No. 220 (Mass.) seeks legislation to provide that each member of the Armed Forces who had been held a prisoner of war or detained by an enemy agent shall be assigned a disability of not less than 10 percent for compensation purposes.

##### *Increased Compensation (A & A) While a Nursing Home Care Patient*

1972 Convention Resolution No. 450 (Va.) seeks legislation to provide that a person be considered to be entitled to increased disability compensation under title 38, USC, 314 (1) if he is a patient in a nursing home for a service-connected disability.

##### *Presumption of Service-connected Death in Certain Cases*

1972 Convention Resolution No. 451 (Va.) seeks legislation to provide that the widow, children and dependent parents of any person who dies from natural causes after a service-connected disability had been rated total and permanent for 10 years shall be entitled to dependency and indemnity compensation.

##### *Seven-year Presumption for Progressive Muscular Atrophy*

1972 Convention Resolution No. 453 (Va.) seeks legislation to provide that muscular atrophy developing to a compensable degree within 7 years of separation from wartime service shall be considered to have been incurred in or aggravated by such service.

##### *Two-year Presumption for Psychosis*

1972 Fall NEC Resolution No. 12 seeks legislation to provide that a psychosis developing to a compensable degree within two years from the date of separation from war service shall be considered to have been incurred in or aggravated by such service.

#### F. IMPROVE THE DISABILITY AND DEATH PENSION PROGRAM

##### *Comprehensive Improvements*

1972 Convention Resolution No. 399 (Nebr.) seeks legislation to improve the death and disability pension benefits program for veterans of World War I,

World War II, the Korean Conflict, and the Vietnam Era, and for their widows and children.

1972 Convention Resolution No. 414 (Ohio) seeks legislation to increase the amount payable to a veteran in receipt of aid and attendance from \$110 to \$121 per month.

1972 Fall NEC Resolution No. 13 seeks legislation to increase the amount of pension payable to a hospitalized veteran, and to provide for a lump sum payment at the time of his discharge or release from such hospitalization.

#### *Effective Date of Disability Pension*

1972 Convention Resolution No. 367 (Georgia) seeks legislation to provide that the effective date of disability pension shall be the date that permanent and total disability and need is established, if application for such benefits is received within one year from that date.

#### *Income Exclusion for VA Pension Benefits*

1972 Convention Resolution No. 447 (Va.) seeks legislation to exclude from pension annual income determinations the additional railroad retirement annuity payable for dependents in the family group.

### MEDICAL AND HOSPITAL

#### A. MEDICAL SERVICES FOR NON-SERVICE-CONNECTED DISABILITY

1972 Convention Resolution No. 410 (Ohio) seeks legislation to provide that where any war veteran has a total disability permanent in nature of service-connected origin, any other non-service-connected disability shall be deemed service-connected for treatment purposes.

#### B. EXTEND NURSING HOME CARE TO NINE (9) MONTHS

1972 Convention Resolution No. 446 (Va.) supports legislation to amend 38, USC, 620, so as to extend community nursing home care at VA expense to nine months.

### EDUCATION AND TRAINING

#### A. IDENTICAL VOCATIONAL TRAINING FOR VIETNAM ERA VETERANS

1972 Convention Resolution No. 208 (Okla.) seeks legislation to provide that Vietnam Era veterans shall have basic entitlement to vocational rehabilitation identical to that applicable to World War II and Korean Conflict veterans.

#### B. ESTABLISH PARITY FOR EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE BENEFITS

1972 Convention Resolution No. 390 (N.Y.) seeks legislation to establish parity between those educational assistance benefits available to Vietnam war veterans and those that had been available to World War II veterans.

#### C. EXTEND TIME LIMITS FOR EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS

1972 Convention Resolution No. 411 (Ohio) seeks legislation to provide that all post-Korean and Vietnam veterans have until July 1, 1980 to complete their education benefits if they were discharged prior to June 1, 1966; and, that all post-Korean and Vietnam veterans who were discharged after June 1, 1966, be granted 14 years in which to take advantage of such benefits.

### INSURANCE

#### A. SPECIAL GOVERNMENT INSURANCE FOR VIETNAM ERA VETERANS

1972 Convention Resolution No. 15 (Ky.) supports legislation to provide a special government life insurance program for Vietnam Era veterans.

#### B. STATUTORY TOTAL DISABILITY

1972 Convention Resolution No. 365 (Georgia) seeks legislation to provide that kidney and heart transplants shall qualify as statutory total disabilities for insurance purposes.



# LEGISLATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS OF VETERANS' ORGANIZATIONS, 1973

MONDAY, MARCH 5, 1973

U.S. SENATE,  
COMMITTEE ON VETERAN'S AFFAIRS,  
*Washington, D.C.*

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2 p.m., in the auditorium, room G-308, Dirksen Office Building, Hon. Vance Hartke, chairman of the committee, presiding.

Present: Chairman Vance Hartke, presiding and Senators Jennings, Randolph, Harold E. Hughes, Alan Cranston, Clifford P. Hansen, Strom Thurmond, Robert T. Stafford, and James A. McClure.

Also present: Frank J. Brizzi, staff director and Guy H. McMichael III, general counsel.

## OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. VANCE HARTKE, CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Chairman HARTKE. The committee will come to order.

Today, we are going to receive testimony from the Veterans of Foreign Wars concerning their legislative recommendations for 1973. I believe this is a particularly appropriate occasion to hear from the VFW because the Senate is about to consider three measures of vital importance to veterans. These are bills which were unanimously reported favorably from this committee by each and every member of the committee. Our success or failure tomorrow on the floor of the Senate will depend in large measure on whether the VFW makes its voice heard on behalf of the Vietnam veteran and all other veterans who will benefit from these bills. I can assure you that if your voice is as strong, as united, and as direct as it has been in recent weeks, I am convinced that your message will be heard and that we shall have no problem in securing favorable passage tomorrow.

Two of these bills, as you know, were unanimously passed by both Houses last year, only to be pocket-vetoed by the President. I am referring, of course, to the Veterans' Health Care Expansion Act and the National Cemeteries Act. The former bill is aimed at providing adequate staffing and quality care for our Nation's veterans so that we can truly say that Veterans' Administration hospital care is second to none. The second bill provides much needed burial allowances for veterans and brings burial benefits for veterans who die of service-connected causes up to a par of other Federal employees currently receiving Federal burial benefits. The third bill is the Veterans' Drug and Alcohol Treatment and Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which unani-

mously passed the Senate last fall, but for which final agreement with the House was not secured. This bill, which is designed to aid many of our younger veterans who have drug problems, establishes a comprehensive program that is designed to treat not just the symptoms, but the causes of drug abuse. This bill also contains new provisions to deal with the problem of alcoholism that currently afflicts so many of the older generation of veterans.

I want to take this opportunity to express this committee's gratitude for the strong support that has been forthcoming from the leaders, the members, and the Washington staff of the VFW. With respect to the vetoed bills and the inadequate VA budget for the coming year, in my opinion, no group has been more forthright in speaking up clearly and forcefully to protest these unwise moves than the VFW. You have been on the front lines defending this country's 29 million veterans against hypocritical attacks of anonymous budget-cutting bureaucrats, but much more remains to be done.

While you are in Washington, I hope that each of you takes the opportunity to visit every Member in your State's congressional delegation. It is imperative that every Senator and every Representative understand the immediate need for the enactment of these three veteran measures. And, while you are there, you may also want to express your views concerning the bill, which I introduced last week, to limit the power of these men in the Office of Management and Budget who are accountable to no one but themselves. Very simply, S. 1076, the Veterans' Administration Accountability Act of 1973 would require congressional concurrence prior to the closing of any VA hospital, domiciliary, or regional office. Major land transfers would be subject to congressional scrutiny, and construction and major alteration plans for VA hospitals must be submitted in advance to Congress.

Finally, the measure would require that any proposed changes in the VA disability rating schedule must be submitted in advance to Congress. This bill is not intended to limit the administration's discretion. It is intended to provide a mechanism whereby Congress will be informed in advance of major changes so that its Members who are responsible and accountable to the people will have an opportunity to prevent those changes which would be arbitrary or unfair to the veterans of our Nation. There is clearly a great deal of work to be done. Let me just say that it could not be done without the help of the VFW, and I welcome your appearance here today.

I want to call upon members of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs for any statements they might wish to make.

Senator Randolph?

Senator RANDOLPH. Mr. Chairman, we are helped today by the counsel we shall receive from Commander Carr and his associates in the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

I think it is best for me to make no statement. I concur in what you have said. You have discussed the pending legislation, the position taken by you, the able chairman of this committee, and by your comembers.

I would want to say that perhaps I might comment on testimony a little later. But, I believe that it would be preferable to me and helpful to the committee in expediting testimony if we could give

you the opportunity, Commander, to address us as soon as possible. That is not to say that other members might not want to speak at this time, and certainly that would be most appropriate.

The only comment I would make, and not in the form of a pleasantry, although it is pleasant to say, is that I am very happy that in the auditorium today with you is the former National Commander of Veterans of Foreign Wars, Rich Homan of West Virginia.

Thank you.

Chairman HARTKE. Our new ranking minority member of this committee, and one who has been dedicated in working for the welfare of our Nation's veterans, Senator Hansen.

Senator Hansen.

Senator HANSEN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

And, let me add my brief word of welcome. Let me say that there are not too many subjects these days upon which most Americans agree, but I think, without any doubt that there is one thing that we can all agree upon: and that is that if there is one group of people in all of America that merit the full consideration and appreciation of this country for what they have done, it is the veteran.

I think that you, who have fought the battles and have kept the faith and have kept this country strong, make it possible for all of the rest of us to live as free men. There is no way I know at all that we can place monetary value on your contribution.

Thank you for coming this afternoon.

Chairman HARTKE. From the State of Iowa, a distinguished member of our committee, Senator Harold Hughes.

Senator HUGHES. Thank you very much, Mr Chairman.

I simply want to say that I concur basically with what you said in your opening statement. I think that as Senator Randolph said, I will refrain from making a statement at this time. Perhaps I will have some comments later on.

Thank you very kindly.

Chairman HARTKE. Next we have the former ranking minority member of this committee, who is now the ranking minority member of Armed Services Committee. He continues his dedicated interest in veterans' affairs. It was always a pleasure last year to work with him in a bipartisan cause to do more for veterans.

Senator Strom Thurmond.

Senator THURMOND. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Commander Carr, Senator Johnston, Mr. Cooper Holt, and Mr. Stover and my colleagues and friends. I am delighted to see the VFW come here and present its legislative program today.

Senator Johnston, we are delighted to have you with us.

I want to say to the commander that you will get a very sympathetic hearing. During my lifetime, every war in which this country has engaged, fortunately, has been overseas.

So, you men here today, wearing this VFW cap—and I am proud to be a lifetime member of this organization—are the ones who have really fought the war. You have gone abroad. You have offered your very life for your country. And, so far as I am concerned, there is hardly anything that is too good for you.

We would not have a country today. We would not have freedom today if it was not for you people here today. I just thank God for the loyalty and patriotism of men of your caliber.

I want to commend you for the strong stand you have taken for America, standing up for our country, and the strong stand you have taken against those who dodge the draft and deserted the service.

We would not have gotten a cease-fire and this war would not be coming to an end if the Americans who fought abroad had followed the course of those who went to Canada and Sweden. So far as I am concerned, those who went to Canada and Sweden should suffer the consequence; they should be tried as any other law violator is tried, because I don't believe this country is going to say, "We forget it and we grant you amnesty."

Again, Commander Carr, we are delighted to have you with us, and we look forward with anticipation to hearing your fine statement.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman HARTKE. Thank you, Senator Thurmond.

And, from the State of California—you are No. 1 in population, Alan.

Senator CRANSTON. Yes, and in every other respect.

Chairman HARTKE. I would say this to you. California is No. 1 in every respect except one, they are second to Indiana.

Senator Alan Cranston from California.

Senator CRANSTON. Thank you very much.

I want very briefly to join in welcoming you, Commander Carr, to this gathering. I want to express my deep sense of thanks to the VFW for the tremendous work you have done, in particular in relation to veterans health and hospital matters, where I have been particularly focusing my attention and where Frank Stover and Cooper Holt and so many others of you have been by far the most effective ally in this work that we have sought to accomplish and where we have made many gains to assure that veterans get the health care to which they are entitled and which must be due as a cost of war that must be paid.

We have not yet accomplished all that we need to accomplish in this field, but I am confident the VFW will continue its great efforts until we have completely achieved our initial goal.

Tomorrow, there will be on the Senate floor, and I am confident there will be an overwhelming passage on the Senate floor tomorrow, two bills of major importance. One is S. 59, the Veterans Health Care Expansion Act, and the other is S. 284, the Veterans Drug and Alcohol Treatment and Rehabilitation Act. Both of these represent some very important steps forward.

The first, I think, is directly related to the strengthening and the survival of the independent Veterans' Administration hospital system that we have fought so hard to maintain in our country.

I was particularly eager to have these scheduled on the Senate floor at a time when you are in Washington, and we managed to do that. So, it will be a tribute to your great work in this field tomorrow when the Senate adopts those bills.

I thank you again for your help in getting them this far. I beseech your help in getting them all the way to enactment and in seeing to it that they are properly carried out after we make them, with your help, the law of this land.

Chairman HARTKE. From the State of Vermont, Senator Robert Stafford.

Senator STAFFORD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Although the State of Vermont is not quite as large as the State of California, I want you, Commander Carr, to know that the welcome from the Vermont Senator is just as warm as that from Senator Cranston and the others here on the committee.

I am personally very proud that I have been a member of VFW ever since 1946, and I intend to continue in it.

I am gratified to see that you are backed up by an absolute full house here today.

I shall conclude by saying I think when the 93d Congress has been written into the history books, that you will find that this committee has backed you up just about as well as your colleagues have in this auditorium this afternoon.

Chairman HARTKE. A new member to the Senate and a new member to this committee, of course, is Senator James McClure from Idaho.

Senator McCLURE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I will be very brief. I don't think I can state more eloquently my beliefs than what Senator Thurmond has all ready said. I second what he has said.

I think those of us on this committee are aware of the steadfast service that each of you and the people that you represent have given to our country. Each one of us is grateful for that, as well as the steadfast way in which you supported this committee in the last several, trying years.

I think we owe a particular debt of gratitude to veterans' organizations, of which VFW is far from the least in terms of the kind of support which the country and its goals have enjoyed in recent years.

I am certain that there will be tough times and tough decisions ahead as well, and we can count on your concern as interested citizens in making the same kind of decisions and the same kind of support of our free institutions for which this organization has always been noted.

Thank you very much for being here, and I'm certain, as the others have said, that we will see a quick vote on the floor tomorrow. I wouldn't be at all surprised but that we see someone in the gallery just monitoring what happens.

Chairman HARTKE. Senator Talmadge has asked me to express his regrets at not being able to be here. But he is with you in spirit, and certainly in every other way when we need him.

Now, at this time, we are honored to have the distinguished Senator from Louisiana, Senator J. Bennett Johnston, to make an important introduction to this committee.

**STATEMENT OF HON. J. BENNETT JOHNSTON, JR., A U.S. SENATOR  
FROM THE STATE OF LOUISIANA**

Senator JOHNSTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, members of the committee. It is a great personal pleasure for me, as well as an honor, to introduce my good friend, Pat Carr, to you, from Metairie, La.

Senator Randolph, he is the current commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and we are very proud of that, as we know you are proud to have the ex-commander from West Virginia.

I have known Pat for a very long time, and before that, my father, who was the State commander of the VFW, was a good friend of Pat Carr's, too. He has long been active in VFW.

He is a distinguished lawyer from Louisiana, and a great veteran in his own right. He was on his 40th mission with the U.S. Air Force in the Second World War, flying over Hungary when he was shot down. He became a POW in 1944 and released, very happily, in 1945. So, Pat can speak to the problems of veterans and of POW's with particular empathy.

Mr. Chairman, you remarked earlier, a question about how effective will be the voice of veterans in this coming session of the Congress when we consider this legislation. I can tell you that the voice of the VFW, through Pat Carr, will be very strong.

I know that because, first of all, I know that the VFW is at record strength, 1.8 million members, and they are active members.

Members of the VFW, as most of you know, just don't have their names on a list somewhere. They are active and they are involved, and they are willing to stand up when this time comes. I know they will be effective because Pat Carr is a very effective person; a very effective commander.

So, it is with a great deal of personal pleasure and honor that I introduce to you the national commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Patrick Carr, a veteran of Louisiana.

Chairman HARTKE. We are delighted to have you and are honored by your presence, and I think you ought to feel grateful at the kind of response you had from your members. That is a wonderful tribute to you, and I think it is well-deserved.

But, more than that, I think you understand that after being in a position of responsibility, as you have been, it is nice to have the people back there cheering you forward.

Commander CARR. Indeed it is, sir.

I might say, Mr. Chairman, that after listening to members of the committee and what they had to say, that I have no doubt what you say is true, that what we say to you today will fall on sympathetic ears, to say the least.

**STATEMENT OF PATRICK E. CARR, COMMANDER IN CHIEF, VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES, ACCOMPANIED BY FRANCIS W. STOVER, DIRECTOR, NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE SERVICE, VFW, AND COOPER T. HOLT, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, WASHINGTON OFFICE, VFW**

Commander CARR. Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, it is a great privilege to appear before your distinguished committee to present the legislative program of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. This is our third appearance before this distinguished committee. Already our members look forward to this hearing as a highlight of our Washington conference of national and department officers.

This is our 20th successive year of membership growth. The Veterans of Foreign Wars was founded, as most of the members of this committee know, back in 1899, when a handful of veterans of the Spanish-American War met almost simultaneously in several cities to discuss mutual problems of returning veterans of that conflict during the last century. These veterans subsequently joined together to establish the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. From that beginning in 1899, the Veterans of Foreign Wars has grown steadily until today we have the largest membership in our history. This next year will be our 75th anniversary, and as we go to our national convention in New Orleans, we are sure that we will be well over the 1.8 million mark.

Accompanying me today are the men who are directly responsible for the vitality and leadership of our organization. These are the officers, commanders, and committee members at all levels of our organization from all over this Nation, who have helped make the Veterans of Foreign Wars the greatest veterans' organization in the land. I know I speak for all of them when I express the deep appreciation for the opportunity to appear before this great committee.

The many programs of service to veterans and their families, to our communities, and to the Nation are the primary reasons for our continued growth. As I previously indicated, many of the members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, who have labored so hard over the years in behalf of our programs and purposes, are with me today. Many of them have already visited with you or will be visiting with you today and tomorrow.

Time does not permit a complete description of all of the programs which the Veterans of Foreign Wars carries out in behalf of veterans and their dependents and other programs for the benefit of the Nation. I will, however, refer to one of these programs, which is our Voice of Democracy Program. This is a script-writing contest participated in each year by high school students from the 50 States, the District of Columbia, Guam, and the Panama Canal. The theme again this year is "My Responsibility To Freedom." Five scholarships, totaling \$22,500, will be awarded to the winners of this script-writing competition at our congressional banquet tomorrow night. The first-place winner will deliver his or her speech and receive the first prize of \$10,000 to be used to further his or her education at the college or university of his or her choice. Mr. Chairman, these Voice of Democracy State and territorial winners will also be visiting with their Congressmen and U.S. Senators here on Capitol Hill today and tomorrow.

The legislative program of the Veterans of Foreign Wars is established by the approval of resolutions by the delegates representing our membership at our annual national conventions. Our most recent national convention, held in Minneapolis, Minn. last August, approved about 300 resolutions. And, I might interject at this point that we had registered some 16,000 delegates at that convention. The majority of these resolutions relate to legislation coming within the jurisdiction of this committee. Following our convention, our national legislative, national civil service and employment and national security and foreign affairs committees met here in Washing-

ton and reviewed these 300 resolutions. As a result of their meetings, a representative list of national resolutions was recommended by these committees, and I have approved, as commander in chief, our "Priority Legislative Program for 1973." This program has been printed in an attractive brochure, and a copy has been furnished to every Member of Congress and Government officials having a responsibility for carrying out and implementing of veterans' programs.

It would be deeply appreciated if a copy of the "Digest" of our national mandates, adopted by delegates attending our Minneapolis Convention, and a copy of the brochure listing our 1973 priority goals be made a part of my remarks at the conclusion of my statement.

Chairman HARTKE. Without objection they will be made a part of the record at the conclusion of the hearing.

Commander CARR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, it is a historical fact that the contribution made by those who wore the uniform in time of war are soon forgotten in the aftermath. The Vietnam war has been unpopular and has deeply divided the Nation. It has come as a shock, however, to the Veterans of Foreign Wars to realize that even before this war was over, veterans and their dependents are already being given the short end of the stick.

I am referring to the shocking and totally unexpected and unwarranted vetoing of two comprehensive veterans' bills on October 27, 1972. With the war still continuing in Vietnam, the antiveteran forces in the Office of Management and Budget and in other policy-making levels of our Government persuaded the President to withhold his approval of two comprehensive veterans' bills in the name of economy and balancing the budget.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars holds that the cost of veterans' programs has been and always will be a part of the cost of war. If there are any programs which should be exempted from budgetary and fiscal limitations, they are veterans' programs. We can't expect veterans who have made one sacrifice in the national interest to make a second sacrifice at the expense of his health in order to balance the budget. Compassion dictates that there should be no economizing at the expense of veterans and their dependents. Veterans' programs should be exempt from budget restrictions.

Mr. Chairman, it is most difficult to determine just what the national health strategy of this administration is regarding veterans' hospitals and medical care. We do know where the Congress stands. We do know the policy the Congress has laid down is, for example, that the Veterans' Administration shall maintain an average daily patient load of not less than 85,000 in Veterans' Administration hospitals. Regretfully, we also know the Veterans' Administration contemptuously ignores this congressional mandate by maintaining a substantially lower average daily patient load, which is around 82,000 at the present time.

Mr. Chairman, the Congress has always been most compassionate and generous in its treatment of veterans and their dependents. Our problems have almost always originated in the executive branch—the budget makers, the high policy planners, and the officials who help establish national priorities. What can we expect from the executive branch regarding the establishment of a National Health



Insurance System? We fear, and justifiably so, that a National Health System contemplated by the Administration will do grave injury to Veterans' Administration hospitals. As I stated, we do not know for sure what this Administration's national health policy is regarding veterans. We do know, however, the contemplated National Health System is inter-related with veterans' medical care. For example, the then Office of Management and Budget Director, George Schultz, wrote to Members of the 92d Congress there would be no new Veterans' Administration hospitals built until, and I quote:

The President has recently introduced national health insurance proposals, which could have profound implications for the VA hospital system. These initiatives are a new element that require consideration before coming to decisions on new hospital construction proposals. Therefore, we cannot move ahead with any new hospital construction proposal until there is a careful evaluation of the role, size, and geographic distribution of the VA hospital system in the light of these proposals.

We further know that in the Memorandum of Disapproval issued by the White House on H.R. 10880, it was stated:

The bill runs counter to this Administration's national health strategy which would provide national financing mechanisms for health care and sharply reduce the Federal Government's role in the direct provision of services.

Since the Veterans' Administration provides practically all of the Federal Government's hospital and medical care directly to veterans, and it is the stated policy to sharply reduce the Federal Government's role in this regard, is it any wonder the Veterans of Foreign Wars fear a National Health System will swallow up in whole or at least in great part the Veterans' Administration's hospital and medical system? We know where the Office of Management and Budget stands on this issue. We'll be leaning heavily on the Congress and this committee to maintain, improve, and strengthen the integrity and independence of the Veterans' Administration's hospital and medical system.

Mr. Chairman, one of the most important provisions of the vetoed H.R. 10880, 92d Congress, mandated the Veterans' Administration to improve the staff-patient ratio in Veterans' Administration hospitals to approach the staff-patient ratio in comparable community hospitals. The Veterans' Administration controls the number of veterans being admitted to Veterans' Administration hospitals by rejections, postponement of admissions, and other actions to hold down the average daily patient census below the minimum mandated by Congress. By holding down the average daily patient census, the Veterans' Administration has been able to maintain and even improve very slightly the staff-patient ratio. Even so, it is a shocking low of 1.5 to 1—far below the staff-patient ratio in comparable community hospitals, which is about 3 to 1.

It is no wonder, Mr. Chairman, that more and more veterans are complaining to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the long waits before being admitted to VA hospitals, housekeeping problems once they have been admitted, practically no service of any kind in some Veterans' Administration hospitals on weekends, and similar complaints, all of which are rooted in the low staff-patient ratio or inadequate personnel in Veterans' Administration hospitals.

Mr. Chairman, the veto of the National Cemeteries Act was another tragic and unwarranted action. Here was a bill which had been devel-

oped over a period of several Congresses, and would have been a giant step in carrying out the Veterans of Foreign Wars' goal of at least one national cemetery in each State so that every veteran who so desires may be buried in a national cemetery reasonably close to his home.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars is extremely pleased that this committee has unanimously approved a new national cemetery bill, S. 49, and a new veterans' medical care bill, S. 59, which are pending before the Senate. It is our understanding that these bills are scheduled for consideration and vote by the full Senate sometime tomorrow afternoon. And, Mr. Chairman, I can assure you we will have a lot of people in the gallery. We are interested and we will show that interest tomorrow.

You may rest assured, Mr. Chairman, that these two most important, comprehensive veterans' bills, S. 49 and S. 59, have the full and total support of the entire membership of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. We will be extending every effort to have these two bills enacted into law as soon as possible.

Mr. Chairman, the antiveteran sentiment manifested in the two vetoed veterans' bills approved by the 92d Congress rears its ugly head in many of the provisions of the 1974 Veterans' Administration budget, which I can characterize as most distressing and discouraging; in fact, many of its provisions show a callous disregard for the needs of veterans and their families. The official view of our organization regarding the 1974 Veterans' Administration budget is contained in my statement of January 30, 1973. It again will be deeply appreciated if a copy of the Veterans of Foreign Wars' positions and its reaction to the 1974 Veterans' Administration budget, as contained in my statement, be made a part of my remarks at the conclusion of my testimony.

Mr. Chairman, many Veterans' Administration programs are either being cutback drastically in this 1974 Veterans' Administration budget or the very modest increases proposed are woefully inadequate to meet the cost of inflation and increased needs for additional services, such as veterans' hospital care.

The most distressing cut is in the area of medical care. As indicated, the congressional mandate is being contemptuously ignored by the Veterans' Administration regarding the 85,500 average daily patient load which the Veterans' Administration is mandated to maintain in its 168 Veterans' Administration hospitals. The current level is about 82,000. Further reductions are slated in 1974 to a figure of 80,000. When we realize that the Veterans' Administration always lags behind or operates less than the contemplated average daily patient load, it can be expected that the Veterans' Administration is probably shooting for an average daily patient load of 78,000 or thereabouts. In any event, the difference between the congressionally mandated 85,500 and the contemplated 80,000 for next year is the equivalent of closing down 11 500-bed Veterans' Administration hospitals.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars is apprehensive that some VA regional offices are going to be closed in the not too distant future. I am referring to a contemplated reorganization of Veterans' Administration regional offices which this year's Veterans' Administration budget calls for, so that the Veterans' Administration field structure will be realigned to fit the 10 standard Federal regions. We have been

unable to learn details of this structural reorganization, but we do know that this year's Veterans' Administration budget calls for a wholesale reduction of Veterans' Administration employees in Veterans' Administration regional offices, estimated to be up to 1500 in the Department of Veterans' Benefits. Many are convinced that this restructuring will result in the closing of many Veterans' Administration regional offices.

Mr. Chairman, none were more shocked and amazed than the Veterans of Foreign Wars to learn of the outrageous provision in the 1974 Veterans' Administration budget which would have literally taken \$160 million out of the pockets of combat-disabled veterans of the Vietnam war. Precisely at a time when the President was trying to negotiate a final settlement of the Vietnam war, the prisoners of war were coming home, and the missing in action still to be accounted for, the faceless officials of the Office of Management and Budget sent to Congress a proposal which was aimed directly at making the disabled Vietnam veteran a second-class citizen.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars is proud of bringing this matter to the attention of our membership and the Nation. We must not let such a proposed revision rear its ugly head again. That is why the Veterans of Foreign Wars strongly supports S. 882 by Chairman Vance Hartke, which will freeze the existing rating schedule as it applies to Vietnam veterans and require the concurrence of Congress before any proposed revision of the rating schedule can go into effect.

It is further noted in this 1974 VA budget that there will be reduction in medical research, reduced out reach and other efforts to contact returning Vietnam veterans, a slash in the hospital construction budget, and not one dime for the Medical School Assistance Act, which was authorized by the Congress last year to help reduce the acute shortage of doctors and other badly needed medical personnel.

Lastly, there is no money in the 1974 budget to offset veterans' pensions being cut because of the social security increase of last year. Hundreds of thousands of veterans and their dependents have suffered a loss in their veterans' pension payments because of the 20-percent social security increase in 1972. I can unequivocally state that more mail, phone calls and communications have reached the attention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars on the veterans' pension cut caused by the social security increase than any veterans' issue in many years. These older veterans, in the main, are existing, for the most part, on social security and similar retirement income and their veterans' pension payments. Every dollar counts. In fact, every dollar is crucial. It came as a shock to many of these older veterans or their widows to learn that, on the one hand, when their social security pension was increased, the other hand was reducing their veterans' pension payment, and in many cases resulted in a net loss of income. Not only is there no money to offset the 1972 social security increase, but the 1974 budget spells out, it is going to save \$237 million out of the pockets of elderly disabled veterans and their dependents by doing nothing about the social security increase. Unless the Congress acts in this area, veterans and their dependents will have their VA pension checks reduced \$237 million in the months ahead and out of the pockets of those who can least afford to have the reductions.

Even more incredible, and to the astonishment of almost everybody, the 1974 Veterans' Administration budget calls for including a

wife's earnings in computing a veteran's entitlement to a Veterans' Administration pension. If the Congress would approve this budget recommendation, the Veterans' Administration would reduce the pension program by taking \$233 million from very disabled, sick, and elderly veterans. The Veterans of Foreign Wars will oppose any and all bills which may be introduced to carry out this request.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars commends all sponsors and cosponsors of pension bills which will carry out the Veterans of Foreign Wars' objective of protecting veterans and their dependents from a veteran's pension loss because of the 1972 social security increase. We urge your favorable consideration of one of these bills as soon as practicable.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars, as indicated in our priority legislative program and digest of resolutions, is extremely concerned with veterans' programs, rights, and benefits. The Veterans of Foreign Wars will be working closely with your committee for the favorable consideration and approval of bills carrying out these objectives. The Veterans of Foreign Wars is proud of its sponsorship, participation, and support of legislation which has sharply increased the GI bill rates, resulting in liberalizations and improvements which are helping the Vietnam veteran in his return to civil life. Public Law 92-540, the GI rate increase law, has done much to place Vietnam veterans on a comparable basis with veterans of previous wars so far as readjustment assistance is concerned.

Mr. Chairman, the Veterans of Foreign Wars has spent much time and effort trying to help reduce the staggeringly high number of unemployed veterans. The GI bill, unquestionably, has done more to help reduce this high unemployment list than any other single veterans' program. The Veterans' Employment Service of the Department of Labor and the National Committee on Jobs for Veterans are doing an admirable job trying to reduce the high number of unemployed veterans. More help is needed, especially to reduce the high number of unemployed Vietnam veterans, which, at last count, was over 200,000. That is one reason why the Veterans of Foreign Wars supported legislation developed by this committee which has authorized a substantial number of veterans' employment representatives in the State employment offices to be filled by Vietnam veterans. It is our understanding that money for these authorized, new positions in the Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment Service has not been requested in this year's 1974 budget—just another example of the hollow ring of statements such as, "We can never fully repay the patriotic sacrifices of the American veteran."

Mr. Chairman, the Veterans of Foreign Wars does not relish the idea of the Veterans' Administration having to report to the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare regarding veterans' programs. Yet, this is a fact. Under the present reorganization of the executive branch of the Government, Caspar Weinberger wears two hats—Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, and Counselor to the President on Human Resources. The supercrats have decreed that some veterans' programs, such as pension, education, and medical services, are not a part of the cost of war, as the Veterans of Foreign Wars holds, and reason dictates, but, somehow, come under the umbrella of human resources. In effect, therefore, the head of the Veterans' Administration must now report to the head of the

Department of Health, Education, and Welfare regarding these veterans' programs. This is an outrageous development and one which must be changed before the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare takes over all veterans' programs and scatters them throughout the executive branch of the Government.

A third bill scheduled for consideration and vote tomorrow is S. 284 by Senator Cranston, who has done so much important work developing this bill, and cosponsored by all members of this committee together with Senator Humphrey and Senator Schweiker. S. 284 will authorize the use of existing Veterans' Administration facilities to meet and attack the social problem of drug addiction among veterans. The Veterans of Foreign Wars was disappointed when the 92d Congress failed to finally approve a Veterans' drug care bill before final adjournment. We are hopeful S. 284 will receive quick approval by the 93d Congress.

I would like to digress for one moment on a matter of tremendous importance to our membership, which is not the primary responsibility of this committee. I am referring to bills pending in this Congress which would grant amnesty to draft dodgers and deserters who fled to foreign countries to avoid military duty in our Armed Forces. The Veterans of Foreign Wars believes, now that the war is over, these draft dodgers and deserters should be prepared to suffer the consequences of their actions. Our members are opposed to amnesty today, tomorrow, and forever.

Other bills which are of great interest are proposals to have Veterans' Day restored to November 11. If there is any one particular day in this country which is symbolic of the contribution made by veterans who served in the Armed Forces during war time, it is November 11. That day has been recorded forever in our history. The Veterans of Foreign Wars believe that that day should be restored as Veterans' Day. We are hoping that the 93d Congress will approve this priority objective of our organization.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, may I again express my sincere gratitude for this opportunity to appear before this distinguished committee.

It is our hope that each of you will be with us tomorrow night at our annual congressional banquet at the Sheraton Park Hotel. We will be honoring one of your distinguished colleagues, the chairman of the Senate Committee on Armed Services, the Honorable John C. Stennis of Mississippi. He will be the 10th recipient of our Veterans of Foreign Wars Congressional Award for outstanding service to the Nation. The dinner will begin promptly at 7 p.m., with a reception at 6 p.m.

Mr. Chairman, I would be happy to answer any questions that the committee might have. If I can answer, I will; if I can't, my staff will. I thank you.

Chairman HARTKE. Let me say, Commander, that was an excellent statement, and you have my congratulations for it.

I think, again, the demonstration of the support by the people here in the auditorium is indicative of the type of response which you expect, and which I think you are going to get.

I think it is appropriate, though, for me, at this time, maybe for some of you who have not been acquainted with the people who work

here in Washington, to understand that a lot of effort would go unnoticed if it wasn't for those who are constantly working with our staff. They are Cooper Holt and Frank Stover, to name a few.

Would you gentlemen, Cooper and Frank, stand up?

Now, Senator Randolph, do you have any questions or comments?

Senator RANDOLPH. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I have been intensely interested in the statement of Commander Carr. I feel that this material he has presented for the consideration of the members of this committee is comprehensive. It is a focusing of attention on the needs of the veterans.

I think it is a very blunt statement, and that is exactly the kind of statement we want to hear. I think it is a very hard-hitting statement, and that is the kind of statement that the subject matter you address yourself to demands at this time.

I think what we are going to have to do, Mr. Chairman, what I am sure we want to do, and that is to insure that there be a more coordinated and aggressive program, not within this committee or its like committee in the House, but in the Congress generally, to provide veterans their health and welfare to the *n*th degree. This is very important.

I think, Commander, that what you have said brings a basic response from the members of this committee. In the mature and conscious judgments of these members, perhaps there will be some variations and that is understandable.

Your men at the Washington level of your very excellent and dedicated staff know that is what they want. They want to come and discuss matters with us, and oftentimes, clarify positions that you take on a broad front.

I think we are, as I said, in basic agreement that the benefits that you believe you deserve, we believe also that you fully deserve them, and we want to help you to achieve them.

I would not want to be presumptuous, Mr. Chairman, but I would want to say to you, Commander, that I hope that in your presentation to the Senate and House, to the Congress, that you will also be cognizant of the fact that the strengths that you possess, the judgments that you make, the appeals that you set forth, should be directed to the White House, not just the Congress.

I am never a harping critic of any administration or the Chief Executive of the Republic. I only think, however, that in these matters the President, acting on counsel that he has received, has made many mistakes.

Therefore, your membership, your leadership might, at this juncture, be helping him to correct mistakes that possibly he might give a second look at. Who knows? We never know. Let's approach it, then, in that attitude, not damning a person, but let's say we disagree with him. We think he made mistakes. We think those who advised him were wrong.

Let's make a strong, vigorous appeal to the President. And, then, if that is not successful, if the President, in his judgment, vetoes again the Veterans' medical care bill, vetoes again the national cemetery bill, then, of course, that means that this subject matter has been returned to the Congress, which originated the legislation. There, once again, the Congress will be concerned.

But, at this juncture, Mr. Commander, you have two parties to work with, the legislative and the executive. Do not neglect one because you feel you have, of course, support, as you do here on the Hill.

And I think that this approach to the White House can be couched in vigor, with valid argument, and that is the way to have the case presented, as you have done here in your statement today.

So, the Congress, the membership, will need your help. Personally, I feel that if these two measures are vetoed by the President, there will be an overriding of those vetoes in the Senate. I would not want to speak for the other body. I do recall, as you, Mr. Chairman, and all the members of the committee recall, that we had a unanimity of support for these measures in the Senate last year. There was no dissent.

I hope it will be so this year, and I hope that either tomorrow or the next day, as the Senate Calendar provides, that we will pass these two measures and that the House will join, they will go to the President. He and his advisers will work their collective responsibility, and do what they believe to be best.

For me, it is not only best, but it is right that you be supported in these matters. Thank you very much.

Chairman HARTKE. Thank you, Senator Randolph.

I want to comment on one thing. Senator Hansen, Senator Thurmond, and myself, acting together with Senator Mansfield, Senator Byrd, Senator Scott, and Senator Griffin, were able to work out this understanding so that you could have this vote tomorrow while the VFW is in Washington.

Any comments, Senator Hansen?

Senator HANSEN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Commander Carr, may I say to you that yours is an excellent statement. It is clear, it is constructive, and it is devoid of any equivocation.

I am sure that most of us can agree that just as I believe the President is trying sincerely to do what he believes is in the best interest of this country, this great organization is motivated by those same considerations and desires.

I have no doubt at all but what if an All-Volunteer Army will work, and I have reservations about that. I think we will keep that law in the books.

It seems to me that we can do many things to demonstrate our willingness to stand behind the trends and to support those who support freedom and support this country.

I think your legislative platform outlines those goals, and I subscribe to them. But, I want to say, if we can have an All-Volunteer Army work, it will work only if we follow through in demonstrating by our conviction and our commitment to the things that are important to you, that we believe in the purposes that you so valiantly ascribe yourselves.

I want to say that there will be a number of things that come up that we may not agree. I don't agree with my President always, by any means. I've demonstrated it on the floor. But, it just seems that because of what you have done and what you mean to America and freedom-loving people throughout the world, your goals are ones to which we can subscribe.

I subscribe to them, and I would hope that we can recognize that honorable people may disagree and not bear malice. And, I can say, as a member of this committee, that it has been my pleasure and great privilege to work with members on both sides of the aisle on this committee, and I have yet to find any indication of any pettiness, any desire to take advantage or political advantage of a situation for partisan purposes. It's a great committee to work with. It is a new committee, as you know.

I hope, as it is reviewed by history, as indeed it will be, that we might agree through this committee and its counterpart in the House, a clearer understanding of the problems of veterans will have been gained by the Congress, your problems will have been put into sharper perspective in order that people everywhere can understand what this Nation can and must do if we are to have people do the things for their country that you have so valiantly done yourselves.

I compliment you on your statement. I think that there will be no doubt as to what your position is. And, I am certain that whether you address it to the executive or not, he is going to know very clearly exactly where you stand.

Thank you very much.

Chairman HARTKE. Senator Hughes asked to be excused in view of the fact that he had to go to another committee meeting as well.

I don't want to permit this situation to pass without commenting on the fine work Senator Hughes has been doing with this committee and I hope you understand that he has a deep concern with alcoholism.

We recognize that, with many of the veterans, this is a problem of extreme concern. So, we do treasure his membership and dedication in this field. We don't think we have done nearly enough.

Next, Senator Cranston.

Senator CRANSTON. I want to thank you, first, for that statement which is very helpful in respect to much of the legislation that we must work on, and the very many, important issues that are before us.

I want to echo what Senator Randolph said, in urging that you do talk to all of the various people in places where decisions are going to be made in regard to this legislation. The VA is a very important place to let know your strong and deeply held feelings. It is also most important to let the White House know. And, if you can find anybody to talk to in the Office of Management and Budget, I think that is important.

I hope we will not be again confronted by a veto, or three vetoes, but if we are, I know we will have your help, and I think it is important that you make that very plain.

I do want to stress, in the spirit in which we have all been working together, the wonderful bipartisan way in which this legislation has been handled on Capitol Hill, and particularly in this committee.

Chairman Hartke has gone out of his way and done everything he could to assure that we were unanimous and together, regardless of party affiliation, on these issues, which have nothing to do with parties.

Senator Stafford, Senator Thurmond, and Senator Hansen have been just great in their approach and seeing to it that we always work things out and are totally together. We always have been, and I am sure we always will be.

It has made this committee very effective, and I know Senator McClure will be working with us in the same spirit. With that team-



work here and your teamwork with us, we can't lose in this very important battle.

Chairman HARTKE. Senator Thurmond.

Senator THURMOND. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Commander Carr, I want to congratulate you on a very fine statement, and I just simply want to say that I endorse your program.

I would say further, too, that as a ranking minority member of this committee, from the time it was organized until the past 30 days, it was a pleasure to work with Chairman Hartke. I don't think you could have picked from the membership of the Senate a chairman for this committee and members that are more favorable to the veteran.

Chairman Hartke and every member of this committee is a friend of the veteran and we expect to stand by him.

Chairman HARTKE. Senator Stafford.

Senator STAFFORD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

That was a very fine statement, Commander Carr, and I find myself in general agreement with it, as do the other members of this committee.

I think Senator Randolph has given you some very good advice, which I heartily subscribe to. And, last but not least, let me say in regard to your invitation to the dinner tomorrow night, I expect to be there, and I hope that some of the others here will be there also.

Chairman HARTKE. Senator McClure.

Senator McCLURE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I think the comments that have preceded me adequately express the feeling of this committee.

There is one aspect of your statement, though, that has not been referred to, and I think we would be very remiss if we didn't commend you on the Voice of Democracy program. Getting our young people thinking in terms of their obligations and opportunities as citizens of this country is one of the most important works that any of us could do.

This program which you have has stimulated that kind of concern on the part of our young people in this country in a very meaningful way during a period of time when so many were trying to turn our young away from a feeling of patriotism.

So, I think we should make special note of this program, and I extend my thanks to you, and my admiration of the young people that I have contact with as a result of that program. I always look forward to seeing the young people from my State here. I always look forward to hearing that presentation at the banquet.

It is a highlight of any program, and, very frankly, a highlight of a very crowded schedule for all those of us who serve in the Congress of the United States, and I want to thank you personally for it.

Chairman HARTKE. Senator Randolph.

Senator RANDOLPH. Mr. Chairman, I should like to reinforce what one of our new members of the committee has stated, Senator McClure, in reference to the Voice of Democracy contest.

I will not be critical of the media because the media, or course, has the problem of selectivity of coverage for both television and radio and the newspapers. But, I do recall that I was present that night when the girl from Wyoming—I wish I could remember her name—is there any Wyoming veteran here who can remember the young lady's

name—the young lady who was from Wyoming who won the contest?

Well, I should never forget a young lady's name.

I recall her speech, her essay, her message. I made comment about it in the Congressional Record, I was so impressed. I do this today as a postscript to what Senator McClure has said.

To hope that you will take every opportunity to alert the media to the winner, and see that there is some coverage because on that year there was absolutely nothing on radio or television or in the newspapers here, in the Nation's Capital, about what I felt was a very, very moving speech by a young lady.

I am sure that contacts were made. In bringing it to our attention today, I am not in a spirit of criticism. I am only hoping that this good that exists among a very substantial portion of our youth be accentuated, because there are others among our younger population and older population who are traveling another road.

The other night, there were 600 young people who attended an inter-collegiate basketball game between two universities. They remained in their seats when the national anthem was played. They talked and laughed and joked, one with the other, and moved about during the playing of the anthem.

My son called me about this. He has served in the Armed Forces of the United States of America, and he was very upset. It was late at night when he called me to tell of this happening.

I mention this here today not in any attempt to stand beside the flag. Rather, I emphasize that we need to rededicate ourselves to insure appropriate respect for the institutions which are not political, but the institutions which are ever the America of yesterday, today, and tomorrow to which we pledge ourselves.

Chairman HARTKE. Senator Hansen.

Senator HANSEN. Mr. Chairman, may I say to my very dear friend and colleague from West Virginia that I think he was alluding to Debra George, the young girl from Wyoming, of whom he spoke so praisingly, of the oration she gave.

She is now a student in school in Abilene, Tex. We want to share our good things in Wyoming with Texas.

I know she will be pleased to be reminded as I shall call to her attention what you have just said.

If I could take occasion, let me comment that I suspect it is hard for some of us at times to find how the press and the electronic media overlook things they consider to be very much worthwhile. I don't know why more press attention wasn't earned, wasn't deserved by her oration than it received here.

I can only say that perhaps it is true that things make news which are unusual. If that is true, I would like to believe, as indeed I do, that most young Americans are decent, honorable, patriotic, loyal, fine, young people.

Maybe because Debra George is also decent, loyal, fine, and patriotic, in addition to being very articulate and very forceful, some of the press deemed her observations not to be newsworthy.

We can make our own judgment as to their durability. I am certain that having been published in the "Congressional Record," as they were, having been read by schoolchildren throughout America, as I know they will be, what she said will have greater impact and be far

longer in those enduring qualities than are many other things that are currently said, and in the recent past have been said by those who find little good with this country of ours.

Chairman HARTKE. Senator Randolph.

Senator RANDOLPH. I hesitate because I do not want, Mr. Chairman, to encumber the record. But, I want to strengthen the record by asking, Mr. Chairman, that those sentiments of Debra George be made a part of this record. Not that the winner this year or any other year will not be equally important, but she outlined certain challenges that it would do us well to read in the record, as people see what the VFW has done for democracy with the Voice of Democracy contest.

Thank you.

Commander CARR. Mr. Chairman, a brief comment, sir.

We certainly appreciate the comments expressed by Senator Randolph. It seems, though, Senator, in our view, and in many instances there are so many of those good things that go on that are never mentioned in the press, radio, or on TV.

And, we agree with you that the youth of our Nation are, by far and large, good people. There is no question about that. It appears to us sometimes that when there is something we don't understand, when there is something that people seem to be tearing down, or people who are doing something that is in opposition to the best interest of our Nation, then the news media, for some reason feels, that's news.

And, when we have something good, such as the speech of that young girl you are talking about, they don't see that it is newsworthy.

I would just like to say to Senator Cranston, the winner of this year's Voice of Democracy contest is Cindy Pridy of California, Senator.

Senator CRANSTON. I am delighted to hear that, and I think it would be appropriate that her statement appear in the record of these proceedings.

Chairman HARTKE. We'll put that in the record, too.

Senator CRANSTON. While we're on the subject of Californians, I have spotted, since I spoke earlier, a great Californian who is a great predecessor of yours, and if your leadership matches that of Chief "Ray" Rainwater, you will be a great commander.

Chairman HARTKE. Any other comments?

Let me again say thank you, Commander. I wanted to call one thing to your attention. This is probably the largest attendance at any committee hearing that I have ever attended on Capitol Hill.

Have fun while you are here, but, stay in good enough shape. We have some work to do tomorrow. We want you back in full force tomorrow. Have fun in the meantime and enjoy yourselves.

Without objection, at this point in the record, I ordered to be printed all prepared statements, resolutions of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and other pertinent documents for the record.

The Committee hearing is adjourned.

(Whereupon, at 3:20 p.m., the committee was adjourned, to reconvene at the call of the Chair.)

(The previously mentioned resolutions of the VFW, a brochure entitled VFW Priority Goals for 1973, the statements of Commander Carr, and present and past winners of the Voice of Democracy contest follow:)

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES, NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE  
SERVICE, WASHINGTON, D.C.

DIGEST OF RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY THE 73RD NATIONAL CONVENTION, VETERANS  
OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES, AT MINNEAPOLIS, MINN., AUGUST 18-25,  
1972

Americanism.....	1
National Security and Foreign Affairs.....	2
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AMERICANISM

1. Support and promote 1972-73 Voice of Democracy Scholarship Program. (Res. 101)
2. Support the Federal Bureau of Investigation. (Res. 102a)  
Support the Subversive Activities Control Board. (Res. 102b)  
Prosecute subversive elements attacking the Armed Forces. (Res. 102c)  
Prosecute the Peoples Coalition for Peace & Justice and the National Peace Action Coalition. (Res. 102d)  
Commend the House Committee on Internal Security. (Res. 102e)  
Place case of stealing Government secrets by Daniel Ellsberg in proper perspective by labeling such action as aid and comfort to the enemy to deter others from similar behavior. (Res. 102f)  
Classify Jane Fonda, Ramsey Clark and others as traitorous meddlers and investigate any and all such individuals. (Res. 102g)
3. Establish a "Day of Pride" for the conclusion of the Vietnam conflict. (Res. 103)
4. Designate December 7 as a day of remembrance. (Res. 104)
5. Uphold conviction of Valerie Goguen for disrespect to the Flag. (Res. 105)
6. Restore prayer in public schools. (Res. 106)
7. Prohibit display and distribution of foreign enemy flags. (Res. 107)
8. Prohibit defacement and defilement of the American Flag. (Res. 108)
9. Oppose the National Holiday Act of 1971 and restore holidays to original dates. (Res. 109)
10. Oppose any change in the Pledge of Allegiance. (Res. 115)
11. Recommend a Congressional study of the Flag Code. (Res. 116)
12. Designate Flag Day as a legal national holiday. (Res. 117)
13. Support legislation authorizing a Congressional flag. (Res. 118)

NATIONAL SECURITY AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS

1. Seek proper treatment of American Prisoners of War by demanding:
  - (a) Open and impartial inspection of POW facilities by International Red Cross
  - (b) Release of sick and wounded
  - (c) Proper food and medical treatment
  - (d) Permit mail between POW's and families
  - (e) Identification of Prisoners of War
  - (f) Adherence to provisions of the Geneva Convention. (Res. 401)
2. For a strong National Defense:
  - (a) Maintain modern and sufficient Army
  - (b) Maintain strong air striking force and defense
  - (c) Maintain combat ready Marine Corps
  - (d) Maintain modern and sufficient Navy
  - (e) Provide sufficient funds for National Guard and Reserve Forces
  - (f) Support modern and enlarged U.S. Merchant Marine

- (g) Support strong and meaningful military departments
  - (h) Advocate development and testing of nuclear weapons, including anti-missile defense weapons
  - (i) Support a policy of control and coordination of research and development
  - (j) Support the continuance of adequate forces in NATO
  - (k) Restore and enhance discipline, morale and esprit de corps. (Res. 402)
3. Support the efforts of the United States in providing peace in the Middle East. (Res. 403)
  4. Support increased U.S. Military capacity to compete with the expanding Soviet Military capability. (Res. 404)
  5. Uphold the 1903 Convention between Panama and the United States. (Res. 405)
  6. Support the President's policies in Southeast Asia. (Res. 406)
  7. Support Department of Defense military research programs and the ROTC and Junior ROTC programs. (Res. 408)
  8. Continue present trade embargo and Diplomatic isolation against Cuba and retain control of Guantanamo Bay. (Res. 410)
  9. Demand immediate information on all Prisoners of War and Missing in Action in Southeast Asia and Red Cross or neutral nation inspection of POW camps. (Res. 414)
  10. Deny benefits to all who engage in Un-American activities. (Res. 416)
  11. Restore the research and development efforts of the military forces. (Res. 417)
  12. Maintain an effective Selective Service System which can act effectively in the time of National need. (Res. 418)
  13. Maintain a future National defense policy:
    - (a) The United States will maintain modernized military forces in sufficient strength and balance as are necessary to provide the element of military power necessary to our position as a first rate nation.
    - (b) Parochial and traditional roles of military forces be re-examined with a view toward change where such change will provide for improved military posture at lessened cost.
    - (c) Reserve Forces programs and individual commitments thereto will be realigned to provide for a real and immediate contribution from these elements of natural defense.
    - (d) The Veterans of Foreign Wars continues to support the roles and missions of the Armed Forces and Joint Chiefs of Staff services. (Res. 419)
  14. Support the bombing and mining of ports in North Vietnam. (Res. 420)
  15. Oppose the final settlement in Vietnam until a full accounting of those Missing in Action is made. (Res. 421)
  16. Provide regulations for the retention of records and notes in Navy Court-martial cases. (Res. 422)
  17. Restore privileges to retired military personnel at overseas bases. (Res. 427)
  18. Continue to furnish military and other support to the Republic of China. (Res. 428)
  19. Oppose general or selective amnesty to draft dodgers and deserters and that those who defected to foreign countries by denied re-entry to the United States. (Res. 431)
  20. Support the U.S. policy of bombing military targets in the North Vietnam dike areas. (Res. 435)
  21. Support a position that in the future the U.S. shall not be involved in a "No Win" war. (Res. 436)
  22. Department of Justice shall investigate the actions of Ramsey Clark. (Res. 437)
  23. Strategic Arms agreement between U.S.A. and USSR:
    - (a) Continued U.S. adherence to the May 1972 Strategic Arms Limitation Agreement occur *only* if the most thorough-going verification techniques reveal that the Soviets are complying
    - (b) No effort or expense be spared to verify Soviet compliance with the agreement
    - (c) The American public be fully and frankly kept informed of the dynamic and shifting U.S.-Soviet balance so that if the U.S., by living up to the agreement, is faced with being the "second strongest" nation in the world, domestic public opinion will support U.S. withdrawal from the agreement and massive re-arming

- (d) The U.S. fully fund and deploy the TRIDENT submarine, the B-1 Bomber and the two agreed ABM sites
  - (e) No effort or expense be spared in the critically important research and development of offensive and defensive strategic weapons technology. (Res. 438)
24. Concern for American Prisoners of War:
    - (a) A total and complete opposition to the withdrawal of all American troops and personnel from South Vietnam prior to the release of all Prisoners of War by North Vietnam and her allies
    - (b) A fervent hope that those Americans who advocate the immediate withdrawal of all American troops and personnel from South Vietnam and leaving behind the American Prisoners of War in the prison camps of North Vietnam with the naive hope that North Vietnam and her allies will be "nice guys" and release all of them will sincerely and conscientiously reconsider their position
    - (c) A fervent hope that the United States will constantly harass North Vietnam and her allies by appropriate military action until at least North Vietnam and her allies truly "see the light" and release all of our American Prisoners of War so that they may return home to their families, at which time it is then hoped that this unpopular war may be brought to an end. (Res. 439)
  25. Provide proper punishment for actions such as My Lai without public furor. (Res. 440)
  26. Enhance public opinion of the military services. (Res. 441)
  27. Oppose World Government. (Res. 213)

## VETERANS RIGHTS AND BENEFITS PROGRAMS

### COMPENSATION

1. Provide increases in compensation for service connected disabled veterans' (Res. 606)
2. Authorize presumption of service connection for psychosis and malignancy if manifested within five years following wartime service. (Res. 611-1)
3. Provide that campaign or expeditionary service be considered wartime service for benefits purposes. (Res. 611-2)
4. Eliminate the requirement of causal relation of the disability to performance of military duty for automobile allowance entitlement. (Res. 611-5)
5. Grant presumption of service connection for eye damage for radar operators. (Res. 622)
6. Allow service connected disabled veterans to receive aid and attendance allowance. (Res. 636)
7. Provide DIC benefits to all widows of 100% disabled veterans, regardless of cause of death. (Res. 639)
8. Improve the death benefit program for widows and dependents of service connected veterans. (Res. 647)
9. Allow a break in continuity for the twenty year protection in compensation. (Res. 650)
10. Provide dependents compensation for veterans rated less than 50%. (Res. 654)
11. Provide proportionate disability compensation rates. (Res. 681)

### PENSION

1. Authorize election and re-election without restriction of pension benefits under the "Old" and "New" pension laws, and permit the Spanish-American War widows an opportunity to elect and re-elect between Spanish-American War pension and "New" law. (Res. 611-3)
2. Authorize a parent as a dependent for pension purposes if the parent is living with the veteran or dependent in fact. (Res. 611-4)
3. Provide a service pension for all veterans 65 years or older. (Res. 637)
4. Provide a separate pension for veterans of World War I. (Res. 642)
5. Provide maximum pension benefits pending award of Social Security disability benefits. (Res. 671)
6. Provide a temporary "permanent total rating" for pension. (Res. 675)
7. Provide pension payments for the total number of veterans children. (Res. 706)
8. Include "housebound" veterans for continuance of drugs and treatment if exceeding the income limitation under pension. (Res. 709)
9. Increase income limitations for DIC and pension programs. (Res. 727)

## NATIONAL CEMETERIES, MONUMENTS AND BURIAL BENEFITS

1. Provide adequate facilities at USS *Arizona* Memorial. (Res. 304)
2. Transfer the Congressional Cemetery in Washington, D.C., to the control of the Federal government. (Res. 332)
3. Provide a National Cemetery in every State. (Res. 604)
4. Provide military Honor Guards at all National Cemeteries. (Res. 683)
5. Oppose any efforts to eliminate the veterans burial allowance. (Res. 687)
6. Increase the veterans burial allowance to \$750. (Res. 708)

## HOSPITAL, MEDICAL AND DOMICILIARY CARE AND FACILITIES

1. Construct a VA hospital in the Sacramento, California area. (Res. 624)
2. Replace VA hospital located at Allen Park, Michigan. (Res. 645)
3. Construct nursing homes at VA hospitals in Montana. (Res. 658)
4. Construct VA hospital at Camp White, Oregon. (Res. 664)
5. Permit the use of military hospitals in areas where a VA hospital is not available (Res. 669)
6. Provide additional nursing home facilities. (Referred to NVS for study) (Res. 688)
7. Continue inpatient facilities at St. Albans Hospital, New York. (Res. 689)

## READJUSTMENT BENEFITS

*Education*

1. Improve the VA education program. (Res. 615)
2. Extend time limits for GI educational benefits. (Res. 621)
3. Provide tuition and book fees under the GI educational program. (Res. 638)
4. Provide the same educational assistance as paid under Federal Educational Aid to veterans under the GI Bill. (Referred to NLS for study) (Res. 666)
5. Request the VA to investigate correspondence courses. (Res. 678)
6. Provide the same program under the GI Bill as provided veterans of previous wars. (Res. 730)

*Loans and housing*

1. Disregard veterans compensation in HUD eligibility requirements. (Referred to NLS for study) (Res. 655)
2. Increase VA direct loans to \$25,000. (Res. 656)

*Insurance*

1. Establish a non-participating VA administered National Service Life Insurance program for Vietnam era veterans. (Res. 611-6)
2. Increase the maximum Servicemen's Group Life Insurance to not less than \$30,000, with options of \$20,000, \$10,000, or none, and double indemnity in the event of combat and extra hazardous death. (Res. 611-7)
3. Provide Servicemen's Group Life Insurance protection on active duty for training or inactive for training, if the participant is performing extra hazardous duty such as flying airplanes, parachute jumping, etc. (Res. 611-8)
4. Provide insurance similar to previous programs for members of the Armed Services. (Res. 631)
5. Allow waiver of term insurance premiums when veteran is proven totally disabled. (Res. 635)
6. Permit Vietnam veterans to reinstate Servicemen's Group Life Insurance. (Res. 728)

## CIVIL SERVICE AND EMPLOYMENT

1. Extend and preserve Veterans Preference in all government agencies. (Res. 607)
2. Improve employment service to veterans. (Res. 608)
3. Strengthen veterans rights in Civil Service employment. (Res. 609)
4. Provide increased funds and personnel for job placement for veterans. (Res. 610)
5. Strengthen Veterans Preference in Postal Service. (Res. 686)
6. Provide funds for manpower service to veterans. (Res. 691)
7. Provide adequate veterans employment service. (Res. 692)
8. Provide veterans preference in public employment programs. (Res. 694)
9. Special employment service to disabled and older veterans. (Res. 696)
10. Oppose efforts to provide jobs for draft dodgers. (Res. 700)

11. Support "Jobs for Veterans" program. (Res. 703)
12. Support re-employment rights for veterans. (Res. 704)
13. Reduce to one year the probationary period under Civil Service. (Res. 712)
14. Oppose studies aimed at weakening Veterans Preference. (Res. 713)
15. Oppose by-passing Veterans Preference. (Res. 714)
16. Provide immediate medical examination for disabled veteran job applicants. (Res. 715)
17. Return the Postal Service to Federal supervision. (Res. 711)
18. Provide Civil Service Preference for wives of Prisoners of War. (Res. 722)

#### VETERANS ADMINISTRATION PROGRAMS

1. Demand that the Administration report to Congress any plans respecting the VA hospital and medical system and the proposed National Health Insurance Program. (Res. 601)
2. Insist that the VA maintain the daily patient load and the number of operating beds as enacted into law by Congress. (Res. 602)
3. Maintain the integrity of veterans programs. (Res. 603)
4. Authorize review of all cases involving forfeiture of benefits and revocation of such forfeiture if warranted by current rules applicable to apparent fraud. (Res. 611-9)
5. VA Department of Medicine and Surgery Program—adequate funds to operate VA hospital system, including 15 year modernization program; extension of the six month limitation applicable to the VA payment in community nursing homes and elimination of prerequisite of VA hospitalization; authorization of outpatient treatment for veterans in receipt of disability compensation and pension for treatment of non-service connected disability; elimination of oath of inability to pay regardless of age of applicant; substantial increase in salary for physicians and other professional personnel; prohibition of hospitalization for non-veterans in VA hospital; prohibit closing any VA hospitals without submission of 90 days notice to appropriate Congressional Committees; conduct studies through public hearings which will help to determine the cause in the decrease in the total VA patient loads and operating beds; insure that the VA is permitted to request funds to insure the best facilities and treatment without budget control; modify the restrictive domiciliary admission criteria. (Res. 612)
6. Establish a Department of Veterans Affairs. (Res. 614)
7. Preserve the National Soldiers Home at VA Center in West Los Angeles. (Res. 618)
8. Provide full medical treatment for Prisoners of War regardless of service connected rating. (Res. 620)
9. Urge VA to conduct an eye study on radar induced cataracts. (Res. 623)
10. Increase travel pay for VA patients from 6¢ to 10¢ per mile. (Res. 628)
11. Provide VA hospitalization for dependents of 100% disabled veterans. (Res. 632)
12. Permit accredited representative to review and represent a claim involving drug abuse. (Res. 640)
13. Prevent the elimination of skilled therapists in VA hospitals. (Res. 643)
14. Provide automobile allowance to veterans with a 100% combined rating. (Res. 644)
15. Provide closed circuit sports TV in VA hospitals in blacked out areas. (Res. 648)
16. Provide a 100% rating for a veteran on his first day of hospitalization. (Res. 652)
17. Provide automobile allowance to World War I veterans. (Res. 657)
18. Change the effective date of reduction or discontinuance of compensation. (Res. 659)
19. Oppose any effort to transfer any part of the VA system to other Federal departments. (Res. 672)
20. Expedite securing of veterans records. (Res. 677)
21. Exempt increases in other benefits similar to Social Security. (Res. 679)
22. Care and treatment of Prisoners of War. (Referred to NVS for study) (Res. 685)
23. Oppose integration of the VA hospital program with any national health program. (Res. 729)
24. All trainee programs for veterans in the VA shall be considered as on-the-job training. (Res. 731)



## ARMED FORCES AND MILITARY BENEFITS

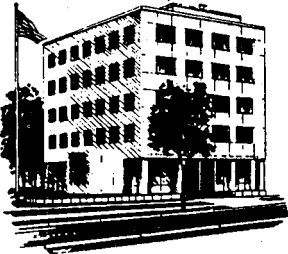
1. Provide a special medal for Prisoners of War. (Res. 302)
2. Provide income tax exclusion for Prisoners of War and Missing in Action. (Res. 306)
3. Authorize expeditionary or occupation medals for certain service. (Res. 312)
4. Provide free mailing to all military serving overseas, or in a military hospital in the United States. (Res. 334)
5. Reduce the retirement age for Reserves from age 60 to age 55. (Res. 412)
6. Support recomputation of military retirement pay and improvement of the military retirement program. (Res. 613)
7. Equalize unemployment benefits for ex-servicemen on a national scale. (Res. 629)
8. Provide a percentage of military retirement pay for widows. (Res. 630)
9. Allow the payment of retired pay in conjunction with VA compensation. (Res. 633)
10. Allow a widow to continue the use of commissary privileges she had when her husband was alive. (Res. 634)
11. Department of Defense provide low cost medical insurance for one year after discharge. (Res. 649)
12. Provide mustering out pay for Vietnam veterans. (Res. 651)
13. Provide maternity assistance for wives of discharged servicemen. (Res. 661)
14. Support recomputation of retired pay. (Res. 668)
15. Provide assistance to veterans in applying for discharge review. (Res. 676)
16. Review of all discharges because of alcoholism. (Res. 680)
17. Eliminate statutory limitation for correction of military records. (Res. 723)
18. Issue medal for Korean service. (Res. 724)
19. Eliminate limitation for discharge review. (Res. 725)
20. Allow rehearings before Discharge Review Board. (Res. 726)

## MISCELLANEOUS

1. Cooperation with National and State organizations to promote youth, safety and patriotic programs. (Res. 301)
2. Liberalize Social Security program. (Res. 303)
3. Provide tax exemption for veterans organizations insurance programs. (Res. 305)
4. Increase Social Security lump-sum death benefits. (Res. 307)
5. Issue a commemorative stamp for Spanish-American War Veterans. (Res. 308)
6. Provide chiropractic care under Medicare. (Res. 309)
7. Commend General William C. Westmoreland. (Res. 310)
8. Credit war service to lower the age limit under Social Security. (Res. 311)
9. Provide "blanket exemption" for Federal tax for all V.F.W. Post activities. (Res. 313)
10. Support the United States Savings Bond program. (Res. 314)
11. Provide testing to insure high quality drugs and medicines. (Res. 315)
12. Oppose the revision of the 1872 Mining Law. (Res. 316)
13. Permit V.F.W. Units overseas to use APO and FPO for mail. (Res. 319)
14. Commend President Richard M. Nixon for his stand on peace in Southeast Asia. (Res. 322)
15. Provide information on pollution and contamination. (Res. 324)
16. Preserve our national resources. (Res. 325)
17. Provide a special enrollment period for Medicare. (Res. 327)
18. Support National Health Service Organizations drives. (Res. 330)
19. Support legislation to provide funds to Eisenhower College. (Res. 331)
20. Support United States airlines in international flights. (Res. 333)
21. Express sympathy to Governor George Wallace. (Res. 335)
22. Commend Senator John O. Pastore for his action on the VA appropriations. (Res. 670)
23. Include a V.F.W. representative on State Manpower Planning Councils. (Res. 693)

# V.F.W. PRIORITY GOALS LEGISLATIVE

**AND**



# SECURITY

V. F. W. MEMORIAL BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

## FOR 1973



### VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

PATRICK E. CARR  
Commander-in-Chief

**The  
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**LEGISLATIVE  
PROGRAM**

**FOR 1973**

# PREAMBLE

## LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

Millions of veterans are returning from service in the Vietnam conflict. There are now over 28 million veterans. Together veterans with their families — there are about 100 million persons — almost half of our population. Since the days of George Washington and the founding of our Republic, grateful Congresses have granted rights, benefits and assistance to returning veterans in recognition of the extra sacrifice in the national interest made by those citizens who wore the uniform during time of war or great national peril. Today United States veterans programs are unmatched by any other nation in the world.

World War II veterans represent about half of the veteran population or approximately 14 million. Surprisingly to many there are now over six million Vietnam veterans who represent the second largest group. Close behind are veterans of the Korean conflict, who represent about 5.9 million. There are about 1.3 million World War I veterans and only 3,000 Spanish-American War veterans still living. The membership of the Veterans of Foreign Wars represents veterans of all of these wars, or, if deceased, their survivors. Consequently, mandates approved by the delegates to our National Conventions are representative of a broad range of interests, concerns, and goals regarding veterans and veterans programs, rights and benefits.

While the number of veterans in our society has sharply increased during the Vietnam era, the cost of veterans benefits has remained constant. While the total number of dollars being spent for veterans programs has sharply increased in recent years, the cost, as compared to the total Federal budget and outlays, or when compared against other yardsticks, such as the gross national product, indicate expenditures for veterans benefits have remained constant.

Most of the additional dollars are directly traceable to the cost of the Vietnam War or inflation. For example, the GI Bill, which will train about two million Vietnam veterans in 1973, will be about \$2 billion. Much of the increased cost in veterans hospital and medical care is the result of the crippling injuries received by Vietnam veterans who require long periods of sophisticated and expensive medical and rehabilitative

care. But, the skyrocketing increased costs in salaries, services and supplies have also caused VA budgets to go up.

Despite the number of veterans being at an all-time high, together with more money being spent on veterans programs than ever before, there are many signs on the horizon indicating that veterans programs are in mortal danger. There are just too many recommendations, legislative proposals, and irrefutable evidence that veterans programs would soon disappear from the American scene if anti-veterans have their way. This is not a theory but a fact. It was best expressed by Commander-in-Chief Carr in his acceptance speech following his installation as Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars for this year. After listing the many groups and individuals who would dismember the Veterans Administration and destroy it as a single agency for administering veterans benefits or eliminate veterans programs altogether, he warned: "I say to all who seek these objectives that they will face the VFW in their battle and they will lose. The Veterans Administration Hospital System and the entire VA will be preserved."

Our duty, therefore, is clear. The VFW has the solemn responsibility of carrying out the mandates of our organization. Not only must we continue the great program of veterans rights and benefits to which all veterans are entitled, but we must redouble our efforts to strengthen, improve, and expand veterans programs, as indicated in our mandates.

The following Priority Goals are a representative list of these mandates. Our concerns range from more readjustment assistance for the younger Vietnam veteran to more funds and personnel for the highest quality hospital and medical care for all veterans to more pension assistance for our older World War I comrades.

This program lists the key problems and intense concerns which the VFW believes are of critical importance and will be favorably resolved during this coming year by their approval by the Congress of the United States.

## COMPENSATION

A. 100% service connected disabled veterans receive only \$5940 a year in disability compensation, with lesser amounts for those with lesser disabilities. The compensation rates must be increased to provide a higher standard of living comparable to that of Americans who did not suffer disabilities as the result of their wartime service.

B. Veterans rated 50% or more for service connected disabilities are entitled to a dependency allowance for a wife and minor children. The dependency allowances should be authorized for veterans rated less than 50%.

C. Widows of 100% service connected disabled veterans should be entitled to service connected dependency and indemnity compensation regardless of the cause of death of their spouse.

## HOSPITAL AND MEDICAL CARE

A. Regardless of the National Health Care System finally established, the independence and integrity of the VA hospital and medical care system must be maintained, improved and expanded.

B. To insure the best hospital and medical care for veterans:

- (1) No budgetary or personnel restrictions on Veterans Administration's capabilities to deliver the highest quality health care.
- (2) No reduction in hospitals or reduction below the daily patient load of 85,500.
- (3) Elimination of the pauper's oath for admission for non-service connected conditions.

## **PENSION**

A. Veterans who have worn the uniform during wartime should not be subjected to welfare status. Veterans pension benefits should be made adequate to preclude veterans from being on the welfare rolls.

B. The average World War I veteran is now 76 years of age. This places them in a special category for extra consideration. The VFW pledges assistance for a meaningful pension program for our World War I comrades.

C. VA pension rates and income limitations must be liberalized so that veterans and their dependents will not have their pensions cut on account of the recent 20% Social Security increase and similar increases in retirement programs. It would appear increasingly necessary that all private and public retirement income should be excluded from being counted as income for VA pension purposes.

## **IMPROVE GI EDUCATION AND TRAINING BILL**

A. Legislation to provide the same levels of GI Bill assistance to Vietnam veterans as was provided veterans of previous wars.

B. Recognition should be given in the GI Bill to veterans with special needs, both before and after they are discharged from the Armed Forces, to prepare them for education and training without which they will be unable to successfully readjust to civilian life.

C. An advance payment should be provided veterans who are attending school for the first time.

## **READJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE FOR VIETNAM VETERANS**

A. The VA's direct loan program should be liberalized from the present maximum loan of \$17,500 to \$25,000.

B. The establishment of a life insurance program for Vietnam veterans similar to the NSLI program enjoyed by World War II and Korean veterans.

C. Drug care and treatment by VA for all eligible veterans.

## **EMPLOYMENT AND JOBS**

A. The continuing, staggering high number of unemployed veterans is a serious problem. We encourage all employers when hiring to recognize the special service that veterans have given their country. The VFW pledges total support for all programs established to help reduce the number of unemployed veterans, with special emphasis on helping the returning Vietnam veterans.

B. Sufficient personnel and an adequate budget for the Veterans Employment Service of the Department of Labor to assure its mission of finding jobs and providing job counseling for veterans in the 2,700 local Public Employment Offices throughout the nation.

## **RESTORE VETERANS DAY**

## **TO NOVEMBER 11**



## **FOR MILITARY RETIREES AND THEIR FAMILIES**

- A. Reaffirm goal of recomputation of retirement pay to reflect active duty pay scales.
- B. All active duty servicemen serving overseas and at foreign stations should be entitled to free mailing privileges.

## **VETERANS PREFERENCE**

- A. There shall be no weakening or diminishing of veterans preference in Federal employment, as provided by the Veterans Preference Act of 1944, as amended, by the Congress or in its implementation by the departments, agencies and commissions of government.

## **NATIONAL CEMETERIES**

- A. Continue every effort to have at least one active National Cemetery established in every state, so that all honorably discharged veterans, who so desire, may have the opportunity to be buried in a National Cemetery reasonably close to their homes.
- B. Establish a National Cemetery system under the jurisdiction of the Veterans Administration to include all cemeteries presently handled by the Department of the Army, all VA cemeteries and all military cemeteries.
- C. Increase veterans burial allowance from the present \$250 to \$750.

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**NATIONAL  
SECURITY**

**AND**

**FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
PROGRAM**

**FOR 1973**

# PREAMBLE

## NATIONAL SECURITY AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS PROGRAM

*"God and the Soldier we alike adore  
Ev'n at the brink of danger,  
Not before:  
After deliverance, both alike  
Required,  
God is forgotten, and the soldier slighted"*

-- Lines on a Sentry Box, Gibraltar

The above quotation from an obscure seventeenth century British writer must serve to remind today's Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States that if our positions on national security and foreign affairs are not to be "slighted," our views must be intelligently developed and vigorously advanced in the councils of government.

We have an inescapable responsibility so to act.

This responsibility arises from the kind of people we are.

We have all been "there" and, having experienced war at first hand, the V.F.W. has a clear duty both to ourselves and to our beloved country to develop, support and advance policies of clear-headed realism in the conduct of foreign affairs. We do not seek the acclaim of the unwitting or the transitory applause of those who, by studiously ignoring our country's tumultous and successful past, would mortgage our difficult and complex future.

As a politically-independent society of patriots, we shall continue to "call them as we see them" without fear or favor. We must never do less; we will always try to do more.

The forthcoming year in the history of America's foreign relations will be both complex and centrally important.

Practical results (for good or ill) will inevitably flow from President Nixon's visit to Peking and Moscow and the centrally important Strategic Arms Limitation Agreement signed with the Soviets.

Free Vietnam will either continue as an independent entity or it will not.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization will either grow in strength and cohesiveness or, lulled by those who "dine out on detente," it will start to unravel.

America's armed forces, beset by years of irrational anti-militarism, will either start on the road back to again being respected, disciplined and important members of our national community or they will continue as the nation's scapegoats for political miscalculation.

Blanket "amnesty" will gain in support or it will still be rejected, and, finally, we will either regain our prisoners of war or they will continue to languish for one more year without end.

Your VFW on these, and countless more foreign policy and national security issues, will continue to "call them as we see them" as we strive to "Put It All Together in 1973."



The question every American should ask himself is "Do I believe there is a real and dangerous threat to our National Security by a Communist conspiracy?"

The Veterans of Foreign Wars, having answered that question by an unequivocal and resounding "Yes," herein sets forth our recommendations and goals to meet, repel and remove that threat.

## NATIONAL SECURITY

The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States continue to advocate peace with honor through military strength. In the event, however, the United States should find it necessary to defend the nation or the nation's interests by recourse to arms, no obstacle should be permitted to arise or be imposed which would deny complete victory to our Armed Forces in the shortest possible time.

To this end, and for the preservation of the nation we all love, the VFW unanimously will support and advance the following priority goals:

1. The Army be modernized and maintained at a quantity and quality to meet fully the many commitments it faces worldwide.

2. Maintain a strong air striking force and air defense capable of meeting any threat to the security of this nation. We support modernization and procurement of manned bombers, fighters and manned interceptors as major elements of our nation's air power.

3. Continue a full combat-ready Marine Corps with the appropriation of sufficient funds to maintain a strength of at least three divisions and three air-wings, and that we fully support the administrative and operational application of the Marine Corps Division-Wing concept.

4. The United States Navy must be modernized and maintained as the world's most powerful and most versatile naval power, by supporting a naval building program to provide adequate ships of all types, including, but not limited to, amphibious ships, submarines, destroyers, cruisers, and aircraft carriers, with emphasis on nuclear propulsion for new combat ships.

5. Congress must continue to appropriate sufficient funds to maintain, and the Executive Branch to approve, the National Guard and the Reserve Forces in sufficient strength to assist in providing for the national security of the United States.

6. Support a U.S.-built, enlarged, and modern Merchant Marine as a vital element of defense, with such subsidies as may be required.

7. Support strong and meaningful separate military departments under their respective Secretaries.

8. Advocate continued development of nuclear weapons and the necessary testing of such weapons to sustain and preserve world leadership. The successful development and deployment of an anti-missile requires continued testing of missiles until such a defensive weapon is a reality.

9. Support a policy of central control and coordination of research and development by the Secretary of Defense that eliminates unnecessary duplication, but assures the benefits of constructive competition and experimentation with weapons appropriate to the missions of the military services. Continue to support the Congressionally-established basic roles and missions of the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps.

10. Continue adequate U.S. forces under NATO.

11. Support every feasible public and private measure to restore and enhance discipline, morale, esprit de corps, and professionalism in the Armed Forces.

12. Fully fund and deploy the TRIDENT submarine, the B-1 bomber, and the two (2) agreed SAFEGUARD ABM sites.

13. Finally, continue opposition to any effort from any source to dilute the sover-

eighty of the United States government over its peoples or territories by any form of world government.

## FOREIGN AFFAIRS

1. Support, without qualification, the Administration's military policy towards Southeast Asia specifically to include the aerial interdiction of enemy war materiel destined for the Republic of Vietnam and the naval mining of ports in the Communist north. Additionally, seek a durable peace in Southeast Asia by support for ongoing bold and timely reductions of U.S. military presence in South Vietnam.

2. Urge that the United States continue to use its influence to effect a negotiated settlement in the Middle East and, to this end, support all U.S. efforts to establish an effective counterbalance to Soviet influence among the more radical Arab states. Additionally, assist third parties seeking a lasting and equitable peace in the area.

3. Honor the provisions of the 1954 treaty with the Republic of China on Taiwan by (a) provision of military and other forms of assistance to "free China" on Taiwan, and, (b) opposition to any diplomatic initiatives toward the Peoples' Republic of China which would be undertaken at the expense of the Republic of China on Taiwan.

4. Urge upon both the President and the Congress that the defense of, sovereignty over, and control of the Panama Canal Zone are by right reserved to the U.S. and are non-negotiable.

5. Oppose any such proposal as may emerge that the U.S. either increase trade

with or establish diplomatic relations with Communist Cuba so long as Castro's regime so cruelly oppresses individual liberties on that unfortunate island. Maintain present U.S. policy and procedures with respect to the U.S. Naval facility on Guantanamo Bay.

## **MILITARY MANPOWER AND PERSONNEL**

Continue our unqualified support for the President of the United States as he seeks:

(a) An impartial and open inspection of POW facilities by the International Red Cross to insure that standards of care and treatment embodied in the Geneva Convention are being met;

(b) The immediate release of all sick and wounded prisoners;

(c) Proper food and medical treatment for all prisoners;

(d) Frequent and regular mail correspondence between prisoners and their families;

(e) An impartial verification of the names of all prisoners of war and MIAs without further delay;

(f) The adherence to all other provisions of the Geneva Convention covering the treatment of prisoners of war;

(g) Additionally, call upon the President of the United States to request that the Secretary General of the United Nations use the full power of that office toward the accomplishment of the foregoing; and

(h) Finally, authorize our Commander-in-Chief to urge the President of the United States to utilize all means necessary to insure the safety of POWs-MIAs, and that we not complete the withdrawal of all our forces



from Southeast Asia until a satisfactory resolution of the POW/MIA issue has been achieved.

## **AMNESTY**

With respect to "amnesty": (a) forthrightly urge that no general or selective amnesty be granted to draft dodgers or deserters; and, (b) oppose re-entry into the United States by any or all of the draft dodgers or deserters who have voluntarily renounced their citizenship and birthright and have defected to a foreign country.

## **SELECTIVE SERVICE SYSTEM**

Maintain a viable and effective Selective Service System so that in time of national need, non volunteer military forces may be raised quickly and effectively with equity.

## **ROTC, DEFENSE RESEARCH PROGRAMS**

Support the passage through the Congress and the enactment into law of legislation pertaining to the ROTC and Department of Defense Research programs essentially as introduced by Congressman F. Edward Hebert, Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee.

## **CONDUCT AND APPEARANCE OF MILITARY PERSONNEL**

Enjoin the military services to take all possible actions to improve the conduct and appearance of their personnel to the end that public opinion of and support for the military be enhanced and, by the positive examples set by the service personnel, patriotism and pride in country be fostered. To this latter objective, focus VFW programs to advance public respect for the Armed Forces, the American Flag, and the hard-won traditions of our free country.

## **COURT-MARTIAL CASES**

Take such action as may be both necessary and appropriate to urge the Department of the Navy to retain recordings and notes in court-martial cases until appellate review has been completed.

## **RETIRED**

## **MILITARY PERSONNEL**

Restore those benefits and privileges to retired military personnel which accrue to active duty personnel to include the privilege of free education of dependents of retired military personnel in the overseas Department of Defense dependent School System.

[News Release]

## V.F.W. COMMANDER SCORES VA DISABILITY RATING CHANGES

WASHINGTON, D.C., FEBRUARY 14, 1973.—“The 1974 VA budget itself showing a complete disregard for the needs of America’s former fighting men, contains a provision which is astounding and incredible.

“The VA, under the guise of ‘certain refinements’ in the amount of compensation to be paid for disabilities, is attempting to cut payments to Vietnam veterans by \$160 million next year,” said Patrick E. Carr, Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

The leader of the 1.8 million-man V.F.W. called this effort to take money out of the pockets of the very person who needs it the most, “shocking.”

Practically all of the proposed \$160 million will be taken from the Vietnam veteran because Congress passed a law which freezes the rates paid to those who have had their disability for 20 or more years. This means that World War I and II and many Korean War veterans’ payments will not be reduced. However, the young veteran returning from Vietnam would receive substantially less than his comrades of previous wars for the same disabilities.

Carr has called upon the President to rescind the proposed revision of the VA rating schedule which determines disability payments for wounded and disabled veterans.

The V.F.W. Commander pointed out that disability compensation “is an extension of the costs of the war and not a welfare program.” Carr said, “the helicopter and outstanding medical care during the Vietnam War permitted much better care of the wounded than we have ever seen. But it also returned more permanently wounded and disabled than in the past. These veterans need at least as much compensation as their comrades of other wars.”

The proposed rates are based upon a 1967 study made on the income of veterans receiving compensation. Carr pointed out that this study was made long before thousands were wounded and returned home at the height of the Vietnam War.

“The President must have compassion and rescind these injustices or Congress must legislate them away. Our disabled Vietnam veteran is not a second class citizen now that he has returned from the fight,” Carr said.

[News Release]

WASHINGTON, D.C., OCTOBER 31, 1972.—Patrick E. Carr of Metairie, Louisiana, Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, has denounced the vetoing of two veterans bills as a callous disregard of the needs of veterans and their families. Speaking for the 1.8 million members of the Nation’s largest organization of overseas war veterans, Carr warned that the battle lines have now been drawn. “The vetoing of these two bills which carry out so many VFW goals proves beyond any doubt,” Carr stated, “the enemies of veterans programs are in high and influential places.” The veterans leader went on to state “it was just outrageous to indicate that these bills were vetoed primarily for budget reasons.” The truth, Carr indicated, “is that the anti-veteran people in the Office of Management and Budget and certain high policy-making officials had an opportunity to get their way and kill off some of the most comprehensive and needed veterans legislation Congress has ever approved.”

One of the vetoed bills, the comprehensive Veterans Health Care Expansion Act of 1972 (H.R. 10880) contains over 20 separate provisions, all of which will improve and expand the capability of the Veterans Administration to deliver quality health care for the Nation’s veterans. The VFW is deeply disturbed that the Administration may not intend to live up to its previous announcements regarding the independence and integrity of care of veterans in connection with National Health care for all citizens. The official statement released by the White House when H.R. 10880 was rejected assigned as one reason for the veto “the bill (H.R. 10880) runs counter to this Administration’s national health strategy which would provide national financing mechanisms for health care and sharply reduce the Federal Government’s role in the direct provision of services.”

The majority of direct medical care furnished by the Federal Government is provided by the Veterans Administration and the Department of Defense. “It can only be presumed the anti-veteran policy planners are committed to a policy of further sharply reducing VA hospital and medical care when a National Health Insurance system is established,” Commander-in-Chief Carr stated. “Such a policy could lead to wholesale closings of VA hospitals,” he stated.

"It is hoped the vetoing of the National Cemetery bill, H.R. 12674, does not doom the National Cemetery System which the VFW has worked for so long to have established. The Congress spent many years developing this bill which substantially carries out VFW recommendations," Carr stated.

"The anti-veteran sentiment which exists at the highest levels of Government manifested itself in the vetoing of these two important measures. For corrective action, I will be calling upon every VFW member to contact his Congressman and Senators to have the provisions of these two comprehensive vetoed veterans bills reintroduced and approved as one of the first pieces of business of the 93rd Congress," the veterans leader declared.

FIRST PLACE WINNER, VFW NATIONAL VOICE OF DEMOCRACY CONTEST, MARCH 6, 1973, BY CINDY PRIDY, LONG BEACH, CALIFORNIA

#### "MY RESPONSIBILITY TO FREEDOM"

This past summer, I spent two and one-half months in Denmark as a foreign exchange student, living with a Danish family. Fantastic would be a very mild adjective to describe the summer I experienced. But of all my memories, one stands out as kind of special. And I'd like to share that with you now. There were 148 of us together on a charter flight from Copenhagen to New York City and we of course had to go through customs upon reentry into the United States. After having such a fantastic summer I think you can appreciate the feeling of misgivings some of us had about coming home. But you know, even as depressed as I was; as the plane circled over New York prior to landing a chill began to run down my spine. Below me, just a few 100 feet was the United States. After what seemed an infinite amount of time, the wheels finally touched the ground and I thought to myself, "I've made it; I'm home." But the best was yet to come. As we walked down a long corridor, we neared the customs inspection center where there were flags outside of the doors. As I caught my first glimpse of an American Flag I felt the excitement mount inside me and I knew that this was to be the climax of my summer.

Now I could sit down and analyze this feeling that I had and come up with some very complicated, intelligent sounding answers as to symbolism and so forth. But the simple fact is that I really got charged up when I saw the American Flag on American soil for the first time. Maybe it was a sense of pride, a calling out saying: "This is my flag . . . and this is my country." But whatever it was, when I look at an American Flag now, I look at it through different eyes. And when I'm given the honor of saying the Pledge of Allegiance, I'm proud.

But what you may wonder, does all this have to do with My Responsibility To Freedom? To me the American Flag stands for a very special kind of freedom. The kind of freedom that over 580,000 American men have died for in the Revolutionary War, two World Wars and Korean war; not to mention the hundreds of thousands that have died in other smaller scale conflicts. These men died not only for their flag and country but for the freedom they both represent. Now if even one man can give his life for this freedom we have, doing it in the name of his country and flag then I should surely strive to take pride and show respect to my flag.

But this is only part of my responsibility. I could sit all day long and worship a flag but that would not insure the freedom that so many have bravely and sometimes vainly fought for. No, although showing pride and respect to my flag are part of it, there is still a much greater part remaining; the responsibility of not being satisfied with the status quo.

We must not and will not allow ourselves to become idle and satisfied with the way things are. If you say that our government is no good and we are not really as free as people say we are then we must strive together to form a better government and a freer freedom. We must not be satisfied with wide extremes of poverty and wealth. If a man cannot honestly feed himself then we must help to feed him. If a man is true in his desire to work and be helped, then we must help him. If a man is sincere in his desire to become educated, then we must educate him.

You may have noticed that I have changed to WE instead of I, that's because "My Responsibility To Freedom" is your responsibility to freedom. For you see my friends freedom cannot run on hunger, idle dreams, or illiteracy. Broken dreams are not mended by one but by many. I remember a verse that says: "One man working alone can do many things; many men working together can do anything."

My Responsibility To Freedom is to show honor and respect to my country and flag so that those who fought and died will not have done so in vain; to work with my brothers and not become idle and satisfied with what has already been done before me; to hope that someday my sons and daughters will know a freedom and peace even sweeter than this one, always keeping in sight that freedom is a privilege and not a right; always working for the birth of a new freedom for the sons of men not only in America . . . but everywhere.

FIRST PLACE WINNER, VFW NATIONAL VOICE OF DEMOCRACY CONTEST,  
MARCH 4, 1969, BY DEBRA D. GEORGE, CHEYENNE, WYO.

#### FREEDOM'S CHALLENGE

"I want!" they cried, and seventeen selfish students closed an entire college.

"I want!" they cried, and a hand full of loud-mouthed demonstrators forced a presidential candidate from the podium.

"I want!" they cried, and a gang of neighborhood ruffians conveniently had an excuse to break shop windows to fill their pockets, and to destroy four church buildings within a week.

"I want!" she cried, and a sixteen-year-old girl found herself too deeply involved in drugs, and felt suicide was the only answer.

Freedom—Each of these wanted freedom; not as it was offered, but selfishly and blindly. In trying to grasp such a shallow freedom, how much tighter did they secure the bonds of all Americans?

Freedom—How? For whom?

Is the businessman for whom it is no longer safe to walk home from work at night, free? Is the rabbi who is forced to put up barbed wire to protect his synagogue, free? Is the candidate for President who must compete against his audience to present his ideas, free?

I shudder to think that my brother, my father, or my husband would fight with such determination to make a dream come true for their children and have it taken away by some self-centered radical who has yet anything to yell except "I want!"

And yet—freedom was a dream; a dream for which men fought and died. This dream became a blessing and was given to all Americans. Not just to an overeager teenager, not just to an under-privileged street-walker, not just to a rebellious student, but to each and every American. And each and every American has this freedom to do with as he wishes, as long as he sees his neighbor as an American with rights too.

Freedom is the right to find yourself as an individual. But does this necessitate the pollution of one's body and mind with deadly drugs?

Freedom is the right to speak, but why should this right belong only to a minority of the audience, and not to the man for whom the assembly was specifically called?

And—yes—every American, no matter who or what he is, has the right to freedom and opportunity. But if he feels cheated, from where does he get his right to loot or destroy another's property?

I, too, want freedom: The freedom for which my ancestors fought and died. But I realize that freedom, like all good things, has to be earned and protected. Such a prize, bombs, guns, and stones will not protect. It must be guarded with an ever alertness and awareness of our responsibilities as citizens of a great nation, and with a courtesy and a consideration of our neighbors as fellow citizens of these United States.

When we, as Americans, are ready and willing to accept these responsibilities and look upon our neighbors with the respect they deserve, then will our forefathers' dream be fulfilled—and truly we will have accepted FREEDOM'S CHALLENGE!



# LEGISLATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS OF VETERANS' ORGANIZATIONS, 1973

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 21, 1973

U.S. SENATE,  
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS,  
Washington, D.C.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2 p.m., in the caucus room, room 318, Russell Office Building, the Honorable Vance Hartke, chairman of the committee, presiding.

Present: Chairman Vance Hartke, presiding and Senators Strom Thurmond, James A. McClure, Harold E. Hughes, and Robert T. Stafford.

Also present: Frank J. Brizzi, staff director and Guy H. McMichael III, general counsel.

## OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. VANCE HARTKE, CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Chairman HARTKE. I will be brief in my remarks so that we may proceed to the testimony as rapidly as possible. A number of the members of this committee have other previously scheduled meetings in which they must consider and vote on legislation. Thus, some members could not be here today and others may have to leave during this hearing. I think Senator Hansen will be here in a few moments.

What each member of the committee wants you to know, however, is the great admiration they have for the job that the DAV is doing on behalf of America's disabled veterans.

By now most Americans know of the proposal to slice \$160 million from the budget by reducing compensation payments for the coming year. What some people may not know is that the retraction of this arbitrary and unwanted proposal for further intensive study was obtained in large part by the very alert and hard work of the DAV.

Your courageous leaders and your alert Washington staff are to be commended for the crucial role they played during the battle of the budget.

But much remains to be done. And, officials in the Office of Management and Budget still say they want to save \$160 million.

The issue of possible reductions in compensation payments is still with us and the committee is anxious to hear your testimony and your recommendations as to what we can do to provide the very finest of care for America's disabled veterans.

We have with us a distinguished former ranking minority member who is now ranking minority member of the Armed Services Com-

mittee but who still continues his active interest in this committee. It has been a real pleasure to work with Senator Strom Thurmond.

Since the Committee's formation, we have been unanimous in every decision and no man has been of more valuable assistance to the chairman than Senator Thurmond.

Senator THURMOND. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Ladies and gentlemen, I want to say in the beginning, I would like to thank Senator Hartke for the splendid leadership he has given this committee since it was first organized.

I became the ranking minority member and he and I worked together and it has been a great pleasure to work with him.

I want to say to Commander Hicks and the others here today, we are proud to have you here. I happen to be a life member of the DAV. I am a member of chapter 13 in Columbia, S.C., and I am proud of this organization and I am proud of what it stands for.

You are the men who not only served in time of war, you not only served your country when it needed you, but you have been injured in some way or either you have received the Purple Heart to entitle you to belong to this organization and so you are men who are singled out, so to speak. You are not in the ordinary run of veterans.

I am proud of all the veterans. I have no faith in those who ran, but I am for those who stood and fought. And we are proud of you because you did stand and fight.

We have a great country and I just hope that our Congress will see fit to go along with an adequate program to protect you veterans.

I think my record in the Congress shows that I have been concerned and I am now, in fact I have one of the highest ratings of being for economy, but I am not going to sacrifice the best interests of the veteran for any purpose whatsoever.

We wouldn't have a country today if it were not for the veterans and those who stood by this country and stood up for it and fought for it and I am proud to be one of you and we are delighted to have you here.

Chairman HARTKE. Thank you, Senator Thurmond.

We also have Senator McClure with us, a new member of this committee.

Senator McCLURE. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I apologize for being a little bit late. I am delighted to see all of you here and very anxious to listen to you as well as to say welcome, and I am sure that our interests are the same.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman HARTKE. We have also with us today Congressman Clarence Brown for the purpose of the introduction of our distinguished visitors.

#### STATEMENT OF HON. CLARENCE BROWN, A U.S. REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE STATE OF OHIO

Representative BROWN. Thank you very much.

I am delighted to have a chance to be here and I am sorry that I will not be able to stay to listen to Commander Hicks' testimony because the House is still in session. I must return to the House side.



It is my great pleasure today to introduce to you and the distinguished members of your committee, Jack O. Hicks, who is a resident of La Rue, Ohio, in my Seventh Congressional District in Ohio.

Jack was elected national commander of the Disabled American Veterans on August 25, 1972, at the organization's 51st national convention in St. Louis.

He is one of the youngest men ever named to head the 380,000-member DAV organization.

He served the DAV as an officer at the local, State, and national level and was national senior vice commander during 1971-72.

Jack is a native of Kentucky and attended Marion Business College in Marion, Ohio. He is currently working for a law degree while operating a retail lumber company in La Rue. He served in the U.S. Air Force from 1954 until 1959 when he was honorably discharged from service because of a service-connected disability.

He plays a prominent role in the activities of many service and civic organizations in his community, his country, and the State. He is a member of the La Rue Village Council, Lions Club, and the Ohio Governors Committee on Employment of the Handicapped. He is a Scottish Rite Mason, member of Aladdin Temple Shrine and a member of several veterans organizations.

I am sorry to say that his wife and son and daughter are not here at this moment, but I hope that before his testimony is concluded we will have the opportunity to introduce them to you.

It is a pleasure to introduce to you the national commander of the DAV, Jack Hicks.

Chairman HARTKE. Thank you Congressman Brown.

Commander, we are honored to have you and now we will be glad to have your testimony.

**STATEMENT OF JACK O. HICKS, NATIONAL COMMANDER OF THE  
DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS, ACCOMPANIED BY DENVEL D.  
ADAMS, NATIONAL ADJUTANT; JOHN J. KELLER, NATIONAL  
DIRECTOR OF SERVICE; NORMAN B. HARTNETT, NATIONAL DI-  
RECTOR OF EMPLOYMENT; AND CHARLES L. HUBER, NATIONAL  
DIRECTOR OF LEGISLATION**

Commander Hicks. Thank you very much.

I would like to introduce a few of my officers who are here with us today. We have our national commander of the DAV auxiliary, Nelda Koontz of Illinois. Also we have our national adjutant, Denvel D. Adams, of Ohio.

Our national director of service, John J. Keller.

And, of course, a man who needs no introduction to this distinguished committee, our national director of legislation, Charles L. Huber.

Our national director of employment, Mr. Norman B. Hartnett.

And last, but certainly not least I would like to introduce the members of our DAV interim legislative committee. Past national commander, Cecil W. Stevens from Arkansas. Harry Wentworth of California. Ed James of Indiana. And John R. Davis of Georgia.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. I am pleased and deeply honored for the opportunity to appear before you and discuss some of our organization's activities and objectives for 1973.

At the very outset, Mr. Chairman, I want to express, on behalf of the 416,000 members of the DAV, our very best wishes to your dedicated colleagues who continued to serve on this great committee. To the new members, we extend our congratulations and a warm word of welcome.

We are indeed indebted to you, Mr. Chairman, and to the members of the committee, for all the great work you are doing . . . and for your ready help in resolving the problems confronting America's disabled war veterans.

Although the members of this distinguished committee represent different political parties, you have a great deal in common—you always ask what are the needs of the Nations' veterans—and then you fulfill those needs in a truly nonpartisan spirit. In this connection, Mr. Chairman, I wish to express to you and to the committee members our thanks and deep appreciation for the sympathetic support you have always given to the proposed objectives of the Disabled American Veterans.

I want to say to all members of the committee that the DAV looks forward to working with you during the course of the 93d Congress \* \* \* and I want you to know that the officers and resources of our national organization are available to assist you at any time, in any way possible.

My appearance here today, Mr. Chairman, is at one and the same time a very gratifying occasion for me, personally, and the high spot of our commander's and adjutant's conference which officially opened last Monday morning.

We find our annual midwinter conferences to be highly useful since they bring together our State and national leaders who engage in valuable and wide-ranging discussions covering the broad field of veterans' affairs.

It is traditional that the subjects discussed revolve around the word "service" \* \* \* services to those who are truly deserving of benefits initiated by this distinguished committee, and approved by the Congress and the American people.

Since its creation in 1920, the DAV has steadfastly held to the principle that our Nation's first obligation to veterans is the extension of meaningful programs designed to improve the physical, economic, and social well-being of those veterans who have suffered wounds, injuries, or disabling sickness as a result of service in our Armed Forces. Our concern for the disabled war veteran extends, of course, to his wife and dependent children, and to the widows and orphans of those men who have died from service-connected causes.

Today, the DAV is the largest single veterans' organization of wartime disabled veterans in this Nation and the world. In fulfilling its humanitarian purposes, the DAV provides its free service to any veteran, whether or not he is a member of our organization. The DAV activities encompass the disabled veterans of all wars. Our services to veterans of the Vietnam conflict are as broad in scope as our services to the veterans of World Wars I and II and the Korean war. For this purpose, the DAV has maintained a larger staff of full-time national service officers than any other veterans' organization. These

attorneys, in fact, provide services that would cost the Government millions of dollars to duplicate. To meet the constantly increasing volume of DAV services to Vietnam era veterans, we are employing 50 additional national service officers in this calendar year alone.

As you know, Mr. Chairman, many articles have appeared and are still appearing in the daily press and popular magazines on the subject of unemployment among the Vietnam veteran population. The DAV shares in this concern \* \* \* and we think we are setting an example by employing Vietnam veterans in key positions in our organization. I am proud to say that out of a total of 220 DAV national service officers, 131 are veterans of Vietnam. Many of these men are here today and I would like them to stand and be recognized. These are young men who have shown not only courage on the battlefield, but courage in life. They have returned home to become active citizens in the best sense of the word \* \* \* and are determined to help others in the difficult process of adjustment that they themselves have experienced. They are reaching Vietnam veterans by making visits regularly at military and VA hospitals and offering patients the assistance and services of our organization. At college and university appearances they are conducting seminars to apprise veteran students of their rights and benefits under all existing programs.

As National Commander of the DAV, Mr. Chairman, I have a deep pride in our service program and the prominence it has attained through the work performance of our national service officers.

The DAV is seriously concerned about the difficulties facing America's disabled war veterans in finding jobs; particularly meaningful, satisfying jobs with career opportunities.

Our DAV national interim employment committee, our national employment staff, our national service officers, and hundreds of department and chapter officers are jointly participating in a program of personalized employment assistance to all disabled veterans who are in need of such help. We have cooperated on a daily basis with the Veterans' Employment Service, Jobs for Veterans Committee, the National Alliance of Businessmen, and many other groups both public and private, to enhance employment for disabled veterans.

Official records indicate that in fiscal year 1972 there were 447,707 disabled veteran job applicants registered with some 2,400 public Employment Service Offices. Only 64,727, 14.45 percent, were placed in regular jobs and an additional 8,264, 1.84 percent, were enrolled in training. Thus, almost 375,000 disabled veterans were neither enrolled in training nor placed in a job. I have attached to this statement a copy of our letter dated March 15, 1973, to the Secretary of Labor, Peter J. Brennan, recommending measures to improve employment assistance to disabled veterans. I respectfully request that the letter be made part of this hearing record.

Chairman HARTKE. It certainly will. Let me say, Commander, this is a shocking situation and this committee will have the Secretary of Labor appear before it to give us a complete explanation of why there are so few people being placed and to tell us what he intends to do to correct the situation.

The letter will be placed in the record at the conclusion of the hearing.

Commander HICKS. Mr. Chairman, I would be remiss if I did not express our grateful appreciation to this committee and to the Con-

gress for approving title V of the Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act of 1972. It establishes a strong job counseling, training, and placement service for veterans, with special emphasis on the employment of qualified disabled and Vietnam era veterans by Federal contractors.

While we appreciate this valuable and necessary legislation, we are disturbed to find that its provisions have not been properly implemented. I refer specifically to the total lack of funding for the 70 newly created positions of Assistant Veterans' Employment Representatives, who are charged with supervising employment assistance to service-connected disabled veterans. We are certain that the chairman and the members of this committee will take whatever action is required to correct this apparent apathy.

Mr. Chairman, the DAV participates actively in other programs which, although not too widely known, nevertheless serve a useful and humanitarian purpose.

Our scouting program for the handicapped represents a formal partnership arrangement with the Boy Scouts of America under which the DAV has pledged its long-term financial support, as well as its manpower resources, to make scouting a reality for as many boys with handicaps as possible. The DAV presently sponsors 150 Boy Scout units for the handicapped and I am pleased to say that more are being formed.

The DAV scholarship program provides 4 years of college to needy and deserving children of service-connected disabled veterans. At present, we have 71 students enrolled in the program and \$1.2 million has been set aside for its operation. I have a high and special regard for this laudable enterprise which has helped educate many children of those men and women who helped in time of war.

Our disaster relief fund provides emergency financial assistance to disabled veterans and their families who suffer major losses as a result of natural disasters. \$932,750 has been funded for this purpose. The chairman and the committee members will recall the devastating floods occurring last year, particularly in the States of New York, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Maryland, and West Virginia. \$105,000 of the fund was used to assist disabled veterans and their families in these areas.

I would like to turn now, Mr. Chairman, to a discussion of a few subjects that are of immediate concern to the DAV and the men and women whose interests we serve and represent.

I realize that the new disability rating schedule distributed February 6 has been touched upon by previous witnesses in appearances before the committee. However, since the DAV membership is made up entirely of war veterans who have incurred disabilities as a result of military service, the issue is a most significant and preeminent one for the DAV as an organization. Despite the February 14 order to withdraw the revisions, the issuance is still the focus of high controversy inasmuch as it is presently under intensive study "within the Administrator's office." It is for these reasons that we feel compelled to bring our views in the matter before this committee at this crucial time.

The DAV views the Veterans' Administration action as completely irresponsible and insensitive and totally lacking in logic. In fact, we

see the proposed revisions as being so irrational that the thinking behind them is beyond comprehension.

The proposed reductions are in sharp contrast with statements made by VA officials at DAV meetings last year. On those occasions they were very positive, indeed, in their assurances that the rating reductions were limited and of little significance.

To bring the outrageous proposals to the attention of the American people, our DAV chapters and departments from coast to coast made themselves heard through letters, telegrams and phone calls to the Congress and to the White House. Our national service officers did double duty on radio and television programs—as well as in newspaper interviews—explaining the inequity of the ill conceived proposals which would have deprived the wartime disabled of more than \$160 million in direct compensation benefits. Approximately 2 million letters were sent from our national headquarters to disabled veterans advising them of this budgetary cut and the resulting reduction in benefits. DAV national staff members were swamped with letters and phone calls expressing fears and anxieties over the proposed reductions.

The DAV had already formed a special working committee to review rating schedule changes. Six national service officers, all of whom are experts in the field of disability ratings, were appointed to the committee.

The committee members are in the process of refining and finalizing a full report on the changes; however, preliminary findings are very instructive and revealing. It is shown that proposed reductions do not correspond at all with the actual extent or seriousness of the disabilities listed. It discloses that the proposed schedule would reduce an overall total of 833 disability categories; that 202 schedular ratings would be reduced below the 30 percent level, thereby eliminating entitlement to vocational rehabilitation; that 149 ratings would be reduced below the 50 percent level, thereby eliminating monthly allowances for dependents; that 121 ratings would be reduced below the 60 percent level, thereby eliminating possible entitlement to a total rating based on individual unemployability; that 8 separate 100 percent ratings for serious disabilities would be reduced below that level, thereby eliminating consideration for aid and attendance and housebound benefits, as well as educational assistance for wives and children. Mr. Chairman, according to VA figures, 687,000 veterans would have their compensation reduced.

The effects of the reductions are not limited to compensation payments. They would eliminate commissary privileges, and entitlement to medical care in certain instances. Many disabled servicemen would have their retirement benefits reduced, others would lose their retirement benefits altogether. VA nonservice-connected pension entitlement for veterans under age 65 would also be affected adversely. Moreover, the reductions could reach down to the State level and take away benefits established by State legislatures.

Our rating schedule committee found many other equally outrageous proposed revisions that, if placed in force, would be the cruellest sort of deception on the disabled veterans of America.

As you know, Mr. Chairman, the VA study to "validate" the 1945 Schedule for Rating Disabilities started out years ago as a "pilot" project. Then in 1967, the full scale study began. From the very

start the Veterans' Administration pursued a wavering, ambiguous, and sometimes puzzling course before distributing its final report on February 6, 1973. It is our feeling that the revisions would have been more "valid" if an independent body—not under control of the OMB—had been commissioned to undertake the study.

We had been told through the years that the underlying concept of the study was to bring about improvements in the disability rating system. It was only natural then to expect that the ultimate recommendations would be of lasting benefit to disabled veterans, particularly those who had lost their limbs in combat. Apparently unmindful of the sacrifices of these seriously disabled veterans, it was recommended that their compensation payments be reduced sharply.

If the reductions become final, the service-connected amputee will be left with a permanent disability as a reward for duty well performed and a pittance as the only form of recognition for his service.

I wish to take this occasion to express our grateful thanks to the chairman and members of the committee for working so effectively to convince the President that the proposed revisions were wrong and counterproductive. We applaud the chairman and his colleagues for having introduced on March 1 the bill, S. 1076. It would: (1) require the VA Administrator to refer to the Congress for approval of any proposed changes in the disability rating schedule; (2) require congressional consent to close any VA hospital, domiciliary, or regional office; and (3) forbid the transfer or sale of VA real property unless notice is first submitted to the Congress.

The legislation would insure that disabled veterans will not lose their compensation benefits provided for them by this committee and the Congress. It will also insure that VA services will remain accessible to veterans at the local level. Indeed, all disabled veterans, particularly the seriously disabled amongst us, will be greatly reassured by the terms of the legislation.

I respectfully ask that this measure, so vitally important to the Nation's disabled veterans, be reported to the Senate for a vote as quickly as possible. We are certain that early and favorable action by the committee and the Congress will discourage any absurd and unfair changes contemplated as a result of the "intensive study" now going on in the Administrator's office.

Mr. Chairman, I realize that I have dwelt at some length and with some intensity on the proposed revisions of the schedule; but I felt compelled to do so because—as I indicated earlier—it is of such overriding importance to America's wartime disabled.

Perhaps the cruelest irony in the entire matter is that successive Administrators—in reports to this committee—used both the pilot study and the full-scale study of the schedule as a reason for persistently opposing legislation to increase compensation benefits. This is especially true with respect to the \$47 monthly statutory award payable to veterans who have suffered the loss of certain parts of the body. The payments for these special awards have not been increased in the last 21 years.

With these thoughts in mind, we express the hope that the committee will closely examine and evaluate the disability compensation program during the current session of the Congress. We feel that

compensation rates paid disabled veterans should be reappraised from time to time to keep pace with national income averages and to realistically represent the earnings veterans are denied by their disabilities.

Should the committee hold hearings on the compensation program, we will be pleased to appear and discuss in depth all facets of this important subject.

The program of hospital and medical care for disabled war veterans is a matter of great significance to the DAV. I want to say, at once, Mr. Chairman, that the DAV owes a great debt of gratitude to you and the committee members for all your earnest and reasoned efforts to help maintain a high level of care for patients in VA hospitals.

I am frank to say that these efforts are very often frustrated when the VA's Department of Medicine and Surgery is forced to adjust to leaner allowances from the Office of Management and Budget. The cuts in VA medical funds for fiscal year 1974 is a classic example of the prevailing mood in the OMB.

The 1974 VA budget reflects a \$5.8 million reduction for medical and prosthetic research and a cut of \$81 million in hospital construction. The budget accommodates an 80,000 daily patient census in VA hospitals despite congressional language in the law explicitly stating that an 85,500 daily patient load should be maintained. Not a penny is provided for construction of the eight new medical schools authorized in the Medical School Assistance and Health Service Personnel Training Act of 1972—another instance where the diehard element within the OMB is using every pretext to circumvent or avoid an enforceable provision of law enacted by the legislative branch of our Government.

In its budget, the VA requested an average of 132,169 employees for its hospital program. The OMB reduced this figure to 120,000—a reduction of 12,169 employees.

It is our hope and expectation that this committee and the Congress will do its best to see that funds for space, equipment, and personnel are made available to enable the VA hospital system to effectively fulfill its stated mission.

Mr. Chairman, I want to take this opportunity to express our special thanks for the prompt and decisive action taken by your committee in reporting and bringing to passage the bills S. 59, the Veterans Health Care Expansion Act of 1973; S. 49, establishing a national cemetery system within the Veterans' Administration; and S. 284, the Veterans Drug and Alcohol Treatment and Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

One final medical item that bears comment has to do with legislative proposals to develop a national health insurance program to be administered by HEW or State governments under HEW control.

The DAV is naturally concerned about the future role the VA hospital system will play in any new national health care plan. We know that the committee shares our concern and that the members will do what is required to defeat any threat to dismantle the VA hospital system.

Mr. Chairman, now that the hostilities are coming to a close in Southeast Asia, the amnesty issue is receiving wide coverage on television and in newspaper columns.

The DAV's views on the subject were expressed to the committee last year. Our feeling then, and our feeling now, is that across-the-board amnesty would set a dangerous precedent. We believe that all those who were called to serve—and who instead chose flight—should be held accountable for their act, that each case should be considered and decided on its own merits—and only after all POW's and MIA's are returned or accounted for.

Mr. Chairman, there are other matters of no small importance relating to veterans' benefits which will draw our attention during the course of the current session of the Congress. They make no demands for more new and costly programs, but only for improvements in the benefits already established.

The special subjects which I have commented upon in this statement represent the larger and more immediate concerns of the DAV. I felt compelled to place heavy emphasis on the rating schedule revisions, for they have had a profound and crushing impact upon the disabled veterans of America. If the VA validation study served any constructive purpose, it is this: it brought out the fact that the benefits so generously granted by this committee and the Congress are never entirely secure; and in this connection, it is comforting to know that our calls for help are always given a prompt and compassionate response by the thoughtful, hard-working members of this committee.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, I again want to express our grateful appreciation for giving us this opportunity to appear before you. I also want to acknowledge with sincere thanks the cooperation, interest, and help extended to us by the highly dedicated staff members of the Veterans' Affairs Committee. I thank them all for giving their very best efforts to the interests of all those who served in the Nation's Armed Forces.

Thank you.

Chairman HARTKE. Thank you, Commander Hicks, for an excellent statement.

Senator Thurmond has been called away. He has delayed his departure until you completed your statement.

Senator THURMOND. Thank you very much, Mr Chairman.

I have been called away on a very urgent mission. I just wanted to say, Mr. Commander, that you have made a magnificent statement here today and we appreciate this fine presentation and the excellent program that you have presented here on behalf of this great American organization, the DAV.

Chairman HARTKE. Senator Hughes.

Senator HUGHES. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Commander Hicks, I think the statements you have expressed over all and the particular problems that you pointed out to us as members of the committee will be helpful to us in the consideration of Veterans' legislation as well as those administrative acts of the administration in relation to the disabled veterans this year.

Some have continuing and particular interest to us. Where you mentioned the Department of Labor and the letter that you had directed to the Secretary of Labor, I would like to ask you if you could furnish us a copy of the reply you get when you receive a reply to that letter.



I would like to have that available to use, since the chairman indicated that he intended to call the Secretary to testify before the committee.

I think we should know what their response is to you as commander of the DAV.

I agree with what you said about it. I can neither understand their response, their actions, or anything else in response to the law and relating to it.

Since we have a new Secretary of Labor, perhaps before he gets up here he will do something about it. Let's all hope that he does.

In your direct statements in relationship to the hospital facilities and the passage of legislation through the Senate already this year, I would like to ask a couple of pointed questions.

What are you finding with the hospital facilities in the way of available space; and the waiting list that you find around the country in relationship to the needs that you have?

Commander HICKS. Senator Hughes, I would like to refer that to our director of service, John Keller.

Mr. KELLER. We find that as far as available space is concerned there is some. We do find there are waiting lists that are unduly high. We feel the rejection rates of individual veterans applying to the hospitals are unusually high.

We are particularly concerned over the staffing ratio in the hospitals. We find in some instances there has been equipment bought and wards and beds open but they do not have the adequate staff to take care of the problems.

This is particularly true in the physician fields, the nurses, and right on down the line. We are concerned.

Senator HUGHES. In the relationship of the non-service-connected disability particularly relating to the older veteran, what are you finding there?

Mr. KELLER. We are finding waiting lists there also.

Senator HUGHES. Long waiting lists?

Mr. KELLER. There are waiting lists; yes, sir.

Senator HUGHES. We have had calls. I have had occasions with personal friends within the last couple of weeks relating—well, one was a friend in Arizona relating to a terminal cancer case and trying to get the man admitted to a hospital, certainly non-service-connected as far as probability is concerned, but nevertheless one of the most trying and draining things on the family that possibly exists.

Mr. KELLER. The situation in Arizona is particularly acute and we find at times—there was an incident recently in West Virginia where a veteran applied to the hospital late on a Saturday evening, was taken to the hospital by an ambulance. He was examined by the examining physician, given cough syrup, and told to come back Monday morning.

Unfortunately, the individual died half an hour after that. He was not admitted.

There are situations such as this that concern us deeply, Senator Hughes.

Senator HUGHES. Do you have some fear of pressure to dismantle hospitals and close some now that we have come to a closing of hospital facilities in Southeast Asia?

Commander HICKS. The proposed plans as presented in the new budget would, in effect, be equal to closing 11 VA hospitals, by the mere fact of reducing the average daily patient census we have in the hospitals at the present time.

So certainly we are concerned about any future plans or reduction in patient loads in the hospital system because we know that along with the influx of the Vietnam veterans, the fellows from World War I, those from World War II are getting a little older and certainly their needs are going to increase. And we want to do everything in our power to try to assure that there will be space available for those people should they need it.

Senator HUGHES. Do you think there is any hospital in the country that can be closed?

Commander HICKS. I certainly do not.

Senator HUGHES. Your viewpoint is that we need them all and any economy measures directed at the bed capacity of these hospitals should be shared on the basis of regional needs, is that it? If they can show consistent vacancies in certain regional hospitals. What is your position on that?

Commander HICKS. I think that some of the VA records indicate that there is a high, it runs in my mind, 40 percent, rate of refusals for admissions.

Senator HUGHES. This is the point I am trying to get at. Are we refusing admission while keeping high rates of vacancy?

Mr. KELLER. This is true and I am mindful of the fact that the great bulk of our veterans hospitalization is in the World War II category. That age bracket is well into the fifties now and we are going to learn from history that the aging veteran, not that we are ready to admit we are that aged, is going to need more and more hospital care. If you close down the existing facilities today, it is going to be tomorrow that we will be looking for those hospital beds.

Senator HUGHES. What is the ratio of World War II and Korean and Vietnam veterans? Do you have any breakdown?

Mr. KELLER. I don't have it at my fingertips.

Senator HUGHES. How about the disabled veterans, do you have that?

Mr. KELLER. The bulk of our disabled veterans are from World War II. From Vietnam there are 337,800 service-connected veterans alone.

I am told there are over 1,300,000 World War II veterans alone who receive disability compensation.

Senator HUGHES. Someone just handed up some statistics.

Mr. KELLER. I do know there are 2,193,577 veterans in this country today receiving disability compensation for their service-incurred disabilities. I say there are 1,300,000, I believe, drawing compensation from World War II, and the balance would be from World War I and the Vietnam conflict.

Senator HUGHES. I want to thank you very much, and again compliment all of you on your testimony, your cooperation, and thank the commander.

Senator STAFFORD. I am happy to yield to you.

Mr. ADAMS. Senator Hughes, we would like to make the point that one of the big problems in connection with the VA hospitals is the lack of staffing. As you may know, the VA had the money for additional staffing but didn't use it, and I think that is one of the big areas.

Senator HUGHES. What was the reason?

Mr. ADAMS. Last year Congress appropriated \$54 million for staffing, additional staffing of VA hospitals, and they did not spend that money for that purpose.

Senator HUGHES. How much did they spend?

Mr. ADAMS. None of it. That is the reason they have to turn these veterans away from these hospitals because they don't have the staff to treat them.

Chairman HARTKE. Senator Hughes has asked to be excused. He is going to a health subcommittee bill markup session. I just want you to know again the fine service he has given us. He has expertise in some areas in which some of us really depend on completely.

Senator STAFFORD.

Senator STAFFORD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to tell the national commander that I thought he made a very fine statement.

I am sure this committee and this Senator is well aware of our responsibility to the veterans who served in the wars of this country, specially those who have been injured in the process. And I feel certain that this committee under the leadership of Chairman Vance Hartke will not let you down.

Chairman HARTKE. He is chairing a hearing. That demonstrates, even though the Senate is not officially in session today, the committee work goes on.

Senator McClure.

Senator McCLURE. I think it might be well to note that I left another committee to be here, too, which I think is a mark of the importance that each of us has given to the presentation you make.

Some of the statistics you give I think need to be underscored and I am going to ask several questions to try to focus on them properly or specifically.

I think that you stated in response, one of you did, to another question, that there are nearly 2,200,000 veterans receiving compensation of some sort. Is that both service-connected and non-service-connected?

Mr. KELLER. Service connected.

Senator McCLURE. How many of those are from the Vietnam war?

Mr. HUBER. 300,000 members, I believe. A total of 337,800.

Senator McCLURE. I want to relate those figures to the figures given in your prepared statement with respect to job opportunities and the employment records. Is there a similar breakdown between the service-connected and the non-service-connected and Vietnam and other war veterans in relation to these who applied for jobs and did not get them.

Commander Hicks. Yes, Senator. I would like to refer this to our Director of Employment, Norman B. Hartnett.

Mr. HARTNETT. There is a breakdown the Vietnam-era service-connected veterans and other disabled veterans without categorizing the veterans of prior wars.

In the figures that we have alluded to, 37 percent of the registrants were Vietnam-era veterans.

Senator McCLURE. Of the balance of the 63 percent or the others that were not included in that, was there a breakdown between service-connected and non-service-connected disabilities?

Mr. HARTNETT. Not currently, but the passage of Public Law 92-540 would take care of this problem if the Department of Labor would implement the law, which to date they have not done.

Senator McCLURE. I was trying to see if we can pinpoint the category of veterans who are having the greatest difficulty. If, indeed, there is such a—

Mr. HARTNETT. I can assure you that the youngest disabled Vietnam-era veteran is being placed at the rate of 24 percent. The older veteran has it much worse in that he was placed in fiscal year 1972 at the rate of 11 percent. About 1 in 9 of those applicants were placed.

Senator McCLURE. When we say the older veteran, you lump Korean and World War II?

Mr. HARTNETT. And World War I.

Senator McCLURE. The second question I have in regard to this is a question with regard to admission to VA hospitals. I think you stated that there was a waiting list. Is there a waiting list of service-connected disability at VA hospitals?

Mr. KELLER. Generally speaking there is no waiting list for the service-connected disabled veterans, but the other veterans do have legal entitlement. They do have a list.

Senator McCLURE. I recognize that. I am trying to pinpoint it. Because I think everyone in this room would agree that there is a legal entitlement for the non-service-connected, but the first call of this Nation is to those who suffered the disability as a result of their service.

I think we have to keep that in mind as we try to assign some priorities, and I think that is exactly the thing the Congress is being called upon to do today, to recognize that we may not be able to do everything we want to do for every citizen of this country and we may have to make some hard choices. That is the reason I think we need to make a breakdown here, even recognizing the right of the non-service-connected disability.

Mr. KELLER. You do get into the area, Senator, where the service-connected disabled veteran who is seeking hospitalization for his service-incurred disability, I must admit I don't think there is much of a waiting list but for this man who has a disability that is adjunct or perhaps aggravated by his service-connected disability. Now, we get into another area and this is perhaps where we are getting into trouble.

Senator McCLURE. I think we are also running into some regional differences because some areas of the country have greater problems than others.

Mr. KELLER. Senator Hughes pinpointed out a very dramatic example. There is a very great problem in Arizona because of the trend of moving population. There is a big problem in Florida.

Senator McCLURE. I think the Congress needs to know what the regional differences are so we can pinpoint the problem and seek some solution in the areas where the problem is greatest.

Mr. KELLER. I certainly agree.

Senator McCCLURE. You refer to staffing problems and admissions and refusals. I have a difference just in my own State. The veterans in the northern part of Idaho have a higher refusal rate at the Spokane VA hospital than the Boise VA hospital. A markedly different rate for reasons which are as yet obscure but I am sure have something to do with the administration of the hospital and with the patient load at the hospital.

Most of the veterans and the veterans' organizations that have contacted the VA hospital in Boise are very, very happy with the treatment they get there.

The staffing ratio is not as good as we would like, but not bad. The beds' availability is good. The refusal rate is good. We don't have that kind of a problem in that particular one and I don't recite that to in any way deny the fact that it exists other places, but I think it helps us in understanding the problem and responding to it to be able to recognize the differences that do exist between areas and between classes of veterans. I think there are differences and I appreciate the statement that you make and that is the reason I asked the question, to be able to perhaps pinpoint it a little more.

Commander Hicks, you indicated there is a 40-percent refusal of admission. I was startled by that figure.

Commander Hicks. Maybe I should say the rate of acceptance runs in the 55, 58 percent category. Those who apply. They are taking about one in two.

Senator McCCLURE. What is the reason for the refusal? Is it an arbitrary classification or are we having some people who are applying who have either a non-service-connected disability or were not disabled but they have some difficulty, that is not yet entitled under law.

Commander Hicks. There is any number of things. The one example that was cited a few moments ago from West Virginia.

I recently encountered one in Salt Lake City where a young Vietnam veteran possibly, he had lost one leg in Vietnam and through, I would say inefficiency of the hospital, he possibly lost the other leg because he was refused admission and consequently had to go down to Denver, Colo., for admission to the Army hospital, Fitzsimmons.

Senator McCCLURE. We run across those individual problems and we certainly want to hear about them because I think we do run into some patterns.

I think we have had enough experience in the past to know that any program we have had varies in its application according to the administration of it and that isn't always equal across the country.

If we see trouble cropping up someplace we want to know because this becomes a localized problem and not a programmatic problem.

I think we can make a difference very immediately and perhaps dramatically when that does become clear. I am sure you realize that and I want to assure you that we realize that.

We are anxious to help.

There is one thing that troubles me just a little, and I am going to express a little of my own feeling and ask you for yours.

In regard to the disability ratings, there are those who say a disability rating is wholly and totally on the basis of the reduction in earning power of the vet. I tend to believe that it is really made up of two things.

One is the compensation or attempted compensation for something for which there can be no dollar value and that is a portion of the body or the health of the veteran. This has no price. It has to be absolutely arbitrary. It is not in any way related directly to the ability of the veteran to earn because we do have some disabled veterans who have by training or exceptional skill, been able to earn fully within our job marketplace and still they are entitled to and receive disability rating and compensation.

The other part of it is one which is more easily measurable and that is the reduction in earning capacity presumed because of a physical condition, either in terms of health or in terms of loss of body members.

I think we are dealing in a reevaluation of the second part of that when we talk about it in this committee. This evaluation started back under the Johnson administration and has continued under this administration. I don't think we should properly address ourselves to the other.

I think that is a judgment value that is left to the Congress of the United States.

I think one of them demands a reevaluation in terms of earning capacity and the other in terms of economic conditions and the feelings of the country.

I would invite any comment that you might make as to whether or not we should attempt to separate or attempt to evaluate or recognize these elements.

Commander HICKS. In regard to the economic value of losses of limbs, and really I have never heard this phrase used until recently, the OMB started making references to things of this nature because to that man that has lost both arms and regardless of his status in life, how he may climb in professional success, there is a human element that is lost and I think that the calculation of the OMB is in terms of dollars and cents and nothing to do with the humanitarian aspect. The disabilities this man suffered.

Senator McCLURE. I am certain that is correct. It isn't just in the veterans' area that we run into this debate. We are doing it in unemployment, accident, and even the advocates of no-fault insurance would like a similar formula for those people injured in automobile accidents.

I think that element of it is going to be dealt with in a dollars-and-cents manner by those people who approach it in this fashion and as they do in other areas of our concerns in the society they will also include veterans. The other element of it that you so eloquently expressed, and I certainly most heartedly agree, is the value you put on something that has no value, that has no price, that is beyond measure.

Each person in this room, I am certain, was willing to, if necessary, sacrifice his life for his country, but wouldn't willingly sell an arm or leg at any price.

I don't know how we measure that difference and certainly if I were called upon to serve at the hazard of loss of life, I would do it again and it might also encompass the loss of a part of my body, but I would never make that kind of a voluntary choice in making an evaluation of my service.

But somehow we, in trying to approach disability ratings, are faced with the necessity of dealing with both aspects of this and I think both

are involved. If we leave one out, then we are down to a dollars-and-cents evaluation and if we go totally on the dollars-and-cents evaluation, then we will undoubtedly get dragged into the legalism between this and other compensatory systems that are unrelated to the veterans services. I think the disabled veterans of this country would be very much harmed by being dragged into that kind of direct comparison without any element of the service to this country being involved in it.

Mr. ADAMS. I would like to make this observation, that even if you put it on an economic basis, that is a loss of earning power. I don't think there is any disabled veteran in this country who is overpaid at this time.

Senator McCLURE. No, I wouldn't attempt to say that any are overpaid, but I think the calculation, the evaluation, becomes a different sort of thing.

The same thing is true of a man who loses an arm in an industrial accident and there are rating schedules written into the statutes of almost every State in the Union that says just exactly how much money he is going to get for that accident.

Mr. KELLER. I don't honestly feel that needs apply to the service-connected disabled veteran.

I can give you the example that within our group of National Service Officers in this room, we have five World War II veterans who are double leg amputees and we have nine who are double leg amputees from Vietnam and one triple amputee. These individuals perform just as well as you or I do today. They get up and go to work, they work hard, with tremendous undertaking on their part.

Certainly I don't think they should be penalized for going that extra mile, making that extra effort and becoming taxpaying citizens of this country.

Certainly they ought to be applauded and certainly nobody should look at the fact that they are able to earn a living, and say if this is the case then perhaps we shouldn't pay compensation. I don't really agree with that either.

Senator McCLURE. I don't disagree with what you are saying except that these other matters are related and if we don't make a careful separation, the veterans are going to be evaluated at least in part upon the same basis as other disabled persons.

Mr. KELLER. They are compensated now for their physical loss. They are compensated for it.

Senator McCLURE. How do you measure the loss?

Mr. KELLER. We have the ratings list of disabilities which we are not opposed to.

Senator McCLURE. I know that, and I shouldn't have asked the question because there is no way to answer it.

Mr. KELLER. You have to consider the vocational longevity of an individual, his employment longevity.

Many of these veterans find that where normally they would work to age 65, as all of us want to, they find that because of their disabilities they have to shorten their work years and their life longevity is also shortened.

Senator McCLURE. No question about that. Some of these are measurable, some are not. I might put into the record at this point,

in reference to your statement that they all want to work to age 65, as all of us want to do, that there is a segment of our society that expresses very strong dissent to such a statement. They want to retire earlier. We deal with that problem, too.

Just one statement in conclusion and I have no answer for it except that a lot of what we are being asked to do in this country today is a setting of priorities, something that we have been unable or unwilling to do in recent years. The result has been a budget that has been out of control, in my opinion, and I don't ask all other Members of the Congress to share that opinion, that has led to massive budget deficits and has been one of several contributing factors to inflation which causes the kind of problem that led you to reflect, as you very legitimately do, that the adjustments in compensation have not kept up with other changes in the economy.

As we try to get a hold of national priorities, we have to recognize, if indeed there are any, that we have to make judgments about what is most important to this country. There will be those people who will make a direct tradeoff in terms of compensation to non-service-connected disabilities. I am not one of them, but there are those who will, as against aid more broadly defined and more broadly disseminated to society for all those who are disabled.

Unfortunately, we can't do all we would like to do in this country for everyone, and certainly everyone here would recognize that one of the most severe problems you face as a group of people is the increasing cost of living, which is almost certainly and directly related to the rate of inflation in this country and we aren't doing you a service if, to you as with everyone else in this country, we promise you everything, whether we can or cannot give it to you, and at the same time cemently seal it away from you by creating inflation in the country.

I think we have been too guilty of that, and I say we because I am new to this committee, I am new to the Senate, but I have served in the Congress for 6 years.

I think we do have a responsibility and I hope that along the line as we make our choice of priorities that the Congress will not lose sight of its unique and particular responsibility to those men and women who serve their country and as a result of that service were to some degree disabled.

Mr. KELLER. I think the man that went away to the defense of his country and became disabled, I think he should have the highest priority.

Senator McCLURE. I agree with you totally. That should be the first priority for our society and I think Congress will agree ultimately that that is the first priority, but I think Congress has been guilty of one other thing, too, and that is that we have overpromised.

We have told people we are going to do some things that we didn't follow through and do for them. We told them we had the capacity to respond when we didn't have the capacity to respond and then people have rightfully said you lied to us.

But I think the people of this country are getting tired of being lied to. I think they have the right to expect us to be honest and candid and that does require me at times like this to caution you that we cannot do everything that we would like to do, no matter how much we would like to.



But again I agree with you that I in my personal priorities, and I think the Congress in its priorities, would say the men and women who served are entitled to first priority.

Chairman HARTKE. Thank you, Senator McClure.

I would like to point out again the number of people who are here in the hearing room. I want to thank you for coming, each and every-one of you.

I can say to you that it makes a difference to me to see an organization that is as dedicated as this one is and to have you come, and see how the Government is conducting or not conducting its business, especially in relation to veterans.

In order to accommodate all of you, we did have to take a special room. This is the caucus room of the U.S. Senate. It is a beautiful room and we are honored that we had a chance to visit here and have you here with us.

The difficulty with all the other hearing rooms is they are too small to accommodate this size crowd and there are very few committee hearings that are held here in the Capital of the United States that have to adjourn to a room of this size to hold hearings unless it is some type of sensational hearing.

We did not consider this a sensational hearing. It probably should be, but it is not.

I want to point out the fact that you have taken so many Vietnam veterans into your National Service Organization, and once again I would like to commend you here publicly for taking that action. And at the same time, I would like to point out that one of the older members of the DAV National Service Organization was in that first class, the first class of service officers, is none other than Frank J. Brizzi, who is staff director of the committee.

Frank, please stand up.

Frank had retired. I went back and asked Frank if he wouldn't come and give a little more service to his country and I think maybe you can see the results of that type of dedication in some of the legislation that was passed.

I would like to point out again that the Vietnam-Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act, which mandates assistance in getting veterans trained and into a job, particularly the disabled, has not been implemented by the Labor Department as it should be.

That kind of inaction cannot be tolerated. We do not intend to tolerate it. That is all there is to that.

We have also introduced a bill, S. 1076, which is presently pending before our committee called the VA Accountability Act of 1973. That deals among other things with the question of how you are going to handle change in disability ratings.

We are not saying that you can't change the disability rating. There may well be a need to increase many ratings. We aren't saying that there are not going to be some adjustments made that should be made.

But I will guarantee you one thing. You cannot tell me you are going to do a better job for the veterans by changing disability ratings and reducing compensation payments by \$160 million without somebody getting hurt.

Just so we don't lose sight of this. I think it important to note that we are spending a smaller percentage of the Federal tax dollar on

veterans benefits and services today than we did 10 years ago in 1963. But you have 6 million more veterans since that time. In other words, you have an increase of 6 million veterans and you are spending less of the Federal tax dollar on veterans than you did 10 years ago.

You can't tell me that is giving the veteran a fair shake.

What we are saying in substance by this committee action and with S. 1076, the Veterans' Administration Accountability Act, is look, you people down at Office of Management and Budget, you have never run for public office in your life.

You go ahead and face the voter and you will find out that the people of the United States want to fulfill the country's obligations to its veterans.

Now, we are not even saying some veterans hospitals shouldn't be closed. I know one case where they ought to either tear the buildings down or close them. The buildings were built to take care of Civil War veterans about 1899 and they are beyond rehabilitation. It should be torn down and a new hospital built in its place. And that hospital happens to be in Indiana, in my home State.

I have a letter here and I am going to read it:

This is addressed to me and was received yesterday, March 20, 1973.

Dear Senator, I am writing this letter in protest of the proposed VA rating schedule changes. I am greatly disappointed to think that our Government would let down our disabled veterans. Those men served our country when called and they paid a terrible price, but they were there in time of need. Are you going to show your appreciation by cutting their benefits? I pray you don't. I served as an infantryman in Vietnam from November 10, 1970, to April 19, 1971. On March 28, 1971 I received wounds in a sapper attack on a fire support base, but I consider myself lucky. You see in one hour 33 buddies died and 65 more were wounded. That one hour I will never be able to forget.

That is something no one can tell anyone else what that one hour is like, I killed that night and I am afraid I died just a bit myself. But, like I said, I was lucky. All the time I was in Vietnam I wanted to believe that there was a purpose in being there, but now I found out I had to kill for an unjust cause in an unjust war.

David Thompson lost both of his legs. Thomas Simmons is now paralyzed from the waist down and Eugene Rasmussen has only one arm. Are the losses of these young men worthless now? Could you walk into an amputee ward and tell them they were maimed for life for nothing, that their country appreciates their losses even less now and the money that would have helped support them and their families is now being sent to North Vietnam to build that country up?

The disabled veteran has made the sacrifice. He has earned his entitlement. I hope you will work and support Senate bill 882 without any delay.

Chairman HARTKE. Let me talk about priorities, and I understand what Senator McClure is talking about. None of us like inflation or having money taken away from us, but let me point out something.

I think I would like to have a little more talk about the priority of bringing the veteran back, at least to where he was in 1963, as well as, making sure we don't close down regional offices that should stay open and S. 1076 would insure that.

Making sure that they do something about not closing hospitals which should stay open, making sure that they build those medical schools, as authorized by Public Law 92-541, so we can have an adequate number of doctors and proper staffing.

I also want you to know that I for one am not going to vote for one penny to North Vietnam until we start giving first-class treatment to the veterans of this war.

I don't want to be misunderstood in the next statement I am going to make, because I am going to read a letter again and it is not to me.

But I just wish some of those people in the Office of Management and Budget, if they don't want to run for office, would at least get out of the ivory towers and go out and talk to some people. I am not sure they ever talk to a human being.

This is from the "South Bend Tribune." It is dated March 15. This is a letter to the editor. "Voice of the People."

I share the sentiments of the writer. It is a Mrs. Cindy Miller from Rolling Prairie. She says:

Your editorial cartoon of March 9 concerning disabled vets and POW's prompted me to write this letter. It is nice to see that at least one other person realizes the unique problems of disabled vets.

We have offered the returning POW's cars, vacations, jobs, and publicity for all they have encountered in the hands of the enemy. What have we offered the amputees and other disabled vets who have returned from Vietnam trying to pick up their lives. They have given something that can never be replaced, their limbs, eyesight, et cetera. Though the war is over, these precious things will never be returned to them.

The problem is, we choose to forget these men because they represent something no one wants to think about.

Chairman HARTKE. And I really think that is the essence of it. There is really more truth to it. It is sort of something we would like to hide, something that never, never existed and hopefully would go away, but I have been in those amputee wards and this has been, as you know, a bobbytrap war.

We can put a lot of money into research in how to get to the moon. I would like to see us use at least 50 percent of that money to do research for what can be done for spinal cord injury cases.

If they did this, nonveterans also would be the beneficiaries of the results of the research. If you find medical advances for veterans, the rest of the people will share as well.

As Mrs. Miller continues in her letter:

The problem is, we choose to forget these men because they represent something no one wants to think about. They, along with the dead, are forgotten because the war has ended. The POW's have come home.

The government hasn't forgotten the disabled, however. They are in the process of cutting their pensions to less than one-third of what they were receiving before the war ended. I guess they won't need the money any more. Their wives, families, disabilities, and lack of a job will disappear. Hanoi needs this money more.

Unless you know someone who is affected by this as I do, it's hard to get angry; but I don't know how anyone with half a conscience can forget them and their right to consideration.

Chairman HARTKE. I thank you for coming.

Yes, Commander?

Commander HICKS. Senator, I have one more brief statement to read here, and certainly we appreciate your kind remarks, and this statement is that Senator R. Vance Hartke is hereby a life member of the Disabled American Veterans.

Congratulations, Senator.

Chairman HARTKE. I do want to thank you, Commander.

This is really an honor and a surprise to me.

Thank you.

Without objection, at this point in the record, I ordered to be printed all prepared statements, the DAV's letter to Secretary of Labor, and other pertinent documents for the record.

This meeting is adjourned.

(Whereupon, at 3:30 p.m., the Committee on Veteran's Affairs was adjourned.)

(The previously mentioned DAV's letter to Secretary of Labor, Peter J. Brennan, with attachment, follows:)

DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS,  
Washington, D.C., March 15, 1973.

HON. PETER J. BRENNAN,  
Secretary of Labor, U.S. Department of Labor,  
Washington, D.C.

Dear MR. SECRETARY: We certainly welcome this opportunity to meet with you and members of your staff regarding the pressing problems of unemployment among the disabled veterans of this nation. We, in the Disabled American Veterans, are seriously concerned about the degree of effective employment assistance being delivered to handicapped veterans who, either by law or policy directives, are supposed to receive priority and preference.

The validity of our concern is supported by official Department of Labor statistics for Fiscal Year 1972 and the first six months of Fiscal Year 1973. In Fiscal Year 1972, of the 447,707 handicapped veterans registered for employment assistance with 2,400 public Employment Service offices, only 64,727 (14.4%) were placed in regular jobs and 8,264 (1.8%) were enrolled in training. The younger disabled Vietnam-era veterans were placed at the rate of 20.4%, whereas, disabled veterans of all other wars were placed at the rate of 11%. It becomes quite obvious that almost 375,000 registered handicapped veterans received neither a job nor a training slot. This pattern has been continued in the first six months of Fiscal Year 1973 which indicates that of 319,000 registered handicapped veterans, only 38,000 (11.9%) were placed in jobs and 4,000 (1.25%) were enrolled in training. Again, the younger disabled veteran fared better than the older disabled veteran, as his placement rate was 15.2% with a 9.39% rate applicable to the older handicapped veteran.

The Disabled American Veterans has conducted two employment surveys of disabled Vietnam-era veterans, one in November 1971 at which time 101,178 were contacted, and the most recent in January and February of 1973 when 23,807 were queried. In both surveys we had a significant response which concluded to substantially higher unemployment rates among disabled veterans than officially disclosed in the Department of Labor Statistics. Our most recent survey results, a copy of which is attached, indicate that of 4,638 respondents, 53% are unemployed but 71% want jobs, implying not only a great degree of unemployment but substantial underemployment as well. Each of our respondents indicating a request for employment assistance will receive such assistance by a referral of questionnaires to local Veterans Employment Representatives of the public Employment Service through our DAV Department Commanders.

Congress is also keenly aware of the need for improved employment assistance to disabled veterans as represented by the passage of Public Law 92-540, signed by the President on October 24, 1972, which contains many provisions in Chapters 41 and 42 which have as their intent a more effective job counseling, training, and placement service for veterans with "special emphasis" for the employment of qualified disabled veterans and veterans of the Vietnam-era by Federal contractors. The Code of Federal regulations pursuant to Public Law 92-540 and Executive Order 11701, as published in the *Federal Register* on January 31, 1973 is woefully weak, and totally inadequate to comply with the statutory obligation of "special emphasis" by Federal contractors in the employment of qualified disabled veterans. We have since December 1, 1972 exchanged correspondence with your predecessor and the Manpower Administrator requesting appropriate changes in the regulations to insure compliance with the law. We ask that you personally intervene to effect such changes.

The initiation of a cooperative plan between the Manpower Administration and the States to train seriously disabled veterans as employment counselors and placement specialists for other disabled veterans was most welcomed, as this was initially suggested by the Disabled American Veterans. We are distressed, however, that the original intent to hire 450 such seriously disabled veterans was not realized because of severe budgetary restraints imposed upon the States just prior to the implementation of the plan. Again, we request your intervention to continue this very worthwhile program and in fact, to expand it both in scope and funding. Many of these training positions could be filled with the scores of thousands of job seeking disabled veterans who are registered with the public Employment Service.

Since it is apparent that the trend in government appears to be revenue sharing with the States, we are requesting that in any Manpower Revenue Sharing Program (MRSP) veterans preference, particularly that applicable to disabled veterans, be continued as it now exists or strengthened to perpetuate the application of priority and preference in employment services to handicapped veterans.

There are other areas of concern which we may discuss with appropriate staff officials at a later date, but we do request specifically the funding of the 70 additional Assistant Veterans Employment Representatives in the affected States which are specifically documented in the legislative history regarding Public Law 92-540.

In closing, the Disabled American Veterans wants to commend you for your statement of support for programs to enhance employment opportunities for veterans, when you appeared before the Senate Labor and Public Welfare Committee. We look forward to mutual cooperation leading to improvements in the delivery of effective employment services to all veterans, especially disabled veterans. We also await your first annual report to Congress regarding the quality and quantity of employment assistance to disabled veterans, as required by Section 2007, Public Law 92-540.

Sincerely,

JACK O. HICKS, *National Commander.*

Enclosure.

*Survey of disabled Vietnam-era veterans*

Number contacted.....	23, 807
Responses (19 percent).....	4, 638
Employed (47 percent).....	2, 173
Unemployed (53 percent).....	2, 460
Want jobs (71 percent).....	3, 322
Number requesting ES assistance.....	2, 552
Number commenting on ES service.....	1, 172
Education:	
Less than high school.....	556
High school graduate.....	1, 992
Some college.....	1, 504
College graduate.....	580
Currently under the GI bill.....	990
Chapter 31.....	535
Not in school.....	3, 113

This survey was conducted by the DAV during the months of January and February 1973.

All respondents who have requested employment assistance will be contacted by local Veterans Employment Representatives of the public Employment Service to whom their questionnaires will be mailed.



# LEGISLATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS OF VETERANS' ORGANIZATIONS, 1973

THURSDAY, MARCH 29, 1973

U.S. SENATE,  
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS,  
*Washington, D.C.*

The committee met at 1:45 p.m. in the caucus room, room 318, Russell Office Building, the Honorable Vance Hartke (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Present: Chairman Vance Hartke, presiding, and Senators Strom Thurmond, Robert T. Stafford, Herman E. Talmadge, and Jennings Randolph.

## OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. VANCE HARTKE, CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Chairman HARTKE. The meeting will please come to order.

Today we will receive testimony from three important veterans' organizations each representing a constituency with specialized needs. They are the Paralyzed Veterans of America, AMVETS, the American Veterans of World War II, Korea, and Vietnam, and finally the Veterans of World War I of the U.S.A.

Before we begin, I would like to make two brief points. First, each of the veterans' groups here has done an excellent job of articulating and fulfilling the unique needs of its members.

The leadership of the PVA, AMVETS, and the Veterans of World War I have exhibited foresight and courage for which they are to be commended. Second, it should be understood at the onset for the record that this committee continues to stand with you shoulder to shoulder. Every member of the committee favors economy in Government but the amount of the budget is not the question before us. The real question is what are our priorities within that budget. As I have said many times before, there is no national debt higher than that owed our brave veterans and their loved ones. Substantial reductions of present veterans' benefits would be unfair, unwise, and in my opinion, un-American.

Last year this committee acted on four bills of particular interest to the groups appearing here today. These were, the Veterans' Health Care Expansion Act, the National Cemeteries Act, the Drug and Alcohol Treatment and Rehabilitation Act, and finally a bill to protect and increase non-service-connected pensions. All four bills were passed by the Senate, but none became law. Two were vetoed by the President.

This year the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs is again committed to needed legislation. Three of these bills as reintroduced,

overwhelmingly passed the Senate on March 6 and are now pending in the House of Representatives. We are awaiting reports from the Veterans' Administration concerning the pension legislation now before our committee.

Please accept our warm welcome. We are anxious to hear your testimony regarding steps that can be taken to meet the needs of our country's veterans. I should mention before we begin that I will have to leave the hearing before it is over and a number of other Senators unfortunately will not be able to attend because of the press of Senate business.

The distinguished Senator from Georgia, Senator Herman E. Talmadge, will act as chairman in my absence. Senator Talmadge, who is the ranking member of this committee has done an outstanding job as chairman of the Subcommittee on Compensation and Pensions.

Our first witness this afternoon is Frank R. De George, president of the Paralyzed Veterans of America.

Frank, we are honored to have you, and are very glad to have your testimony.

**STATEMENT OF FRANK R. DE GEORGE, PRESIDENT OF THE PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA, ACCOMPANIED BY JAMES A. MAYE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND ALAN S. LANGER, NATIONAL SERVICE DIRECTOR**

Mr. DE GEORGE. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman and honored members of the committee, on behalf of the Paralyzed Veterans of America I wish to thank you for this opportunity to present before you our legislative proposals on veterans' affairs as they pertain to the spinal cord injured and diseased veteran.

At this time, Senator, I would appreciate it if you would accept our addendum to a legislative proposal.

Chairman HARTKE. We certainly will. They will appear in the record at the conclusion of your statement.

Mr. DE GEORGE. Accompanying me today are members of the national office staff, our executive director, Mr. James A. Maye, and the national service director, Mr. Alan S. Langer, who will be happy to answer any questions you might have regarding our suggested programs. I would like to add that the PVA is proud of the fact that these two top administrative positions are filled by Vietnam veterans deeply committed to the needs of our organization's members of all ages and from all wars, also present are members of our organization.

As we present our testimony, we would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge what we consider a very fine example of legislative responsibility, the Senate's introduction of S. 59, "The Veterans Health Care Expansion Act of 1973." This bill would provide an added dimension to the Veterans' Administration's continued program of service to the disabled veteran. Due to the high cost of medical care and hospitalization, the disabled veteran must allocate a part of his limited and fixed income to insure against financial disaster in the form of a major illness or accident to a family member. For the paraplegic, purchase of life insurance and standard family health insurance is financially restrictive. The proposed expansion of health



care to include hospitalization and medical care for his wife and dependents would insure the veteran against the crippling cost of prolonged hospitalization of a family member.

The inclusion of hospital and domiciliary care for the non-service-connected veteran unable to defray the expense of necessary hospital care; the inclusion of the family in professional counseling on the aspects of the veteran's disability, and extended home health care services are major points of importance of this bill which we heartily support.

This action on the part of the committee is an important step towards alleviating vast discrepancies in the medical care of the veteran. But it is only one step on a long path. There is much to be done before the people of this Nation can say their war veterans are properly cared for.

A citizen of this country who is asked to place his life in jeopardy by taking up arms and performing at his best should not be expected to settle for second best when a disability intervenes in his pursuit of life. Nor does he expect to lavish in financial wealth or personal partiality. An equal break is what he asks. That equal break begins with the best medical care this country can provide. Can you honestly say that today's veteran is receiving the best care this Government can provide? That his rehabilitation program is second to none? Most assuredly not.

Measures must be taken to see that hospitalization, medical care, and the veteran's rehabilitation are the equivalent of any that could be provided by the best civilian hospital in America, and for that matter the world. To achieve this goal we make the following suggestions:

One, promotion of VA hospital construction to replace antiquated facilities now in use. A strong emphasis must be placed upon the inclusion of modern spinal cord injury centers and the latest in technological equipment.

Two, the provision of a system of emergency transportation for newly injured spinal cord injured patients to minimize the disabling effects of the injury. One logical solution would be the use of military air evacuation from the scene of an accident to a SCI Center.

Three, adequate funds appropriated to insure medical research for cure/research of spinal cord injury related dysfunctions, such as renal failure, a major cause of death for paraplegics. A greater emphasis placed on research of spinal cord regeneration must also be employed.

Four, a strong program for veterans who become addicted to drugs or alcohol. S-284, "The Alcohol and Drug Treatment and Rehabilitation Act of 1973," is just the beginning, but steps must be taken to insure that VA hospitals which undertake such treatment are properly staffed and that a comprehensive program of rehabilitation is instituted. Presently the environment of the majority of VA Hospitals is depressing and the source of mental anxiety, a conducive atmosphere for illicit drugs.

Five, increased emphasis must be placed upon a complete program of rehabilitation. This should include a procession of educational, vocational, and recreational preparation for the veteran. This expanded scope of rehabilitation services would aid in the socio-psy-

chological adjustment of the severely disabled veteran and better facilitate his total rehabilitation and subsequent return to society.

Six, the elevation of the treatment of spinal cord injury to the level of that of a medical specialty with specialized training for medical and paramedical personnel.

Seven, the expansion of outpatient care and hospital based home care programs in order that severely disabled patients may reside outside the hospital.

The implementation of these proposals could effectuate a medical and rehabilitation program second to none and equal to the justifiable need of the disabled veteran.

Moving away from hospitalization and medical care, the next factor encountered in the restoration of the disabled veteran is a benefits program. In the situation of the paralyzed veteran, with rare exception, he is left without a vocation until reeducated and retrained. He must at first depend upon some outside source to provide him with financial assistance in order to survive. If this disability occurred in the line of military duty he will be compensated by the Veterans' Administration for his loss. If he served in the uniformed services during "wartime" and suffered his disability after discharge, he will receive a pension. But if his tenure of service occurred during a time of peace, his only recourse for financial aid would be family and friends or public welfare. No one would dispute the right of a service-connected veteran to his benefits of compensation and necessary adaptive equipment. Nor would any rational individual believe any financial remuneration could replace his loss. Why then can Congress offer only a pittance of a pension to an equally incapacitated veteran who suffered his misfortune after honorable service to his country during a declared time of hostility and let the unpropitious "peacetime" non-service-connected veteran fend for himself? It doesn't take a great deal of insight to see inequities in the manner in which financial assistance is made available to disabled veterans.

It all seems ludicrous to say that the "peacetime" veteran is less deserving because there was no war. It is the basic principle of a strong defense force to prevent war. Therefore, the "peacetime" veteran performed the most honorable service known to humanity by acting as a deterrent to war. For his effort are we to say, "Sorry, but you are not deserving of aid for your time of service because our Nation wasn't in the act of war?" Gentlemen, there is no justification for denying the "peacetime" veteran financial aid when his need is just.

The plight of the non-service-connected veteran in receipt of a pension is only one rung up the ladder from the "peacetime non-service-connected." For example, a veteran who has an income of less than \$300 per year receives \$130 per month. This is \$540 per year below the \$2,100 that the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare has designated as the poverty level. The poverty level for a family of four is \$4,400; the pension scale does not allow the veteran to earn more than \$3,800 before stopping his pension completely. For those veterans so disabled as to need regular aid and attendance a special allowance of \$110 a month is paid to the catastrophically disabled non-service-connected veteran. Under this medical determination he is given medicine and prosthetic devices necessary to sustain him. This too is subject to termination when he exceeds his income

limitations. What type of aid and attendance will \$110 a month buy? Based upon a 40-hour week it amounts to 61 cents an hour. It is time to take under consideration the provision of adequate funds for aid and attendance to the entitled non-service-connected disabled veteran.

What if the non-service-connected veteran is physically able to return to work despite his disability? For the sake of argument we put his annual income at \$6,882, the beginning salary for a GS-4 training position with the Government. First of all, he will lose his pension of up to \$1,540 per year, also his aid and attendance which would account for another \$1,320 per year, plus the medications and prosthetics service. We have now reduced his salary to \$4,022 per year. After Federal, State, and social security taxes are deducted, he will have approximately \$3,282 or \$422 more than before he started work. We did not take into account the extra cost of travel he incurred or any of the other expenses entailed with working. Considering this, is there much wonder in your minds why he doesn't see work as "gainful" employment?

The present pension formula does not meet the financial need of the catastrophically disabled veteran. In order to provide him with the opportunity to support himself without facing an immediate financial crisis, he must be permitted a reasonable amount of earned income before reducing his pension. In the case where a veteran is in receipt of regular aid and attendance, there must be provisions made to insure this financial aid is sufficient to meet his needs. The present rate does not meet his needs and is controlled by his earned income, so that any real attempt to help himself results in the penalty of loss of aid and attendance. It is your duty to provide the veteran the opportunity to advance himself beyond a poverty scale. To do this means major changes in the pension program as it exists today.

Therefore, we recommend the following:

One, that aid and attendance regulations be amended to allow the veteran a greater amount of earned income before he loses the aid and attendance benefit. Also, we suggest that the veteran be allowed the continued benefit of medical and prosthetic supplies under aid and attendance without regard to income level.

Two, that the pension scale be readjusted and made more realistic to the needs of the severely disabled veteran.

Three, that some provision be made to prevent the continuing adjustment of social security benefits from eroding away VA pensions.

Four, an increase in the dependency income exclusion for the non-service-connected veteran in order that a wife can pursue gainful employment without the penalty of a reduction in her husband's pension benefits.

We are knowledgeable of numerous bills introduced into the 93d Congress concerning pension. We hope that you take a long and scrutinizing look at these proposals and evaluate their effectiveness to relieve the plight of the severely disabled veteran who must rely upon his pension to live.

The answer to total rehabilitation of the disabled veteran, and the paraplegic in particular, does not lie in monetary benefits alone. Provisions must be made to educate, retrain, and employ each individual to his fullest level.

There is a tremendous need for counseling of young veterans with severe disabilities in order that they learn their potential and are

motivated toward achieving that level. Jobs must be made available. This is not to say jobs should be created for the disabled veteran, only that they should be available for qualified individuals without prejudice to their disability. The Government itself is the most qualified and has the most to gain from employing disabled veterans. Yet the sad truth is that the Government seems to have lost interest in the creative capabilities of its veterans, once they have served their purpose as soldiers. This is intolerable, both from the standpoint of the indignation suffered by the veteran and the valuable waste of human resource. We must investigate a program of career opportunities which provides the disabled veteran the chance to retain his personal dignity, satisfy his vocational ambitions, and earn an equitable income. The restoration of a human being back into society after the ravages of war must be of an equal priority as national defense. For what is there to defend if those who must suffer the brunt of battle are discarded afterward, or receive only minimal survival care?

It is all very simple and as plain as the nose on our face; it is time to do something for the veteran besides talk. I repeat; let us do something *for* the veteran and *not* to him. The Vietnam war has cost this Nation 130 billion dollars, nearly 50,000 dead, 300,000 wounded, and at least 2,500 of these are suffering from some type of spinal injury. With the proposal of 10 more billions of dollars to reconstruct Vietnam, whatever possesses those who make these proposals that veterans should suffer even further, that VA hospital bed space should be cut to 80,000 for fiscal year 1974, and that non-service-connected pensions should be reduced because of social security increases and other pension plans. It has been further proposed to include wives' income in the computation of veterans income for veterans pension, sinking him to a lower poverty level of living.

It appears that there is an insidious move to place the non-service-connected veteran on welfare. If and when he is relegated to that level, the veteran will have lost any remaining self-respect.

Even though the President has rescinded the recomputation of the disability rating scale, there exists the real possibility that entitled benefits and programs are in jeopardy. How can this be tolerated?

With all due respect, I just wonder what would happen if a POW was discharged or was retired tomorrow and in 6 months he had the misfortune of becoming catastrophically disabled. What benefits would he and/or his dependents be entitled to as a non-service-connected veteran?

You should know that the service-connected paraplegic veteran is concerned for the non-service-connected paraplegic veteran, indicative of our testimony here today. Yes, the Paralyzed Veterans of America is highly concerned.

Gentlemen, I leave you with the definition of a paraplegic and the purpose of our organization: A paraplegic is an individual, the Paralyzed Veterans of America is an organization formed by and for the most seriously disabled in the world. It is devoting its life and effort to every problem of each paraplegic regardless of race, creed, or color.

Mr. Chairman, honored members of the committee, we wish to thank you, as we are appreciative of your time, your patient concern, and the privilege to appear before you. It is our belief that this

auspicious body will act upon the matter presented today and bring about corrective measures for fair and equitable legislation.

Once again, thank you.

Chairman HARTKE. Thank you for an excellent statement.

I might say that the Paralyzed Veterans Organization is not only concerned with problems unique to its own membership but it is concerned with all veterans.

Mr. DE GEORGE. Thank you.

Chairman HARTKE. Senator Talmadge has arrived and I do have to catch a plane.

Senator Talmadge, if you would, I would appreciate your chairing the remainder of this session.

Senator TALMADGE [presiding]. Mr. De George, I wish to congratulate you also on an excellent statement.

Any questions from any members of the committee?

Senator Thurmond?

Senator THURMOND. Mr. Chairman, I just would like to commend President De George for his excellent statement. I thought you made a very full and comprehensive statement and you have set out the needs of the members of your organization.

I want to thank Mr. Maye and Mr. Langer for accompanying you, I noticed at the beginning of your statement, you made some specific recommendations, it seems to me, that would be most helpful.

For instance inclusion of modern spinal cord injury centers and the latest technological equipment. I have often felt that there should be more research on the spinal cord, the spinal cord controls the whole body. The brain is a nerve center, but right through the neck from there on down the nerves begin to spread and that spinal cord controls it all. And, I believe as time passes that there will be tremendously more research than is now conducted, and I think there ought to be.

And I would favor, because I feel that many of the fellows who have these spinal cord injuries, that if we had the benefit of the most modern research and can do more research, that the situation could be alleviated, if not cured entirely, and I am very much interested in that and in more research.

I notice you mentioned the emergency transportation for newly injured spinal cord patients. I think this is important because every minute counts after the spinal cord is injured.

The spinal cord injury, when we think about it today, we think frequently of Gov. George Wallace, his spinal cord was injured. And in some of these days, in my judgment, medical science is going to come up with an answer to those things, and I think that the sooner it does come up with that answer, then the sooner more veterans and nonveterans will receive the benefit of that research and that treatment.

You made other helpful recommendations in here which I am sure our committee will give the most careful attention to, and we appreciate your appearance here.

Thank you very much.

Mr. DE GEORGE. Thank you very much.

Senator TALMADGE. Thank you very much.

Senator RANDOLPH. Mr. Chairman, I would like to make a comment, very brief of course.

Senator TALMADGE. Senator Randolph.

Senator RANDOLPH. I have read the seven suggestions, and I think, Mr. De George, that I want the record to reflect that very seldom do we have anyone who comes before any committee and speaks of recommendations or proposals and suggestions. You are very modest when you come and approach this in this way, because actually they are good recommendations. They are effective proposals.

I mention that I think in your suggestions that you approached the members of the committee on the basis of counseling with us rather than directing us. I think this is a high compliment to you. I would like to have the record indicate this.

Mr. DE GEORGE. Thank you very much, sir.

Senator RANDOLPH. You do know, Mr. De George, that our chairman has introduced the bill, S. 275.

Mr. DE GEORGE. Precisely.

Senator RANDOLPH. You know the provisions of that measure. Of course, Senator Talmadge has joined, as have others, and Senator Thurmond is a cosponsor. And, with Senator Hartke there are in addition to the members of this committee, those that are not members who are joined for this common purpose.

I do recall, Mr. Chairman, that last year a similar bill passed the Senate but did not have the opportunity to be considered on the House floor, to be actually voted up or down, so we are back with it again this year. I have no feeling of fear that the Senate will not approve the measure again, and hopefully that the House will agree with us.

I have some proposals for the employment of veterans, which you perhaps know about, and others in the organizations that will be heard this afternoon. Because of the other committee meetings that Senator Stafford and I have been attending since 12 o'clock with no break until I asked the committee to recess until 2:15, we have just been able to come here and join you, Senator Talmadge, and the others.

I will resist the colloquy that might take place on matters that I think are of benefit to the veterans and to those like yourself, who are in a sense, suffering the handicaps that are very severe.

I know that Senator Stafford and I have become alarmed as we studied the buildings here on Capitol Hill; there is no opportunity for the paraplegic to come into these buildings without someone helping that paraplegic. This must be changed.

Mr. DE GEORGE. That is another whole ballgame, Senator, thank you.

Senator RANDOLPH. So we have been with the jackhammers already, Bob and I, and the work is underway on architectural barriers. We could not do the job, but the Architect of the Capitol has recognized it, and others have, and the program is beginning now to move forward. There will be a mobility for you that you haven't enjoyed in the past.

I have no desire to be partisan; I perhaps, in some ways, am very bipartisan and a nonpartisan Senator. But I do believe that on next Tuesday we are going to have the opportunity, and I say it without rancor or within an attempt to even suggest how a member should vote, to override veto of our bill for the rehabilitation of the physically handicapped.

It is a matter of a veto which has been exercised by the President and I respect his thinking and the office he holds. But we come back to the Congress next week to see what we have done with only two votes against the bill, with all of the provisions cut from the bill last year dollarwise, what we perhaps will do in reference to the overriding of the veto.

Again I say that I respect the votes that will be cast. I only say to you that there are efforts being made on the subjects you have brought to our attention today—problems of the veterans in their ability to fit themselves into our society, not in any sense as recipients of welfare, but as those deserving of the helping hand of Government to build lives that have in a sense been impaired.

Thank you.

Mr. DE GEORGE. Thank you.

Senator TALMADGE. Senator Stafford?

Senator STAFFORD. Mr. Chairman, thank you.

I would like to compliment President De George on his statement to this committee and be associated with the remarks of the chairman of the Public Works Committee, Senator Randolph. And finally to say that I don't believe that this committee, which does appreciate what you have done for the country, is going to allow you gentlemen to be let down in the near future or in the long term.

Mr. DE GEORGE. Thank you, sir.

Senator TALMADGE. Thank you, Mr. De George.

You may rest assured that this committee will give your recommendations every consideration.

Mr. DE GEORGE. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and committee members.

[The previously mentioned legislative resolutions of the Paralyzed Veterans of America follow:]

#### PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA

##### LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTIONS FROM THE 1972 CONVENTION

###### 1. Resolution 72-C-2 Starting Date of the Vietnam War

Whereas on November 8, 1950, the first American USAF advisers arrived in Vietnam to assist the French and South Vietnamese, who at that time were deeply engaged in the Indochina War, and we have remained in Vietnam during twenty years of continuing combat.

Whereas after the fall of Dien Bien Phu in May, 1954, and the partitioning of Vietnam at the 17th parallel, French forces withdrew and the American presence was gradually increased and escalated as more and more Americans were committed during the ensuing years of insurgency.

Whereas many Americans were killed and injured during the twenty years of continuous strife, the first combat death that the Government officially recognizes occurred in 1961, over 3½ years before the date now set as the start of the Vietnam War, August 5, 1964.

Whereas the U.S. Senate has twice voted to repeal the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution that was passed as a result of the attack by the North Vietnamese on August 5, 1964, against U.S. Navy ships cruising in the Tonkin Gulf. The Administration has publicly stated that it does not regard the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution as the basis for its authority to operate in Vietnam, therefore there no longer exists any validity for retaining August 5, 1964, as the starting date of the Vietnam War. Therefore be it

*Resolved*, That the Paralyzed Veterans of America, in convention assembled, does hereby recommend and support that the Congress of the United States set February 1, 1955, as the starting date of the Vietnam War for the purposes of the Veterans Administration and all other branches of the Federal Government so that all *Vietnam Veterans* may receive their full entitlement to benefits.

*2. Resolution 72-C-3 Equalization of Aid and Attendance for both SC and NSC*

Whereas PVA has gone on record supporting an Aid and Attendance allowance of \$336 for service-connected spinal cord injured, and

Whereas the nonservice Aid and Attendance allowance is \$100, and

Whereas there is no difference in the amount of care needed by either the service-connected or nonservice-connected injured, therefore be it

*Resolved*, That the amount of Aid and Attendance to be allowed should be one and the same for both divisions, that of the service-connected present allowance of \$336.

*3. Resolution 72-C-4 Equalize Aid and Attendance*

*Be It Resolved*, That the Paralyzed Veterans of America give continued and active support for legislation to equalize A & A allowance for all recipients of increased compensation and pension because of need of aid and attendance to the amount of at least \$336 per month.

*4. Resolution 72-C-6 Power Windows and A/C as Adaptive Equipment*

Whereas under the present law adaptive equipment does not include power windows or air conditioning,

Whereas thermal control is of great importance in the care and treatment of a paraplegic,

Whereas power windows are a definite safety necessity for operating a motor vehicle when using hand controls,

*Be It Resolved*, That the Paralyzed Veterans of America recommends inclusion of air conditioning and power windows as items issuable under the automobile adaptive equipment regulation.

*5. Resolution 72-C-8 Air Conditioning for Total Living Environment*

Whereas presently a veteran who has incurred a service-connected spinal disorder is eligible for an air conditioning unit under a doctor's prescription as a necessary part of medical treatment, and,

Whereas this air conditioning unit will provide thermal control for his bedroom area only, thus making the veteran a prisoner of one room,

*Be it Resolved*, That the Paralyzed Veterans of America recommends that the Prosthetics Department of the Veterans Administration authorize the issuance of air conditioning for a total living environment as a necessary part of medical treatment to eligible veterans.

*6. Resolution 72-C-9 Special NSC Auto Grant*

*Be It Resolved*, That the Paralyzed Veterans of America support legislation to provide a special one-time auto grant in the amount of \$1,500.00 to those catastrophically injured nonservice-connected paraplegics and quadriplegic veterans receiving A & A allowance, provided he will be able to operate the automobile or other conveyance in a consistent and safe manner which will satisfy the standards of his respective licensing authorities.

*7. Resolution 72-C-10 Equalization of VA Benefits for all SC Veterans*

*Be It Resolved*, That the Paralyzed Veterans of America give continued and active support for legislation to equalize all VA benefits for Vietnam veterans on a par with those received by WWII and Korean veterans;

*Be It Further Resolved*, That requirements of eligibility for VA Benefits be no more restrictive for Vietnam veterans than those which have been extended to WWII and Korean veterans.

*8. Resolution 72-C-11 VA Small Business Loans for Vietvets*

Whereas the Vietnam veterans of our nation are presently denied the benefits that have been given to wartime veterans in the past relative to the availability to receive business loans, and

Whereas the increasing unemployment rate, especially for spinal cord injured veterans, is at an all time high,

*Be It Resolved*, That the Veterans Administration make available similar benefits to the Vietnam Era veteran as were available to other wartime veterans in the field of business loans.

*9. Resolution 72-C-12 Separate Pension for NSC on Aid and Attendance*

Whereas nonservice-connected pensions tend to lose each time there is an increase in the social security payments, and



Whereas nonservice pension schedules are confusing because they do not reflect the increased need of those who are entitled to aid and attendance, except in an additional provision, and

Whereas a separate schedule would be more understandable and could more easily reflect the needs of the nonservice-connected, therefore be it

*Resolved*, That a separate pension schedule be supported and promoted by PVA for those who are in need of Aid and Attendance.

*10. Resolution 72-C-13 Increased Dependency Income Exclusion*

Whereas under the present system a veteran with two or more children is granted 10% exclusion when the Veterans Administration is computing his net worth, and

Whereas this system is totally inadequate to fulfill the needs of the nonservice-connected veteran in receipt of pension.

*Be It Resolved*, That the Paralyzed Veterans of America recommends that a nonservice-connected veteran be eligible for full pension benefits without regard to income.

*11. Resolution 72-C-14 No Reduction in NSC Pension*

Whereas veterans pension for nonservice-connected disabilities prior to July 1, 1960, provided that if a veteran has no wife, child, or dependent parent, and is being furnished hospital treatment, institutional or domiciliary care by the VA, 50% of his pension will be withheld effective the first day of the seventh month following the month of admission for such treatment or care. If the Veteran is discharged or released for approved reasons, the withheld amount of pension will be paid in a lump sum without delay, and

Whereas the final date of filing under the Protected Pension Plan was July 1, 1960, a new pension plan went into effect whereby a veteran without dependents is hospitalized in a VA hospital by the VA, the new pension system requires that his pension be reduced to \$30.00 a month after two full months of hospital care, and

Whereas no excess payments will be made to veterans without dependents and he will lose the amounts of money withheld, and

Whereas the cost of living has increased greatly since July 1, 1960, making the reduction to \$30.00 per month insufficient to pay for necessary creature comforts such as haircuts, shaves, laundry, tobacco, etc. not to mention rent and other monthly expenses to keep an apartment or home, therefore be it

*Resolved*, That no reduction of pension be made until the first day of the seventh month following the month of admission and then only the amount designated as Aid and Attendance shall be discontinued.

*12. Resolution 72-C-15 No Reduction in Pension for Hospitalization*

Whereas the nonservice-connected veteran with a 100% disability must seek independence in a society with a continual cost of living increase, and in many cases, must find additional sources of income to subsidize his pension, and

Whereas the nonservice-connected veteran with a 100% disability needing major surgery can usually be confined to a hospital for a period of more than two months, and

Whereas gainful employment ceases and his independence is jeopardized if he is confined to a hospital for a period exceeding two months, and in certain instances, he is forced to prolong his stay in the hospital, because of his financial status, therefore be it

*Resolved*, The Veterans Administration make no reduction in Pension and Aid and Attendance until the seventh calendar month after hospitalization, and then said reduction should be confined to the portion of Aid and Attendance only.

*13. Resolution 72-C-16 Increased DIC for Survivors*

Whereas for many years the dollar amount given for a wife or dependent is \$28, and

Whereas this figure is totally inadequate and unrealistic,

*Be It Resolved*, That the Paralyzed Veterans of America recommends the following scale in lieu of the present inadequate and unrealistic scale: \$150 a month for a wife; \$75 a month for each child. (SC).

*14. Resolution 72-C-17 Emergency Transportation for SCI*

Whereas research data (see Barrow Neurological Institute) shows that an astounding rate of recovery results from appropriate treatment within two to four hours of spinal cord injury, and

Whereas military helicopters are now utilized in certain areas as a local activity in transporting injured persons to hospitals, therefore be it

*Resolved*, That PVA request from the Congress or arrange directly with the military for an integrated nationwide program for picking up SCI injuries at accident sites and transporting them directly to the nearest SCI facility.

*15. Resolution 72-C-18 Increased NSLI Coverage*

Whereas the present normal practices of normal individuals renders the sum of \$10,000 as totally unrealistic for insurance coverage, and,

Whereas due to their service-connected disabilities, spinal cord injured veterans are denied the right to acquire insurance protection at normal rates, therefore be it

*Resolved*, That the Paralyzed Veterans of America recommends that the Veterans Administration be authorized to issue policies of insurance to the amount of \$50,000 to replace the present \$10,000 life insurance policies.

*16. Resolution 72-C-21 Exclusion of A & A as Income in Public Housing*

Whereas many wheelchair-bound paraplegic veterans make their home in public housing developments, and

Whereas said severely disabled veterans, who received nonservice-connected pension payments, may be entitled to an additional allowance known as "Aid and Attendance," and

Whereas certain city, state, county and federal housing authorities will increase the rent of such veterans due to their receipt of "Aid and Attendance," and

Whereas said "Aid and Attendance" allowance is provided by the Veterans Administration to said paralyzed veterans to permit them to hire necessary, personal, medically indicated, daily assistance, therefore be it

*Resolved*, That the Paralyzed Veterans of America petition the Department of Housing and Urban Development in order to put a stop to the widespread and unfair practice of including in the computation of the annual income for the purpose of determining rental rates of paralyzed veterans that portion of their Veterans Administration pension payment known as "Aid and Attendance."

Senator TALMADGE. The next witness is Mr. Joseph R. Sanson, national commander of the AMVETS.

It is important that some Senators must leave at this time. We are sorry to see you go, but we understand the circumstances.

You may proceed as you see fit, Commander.

**STATEMENT OF JOSEPH R. SANSON, NATIONAL COMMANDER OF THE AMVETS, ACCOMPANIED BY LEON SANCHEZ, NATIONAL SERVICES DIRECTOR**

Mr. SANSON. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

First of all, I would like to introduce to the committee the young lady that has to bear with me throughout my term of office as national commander, the one that gives me the inspiration that I need to carry forth the duties, my wife Helen.

Senator TALMADGE. We are glad to have you with us.

Mr. SANSON. I would like to also introduce one of our past national commanders, Mr. Ralph Hall.

Senator TALMADGE. Very good to have you, sir.

Mr. SANSON. Mr. Leon Sanchez sitting to my right, who is our national services director; Mr. Jack Tuley, our national finance officer from the State of Massachusetts.

I would like to also announce to the committee, Mr. Chairman, if you were wondering what the commotion was a few minutes ago.

I am very proud representing our national organization of AMVETS, and through the generosity of Mr. Lester Gerald from Georgia City, N.J., the AMVETS presented the beautiful AMVET emblem that you see to your left there. We are very proud of it, and we are very grateful

to Mr. Gerald for making it possible to present this to the committee today.

Senator TALMADGE. It will be placed in our committee room, and we appreciate this contribution.

Mr. SANSON. Mr. Gerald is sitting to my right there; he is the owner of the flag.

Mr. Chairman and members of this committee, it is a very high honor for me to appear before you as the leader of a quarter million veterans of World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. It was in 1947 that AMVETS became recognized as the American Veterans of World War II by a congressional charter, later amended to include veterans of the Korean conflict and the Vietnam era.

At the very outset of this presentation, it is my desire to extend to you, Senator Hartke, a deep spirit of cooperation in helping you as chairman, and the members of your committee, in carrying out your responsibilities to our Nation's veterans. We are well aware of the tremendous task you have in considering legislation that affects almost 29 million citizens who have served their country and earned the right and privilege to be called veteran. The concerns and interests of this organization today can be identified as follows:

One, the need to improve the image of the returning Vietnam era veteran, and thereby increase his employment and reemployment rights privileges; two, enactment of a veterans health care expansion bill; three, approval of legislation authorizing Veterans' Administration treatment of drug abuse problems for veterans regardless of the type of discharge they have received; four, approval of a national cemeteries bill; five, amending pension legislation to prevent reductions caused by increases in social security and public and private retirement plans; and six, returning the observance of Veterans Day to November 11. The position of AMVETS on other subjects under general discussion in the Congress will be outlined in my presentation.

The returning Vietnam veteran—the theme of my administration could very well be called "Honor the Vietnam Veteran." From the first day I assumed the office of national commander, I perceived that the Vietnam veterans' image was not being etched in glory. It can be said that the brass bands and red carpet were not in evidence when the young soldier, sailor, or marine returned home after serving his country honorably and well. As we reported to this committee last year, it is ironic that the counterparts of these veterans, those in the same age group who have never been in the Armed Forces, were more successful in securing employment.

The record is better today than it was a year ago. Recognition of the success of the President's 6-point program to aid veterans in the field of employment needs positive recognition. As of the end of February, the unemployment rate of Vietnam-era veterans 20–29 years of age stood at 5.7 percent seasonally adjusted, the same rate as the nonveterans counterparts. From an 8-percent rate early in the calendar year to 5.7 is real progress, however, much remains to be accomplished:

One, approximately 45,000 young veterans will be discharged each month during this year.

Two, Vietnam-era veterans age 20–24 are experiencing a 9.4-percent unemployment rate.

Three, the pool of unemployed Vietnam-era veterans stands at 240,000.

Four, disabled veterans' unemployment rate is estimated to be approximately 14 percent.

Five, special attention must be given veterans who lack marketable skills and are undereducated.

As mandated by resolution at our last national convention, ANVETS will continue our efforts at local and State levels and the national level supporting the Jobs for Veterans effort and those of the Veterans Employment Service. This committee's recognition and support of these programs is sincerely requested.

AMVETS is also very concerned about another group of veterans who really should experience very little or no difficulty in the return to civilian pursuits. These are the veterans returning or attempting to return to civilian employment interrupted by military service. The Federal law which assures such reemployment rights in private industry and the Federal Government does not provide mandatory reemployment rights with States and their political subdivisions. Furthermore, as a result of either a provision in the law establishing the new U.S. Postal Service or an interpretation of the law, postal employee veterans seeking restoration equity now have no recourse outside the Postal Service itself. We find it difficult to believe that Congress in establishing the Postal Service intended to limit or restrict existing appeal rights of postal employees seeking proper restoration following military service. We find then, Federal, State, and local government employees without enforceable rights in spite of the "sense of the Congress provision urging such employers to adopt similar restoration rules." While most of the States have enacted some sort of reemployment rights legislation, this State legislation is commonly limited to certain narrow categories of State employees and often interpreted as being optional with the employing agency or locality.

Enforcement of such is usually only through private litigation at the expense of the veteran. Believing that this legal discrimination against veterans who left employment in this large and growing segment of the economy is no longer defensible, AMVETS urge that section 9 of the Military Selective Service Act be amended to include postal, State, and local government employees, including public school teachers, policemen and firemen, within the mandatory reemployment rights provision of the act and to make the assistance of the Federal Government available to these employees on the same basis as it is now available to other employees in the private industry and other Federal employment.

While AMVETS is also apprehensive about certain other aspects of the Postal Service's approach to veterans preference benefits, appeal rights, for example, at this time, we, like many others, are willing to wait and see what they deliver.

In order to improve their image, it would be helpful to focus attention of the American public on the problems of the returning Vietnam veterans. We, therefore, strongly support legislation introduced by Congressman Gilman, House Joint Resolution 38, authorizing the President to proclaim a "Vietnam Veterans Day" after the United States has properly concluded its participation in hostilities in Southeast Asia and all our POW's have returned.

Such legislation, if approved, would invite and encourage the citizens of the United States, especially veterans' groups, churches, and their affiliated organizations to observe such "Vietnam Veterans Day" with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

This day of honor would go a long way toward turning around the negative image of the young Vietnam veteran to the rightfully positive one of a mature, intelligent, and forward-looking veteran eager to participate in the economic and social processes he fought to preserve. We commend this endeavor to the members of this committee, leading the way in elevating the recognition accorded our returning service men and women.

Many resolutions were approved at our 28th national convention last August in New Orleans, La. The resolutions approved by our various committees are appended to this report for your study and use in proposed legislation.

AMVETS are aware of the exemplary efforts of this Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs in spearheading the approval of three major bills, and in this regard we extend to you our profound gratitude and appreciation. Two of the bills provide similar benefits contained in legislation vetoed by the President after Congress adjourned last October 18, making impossible an overriding of the vetoes. Incidentally, we are discussing two bills that were passed almost unanimously last year by the House and Senate; the Veterans Health Care Expansion Act of 1972, and the National Cemetery Act of 1972.

We have urged the House Committee on Veterans Affairs to give early attention to the approval of the bills initiated in this committee, S. 59 and S. 49. You are all aware that the closing last November of the National Cemeteries at Gettysburg, Pa., and Culpepper Va., increases the problem of available sites for burial of honorably discharged veterans. The future status of Arlington National Cemetery should be studied as recommended in the vetoed legislation. AMVETS supports the plan whereby responsible members of Congress and Government Agencies involved undertake the necessary procedures for obtaining and transferring adjacent properties, such as property on which Naval Barracks "K" is located, to the agency now responsible for the continued operation of Arlington National Cemetery. The Veterans Health Expansion Act, S. 59, and the National Cemeteries Act of 1973, S. 49, should receive early approval by the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Veterans' Administration medical program—the necessity for the approval of an omnibus veterans health care bill is indicated by the steady and alarming increase in the cost of medical care, and the advancing age of our members. S. 59 will for the first time authorize VA hospital and nursing care for wives and children of permanently and totally disabled service-connected veterans and for widows and children of deceased service-connected veterans. It will authorize night, holiday and overtime differential pay for nurses in VA facilities. It will also authorize increased per diem rates for State soldiers' homes that provide hospital, domiciliary, and nursing care for veterans. We would not presume to estimate the time, effort and dedication given to this legislation by the members of this committee and your staff. Your yeoman efforts will not be forgotten by a grateful veteran population and especially those who are members of AMVETS.

Forward progress in medical care has been the hallmark of the Veterans' Administration medical program. We have seen the advent of sophisticated treatment procedures that only recently were experiments, miracle drugs and innovative treatment that revolutionized mental health care bringing about the discharge of patients from psychiatric hospitals that only yesterday were locked in wards. The very heart of this medical progress has been the VA's independent nature; its ability to do its own research; its ability to train its own medical people. We urge this committee to prevent the stifling of this independence or have it encumbered under some alleged great central medical program.

A more equitable pension program—the VA pension program must receive, and is receiving, your attention to prevent reductions and discontinuances of pensions. About 24,000 veterans and widows of veterans have lost their pensions and over a million pension checks have been reduced because of the 1972 increase in social security and Railroad Retirement benefits. We urge consideration of a bill to increase pension rates and income limits to assure that no VA pension will be reduced or discontinued because of social security increases or similar increases in other public and private retirement plans. Let us remember that this is a benefit earned by the veteran by rendering service to his country.

The Federal Government has reported new income guidelines used by the Government to determine whether a person is poor. Under these guidelines a single person is considered poor if he has a net income of less than \$2,100 per year. The poverty level for a family of four is \$4,200 in determining eligibility for Federal poverty programs. Yet the present law regarding VA pensions for totally disabled veterans and widows terminates eligibility if a single veteran or widow without children has income in excess of \$2,600 and also terminates pension payments for a veteran or widow with children if income exceeds \$3,800. AMVETS cannot accept the concept implicit in these figures that the Congress is willing to allow its veterans, their widows and children, to exist on a poverty level. AMVETS cannot believe that no person who has served his country, or his widow and dependents, should live in poverty or found to be in need. This country is too great to permit even one veteran or veteran's widow to suffer the bare necessities of life.

Veterans' Administration treatment for drug abuse—much attention was given by the last Congress to the problem of the returning Vietnam veteran with a drug addiction habit. The Veterans' Administration could not treat many veterans due to the nature of their discharges. However, S. 284, the Veterans Drug and Alcohol Treatment and Rehabilitation Act will now give the Veterans' Administration authority to care for drug-dependent veterans, regardless of the type of discharge received from the Service. Although AMVETS has traditionally supported the argument that only honorably discharged veterans are entitled to Veterans' Administration benefits, we are in agreement that in this instance the drug abused veteran must be given special consideration in order to enhance his ability to rehabilitate himself and take his rightful place in the community.

The incidence of alcoholism among the veteran population is probably no more than in society generally, 1 out of every 15 people

have this illness in some degree. Modern medical techniques are now applied to this treatable disease. The alcoholic veteran can no longer be turned away from the veterans hospital as a public nuisance or sequestered in a domiciliary. The Veterans' Administration is, therefore, strongly urged to provide good, up-to-date medical care for the veteran alcoholic and to link onto the counseling services of the National Council on Alcoholism. The patient should be exposed to meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous at the hospital site and encouraged to continue this kind of therapy after release from the hospital.

Our members have been disturbed by the recent decision of a U.S. district judge ruling that it was a constitutional denial of equal protection of law for Congress and the Veterans' Administration to provide educational assistance to veterans while denying it to conscientious objectors who performed other service in lieu of military service. Information has been supplied our office that an organization known as the Committee for Legal Research on the Draft at Harvard Law School is advising all interested and eligible conscientious objectors to apply for Veterans Educational Benefits. We, the American Veterans of World War II, Korea and Vietnam, wish to make it known that we oppose this ruling as being detrimental to the cause of all veterans, their widows, and their families who have served their country honorably and to those of our POWS and MIA'S still not back home with their loved ones.

Much discussion has taken place and valuable time of our congressional bodies will be burdened by the demands for amnesty legislation. We of AMVETS cannot support the argument that we should forgive those who left this country, or deserted while in service. Draft resisters, draft dodgers, and deserters do not want to accept responsibility for running out on the Americans who stayed and did their duty. They say we must show compassion. But is not compassion a two-way street? What compassion did they show those who defended their country, many returning with grave disability, the loss of a limb, confinement to a wheelchair for life, or yes, even the loss of life itself. I do not believe that those self-determined exiles would want to be judged by a jury of their peers, the returned wounded and disabled Vietnam veteran, or our POW's that we proudly saw returning a few days ago.

Returning Veterans Day to November 11—many resolutions have been received from our posts and departments asking for the return of Veterans Day to November 11. This day commemorates in dignity the memory of our veterans of World War I who fought and died to end all wars. It is demeaning to their memory to change arbitrarily a day sacred to all veterans merely to provide a long weekend or extra shopping days for the businessmen.

Proposed revision of VA rating schedule—in conclusion, Mr. Chairman, I would like to comment briefly on the recent Veterans' Administration proposals for reductions in the schedule for rating disabilities. You, Mr. Chairman, and your colleagues on this committee took action within hours after release of the proposed revision to protest this economy move at the expense of our seriously wounded Vietnam-era veterans. As the leader of this organization, comprised of veterans of World War II, Korea, and Vietnam, I have traveled extensively in many parts of the country since these proposals were announced. I can report to you that there is no subject creating more expressions

of dismay and disbelief than this revision of the rating schedule as announced on February 6. At the time when our prisoners of war were returning home to a nation's heartfelt welcome, their wounded and disabled comrades were being told that their sacrifices would be downgraded, to provide assistance to North Vietnam. I have stated in many speeches that AMVETS will stand resolutely against any reduction in benefits for our Vietnam veterans, and we stand shoulder to shoulder with the members of this committee in our mutual endeavor on their behalf.

As stated previously, AMVETS' delegates carefully and thoughtfully gave consideration to many resolutions, which upon approval have become the legislative mandates of this major veterans organization for the 93d Congress.

The fact that reference to a specific resolution has not been made in my presentation should not leave you with the impression that its importance has been lessened; rather this committee's valuable time has been taken into consideration by me and I have highlighted those areas of high priority to our membership. Our legislative committee and our national legislative department will be available to report and consult with you on specific legislative mandates. However, if you can favorably resolve within the next few months the problems I have enumerated, you will have earned the plaudits of a grateful nation for a job well done. And I, as national commander of 250,000 AMVETS in 1,600 posts throughout the United States and overseas, will be the first to salute you.

Thank you again for allowing me to appear before you, and we will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you.

Senator TALMADGE. Commander, we appreciate your excellent statement. It is always a pleasure to have you before us.

Senator THURMOND?

Senator THURMOND. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Commander Sanson, we are delighted to have you here, and I want to compliment you for a magnificent statement.

We also appreciate Mr. Sanchez being with you, and now, I want to say that you not only have made a good presentation but you have been specific and that is very helpful to the committee.

You have put your finger on certain key points; they are listed in the beginning of your statement, about improving the image of returning Vietnam-era veterans, thereby increases reemployment rights and privileges.

That is important because a lot of people don't seem to realize we have been in a war, since we have not been in an all-out war so to speak, just a limited war. But, that limited war is the longest war that this country has ever engaged in. We lost about 50,000 men, almost that many; we had over 300,000 wounded, and it seems that too many employers now have just gone along with business issues sort of taking things for granted as usual. And, as these veterans have returned, they haven't shown them the consideration that I think they should have, and I hope that steps can be taken to reemphasize to the employers, to the business people in this country, that I think they have got a responsibility to give these veterans jobs.



Now, if these veterans went off and fought to save these businessmen, and fought to save the others in this country, the rest of the country has a responsibility to try to help them gain employment.

Now, your next point there, the health care expansion bill. We passed that bill again this year, Mr. Chairman. We passed it last year, it never was approved, and we passed it again this year. So, I think it won't be long until we will have some results on that.

On the drug abuse problems, we have passed another bill on that, Mr. Chairman, again this year, too. That is a bill we passed last year.

The national cemeteries bill is another one that we passed last year, and was not signed, and I think we have removed the objection to the portion the President had to it as he did on the health bill, at least I hope we did.

At any rate, it is my sincere hope the President will sign all three of those bills which we acted on in the Senate.

Now, about amending the pension law to prevent reductions caused by increases in social security. Last year we passed a bill on this. What is the status on that?

Senator TALMADGE. The House did not act last year.

Senator THURMOND. The Senate passed it last year, but the House did not act on it and we are hoping that that bill will be approved this year.

I agree with you, it doesn't make any sense to raise the social security and then because you raise it, you don't raise the veterans pension, that one offsets the other so that he is back where he was.

Mr. SANSON. It reduces the man's income.

Senator THURMOND. So, we hope that that can be corrected.

Now, the reference made to Veterans Day, maybe I am old-fashioned, but I agree with you. November 11 has always been considered Armistice Day and it doesn't seem much like Armistice Day when you set it on some other day. All the veterans organizations, I think, would take that position if they could vote on it from amendments.

I think you made a very fine statement. We are honored to have you here, and I want you to know how interested this committee is. Senator Hartke is an able chairman; Senator Talmadge, the ranking man there, is very interested in these matters, the very able man, and on my side of the aisle they are, too.

This is a committee that, although you have both Republicans and Democrats, you would never know it, on the committee. We work together to help the veterans, and it should be a nonpartisan committee, and I am very glad that that is the case.

Again, we thank you for your splendid appearance, and we hope that the action this year by the Congress will please you.

Mr. SANSON. Thank you very much, Senator.

Senator TALMADGE. Commander, as Senator Thurmond pointed out, we have acted on some of your recommendations and no doubt we will act on others in the near future.

Mr. SANSON. Senator Talmadge, may I make one more statement?

I have received a copy of a press release issued by Senator Randolph. I am sorry he isn't here, but we alluded to the topic in his press release about reemployment rights in the various States throughout

the country, and we would like Senator Randolph to know that we are very pleased with his introduction of this bill. If there is anything we can do to support it and have it approved by the Congress, we stand ready to assist him.

Senator TALMADGE. You may be certain that Senator Randolph will be informed, sir.

Mr. SANSON. Thank you very much, sir.

Senator TALMADGE. The next witness is Mr. Herbert M. Houston, legislative director, Veterans of World War I of the U.S.A., Incorporated, appearing in behalf of Mr. A. O. Soderholm, national commander.

You may be seated, gentlemen, and I notice your statement is quite lengthy. We are expected to vote on the floor of the Senate at any time. So, if you desire, you may insert your full statement in the record at this point and summarize it.

We want to hear as much of it as we can, but you never know when the bells are going to ring here. Being in the Senate is somewhat like being in the military, you are not the master of your own time.

You may proceed, sir.

**STATEMENT OF A. O. SODERHOLM, NATIONAL COMMANDER, VETERANS OF WORLD WAR I OF THE U.S.A., INCORPORATED, ACCOMPANIED BY HERBERT M. HOUSTON, LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR AND FLOYD HENDERSON, NATIONAL ADJUTANT**

Mr. SODERHOLM. Mr. Chairman, honorable members of this distinguished committee, I would like to introduce a few members of our organization of Veterans of World War I of the U.S.A., Incorporated.

First I will introduce my wife, Laura; would you please stand up?

Senator TALMADGE. We are delighted to have you, ma'am.

Mr. SODERHOLM. We have been getting along for a little more than 54 years, we think we have got a good start.

I want to introduce our national adjutant, Floyd Henderson, and I want to introduce our national quartermaster, Charles Law, our alternate national junior vice commander, Louis Zaruba, our national legislative committeeman, Tom Walters, Tom isn't here either, the auxiliary national secretary of treasury, Allan Miller, the national legislative chairman, Mrs. Gray, Harold Sea, I guess Harold isn't here.

Are there any department commanders here? We left them this morning, I think. We have Mrs. Mildred Brown here—she isn't here—okay.

Then I would like to present our national legislative chairman, Herbert M. Houston, who will present our program. Thank you, sir.

Mr. HOUSTON. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman and members of this distinguished committee, I think I shall omit part of the text and ask that the entire presentation be entered in the record.

Senator TALMADGE. Without objection, your entire statement will be inserted at this point in the record, sir.

Mr. HOUSTON. Thank you, sir.

Mr. Chairman and members of this distinguished committee, we wish to thank you for the privilege of appearing before you and for the opportunity of presenting the views of the Veterans of World War I of the United States of America, Inc., which represents the thinking of the membership as reflected by resolutions adopted during our last national convention held in Palm Springs, Calif.

We would like to point out that World War I was fought before the deterioration of American patriotism and before the days of draft card burners. To the veterans of that war, refusing to obey orders, or desecration of the flag is unthinkable. This patriotic spirit remains with these veterans as strong today as it was 55 years ago. They are disturbed as they witness the disrespect for constituted authority; the downgrading of the uniform services of our country, the expendable attitude toward veterans in the streets and in high places. This diminishing group of veterans whose experiences over the past half century can see in this attitude a parallel to the nations of the past whose names are just history. We call upon the veterans of all wars to become alerted to the sedulous forces against us who would relegate us to oblivion.

It is with pride that we address you members of this distinguished committee, who of your own volition seek to render a service to this Nation by recognizing the needs of, and acknowledge by way of legislation, remuneration for the service rendered by the veterans of America's wars and their dependents. We also recognize the opposition you face in your desire to render this service.

#### MEDICAL CARE

At a time in our Nation's history when our veteran population is at its peak, with thousands of young veterans just from the battlefields of Vietnam requiring hospitalization, many requiring long periods of physical therapy. There are nearly 6 million of these young veterans. There are also almost 6 million Korean war veterans, many of whom require VA hospital care. Then there are 14 million veterans of World War II who are growing older and in the near future an increasing number of these veterans will require increased hospitalization. Add to this the 1.2 million veterans from World War I who are an average of 78.1 years of age. A higher percentage of these require hospital care and an increasing number of them now need nursing home care because they have no one to care for them in their homes. Increasing numbers of them have no homes and cannot enter VA nursing homes because they are not permitted to enter a VA hospital so they can be transferred to a nursing home.

With these alarming statistics, well known to all veterans organizations, and all veteran minded citizens, the recent request for the fiscal year 1974 budget by the Veterans' Administration calls for a cut in funds for the VA operation.

Evidently those who made the request have been anesthetized by the anti-veteran attitude of the Office of Management and Budget under the guise of saving money, and have betrayed the trust for which the Veterans' Administration was created.

They would arbitrarily reduce the daily patient census in VA hospitals by 5,500. With veterans being denied hospitalization this

year because of the lack of available beds, due to the withholding of funds, they would slash additional funds, making even fewer beds available. The VA takes pride in the turnover, making statistics look good, while some of these statistics are World War I veterans sent home unable to care for themselves, and die because of the need of care they could not receive because there was no one to care for them. Others have been taken to a VA hospital by friends and waited all day in the waiting room without attention because there was no one to receive them or even see what the problem was with them. They were then taken back home where the veteran died because of the lack of medical care.

The fiscal year 1974 budget proposed by the Office of Management and Budget would be the equivalent of closing down 11 500-bed hospitals. The VA medical employment is also scheduled for a 1.8-percent further reduction in staff-patient ratios in VA hospitals, and a \$6 million slash in medical research funds. Hospital construction would be slashed by 51 percent in major construction and 30 percent in minor construction. And not one dime has been provided for assistance in the construction of the eight new medical schools authorized by the 92d Congress.

The Office of Management and Budget with concurrence of the VA has evidently decided to phase out the VA hospital system by attrition. To this the veterans of World War I strongly protest and urge the Congress to mandate the use of appropriated funds.

We are in the process of emerging from our longest war in the history of this country. The cost of this war cannot be measured in dollars spent for equipment, it must be considered in terms of casualties as well as material. The medical care of, and compensation for the returning veterans must be our concern for years; it is part of the cost of this war.

The VA would turn back the pages of history to 1933 after the close of the First World War. They would restore in the 1970's a new version of the Economy Act by revising the rating of compensation to disabled war veterans.

Fortunately, the expressed opposition by the Congress, and with the cooperation of the news media they were forced to retract their orders to make the proposed revision of compensation tables, after finding a scapegoat.

These veterans just recently from the battlefields must have been set back on their heels. What price peace?—must have been their reaction to this move to discriminate against them, as had been done to their grandfathers of World War I. This subject will need to be watched closely so that the planners do not slip the proposed plan in some other way.

The only way to stop the cost of veterans care is to stop wars. Veterans care is a cost of war. It would be as humane to stop the supplies in battle as to stop the care of the veterans after the battle is over.

#### PENSION

The pension system is in a state of chaos. Thousands of those who received a pension in 1972 had their pensions terminated as of January 1, 1973, and many thousands more had their pensions greatly reduced.

If it is a question of saving money, if the economy of this Nation requires the slashing of expenses, the veteran is willing to take a proportionate share. If the Office of Management and Budget and the Veteran's Administration would be fair with the veterans, the fair thing would be for them to start with themselves and take a proportionate salary slash from top to bottom. If this was done, the veterans of this country would see that they were being treated fairly and would bear their share willingly.

The 92d Congress enacted laws to provide a 20-percent increase in social security and railroad retirement monthly payments, retirement programs in which the recipient and the Government or railroad participate. These laws were designed by the Congress to provide a cost-of-living increase which is laudable; however, as of this date, every recipient of these benefits received a 20-percent increase except the veteran. The 92d Congress adjourned without passing any legislation to protect the veteran's pension, and thousands whose pensions were terminated have less income in 1973 than they had in 1972. Instead of the promised increase, they received a net loss.

The Veterans' Administration has stated that no one would lose any aggregate income because of the 20-percent increase in other income. This is not being honest with these veterans, as letters from these veterans received daily in our headquarters attest. Cases where the veteran received an increase in social security, and his wife received one are common among these letters. The two small increases caused the veteran to go over the income limitations, and his pension was terminated, thereby receiving less money in 1973 than he did in 1972. The law now in effect is saying to this veteran and his wife, if you want to receive a pension you will have to get a divorce, then you can both draw your social security and the husband can draw a pension also. Thousands of single veterans have had their pension terminated, and have a net loss in income for the year 1973. This situation would be ludicrous if it was not so pathetic. The credibility of the VA has sunk to a new low in the minds of the veterans.

We do not propose to argue with the Veterans' Administration for their findings as shown by the computer, but we will question the ones who fed the data they had into the computer. We feel that the veterans know more about their personal situation than the one who fed the data into the computer. They say that their income for 1973 will be less than in 1972 counting the 20-percent increase in social security. This takes us back to our statement, "every recipient of these benefits received a 20-percent increase except the veteran."

Mr. Chairman, this is not a new experience, it has been going on for years. The Veterans of World War I have been calling this to your attention each year; however, the Veterans' Administration has been telling you another story. The Congress has been taking the statements furnished by the VA as factual, and we have contended that they were not. Now we have the facts as revealed by thousands of letters from veterans that our statements have been correct.

We would like to review the past 5 years. Each time there would be an increase in social security benefits authorized by the Congress, we would ask for an increase in veterans income limitations so that the veteran would not lose a part or all of his pension. In each instance, the VA would not approve a bill which would protect all those on

pension. The Congress has taken the advice of the VA, and in each instance, thousands of veterans have had their pensions terminated, and many thousands more have had a reduction.

We would call to your attention a letter from a veteran in Ohio. In 1968 his pension was \$84 per month. In 1969, it was \$81 per month, a \$3 cut. In 1971, it was \$75 per month, a \$6 cut. In 1972, it was \$78.96 per month, a \$3.96 increase. In 1973, it was reduced to \$67.62, a cut of \$11.34 per month.

Our organization has been pointing out that the erosion of the veterans pension is, and has been over the years following a designed plan. Each time the Congress authorizes an increase in social security benefits as a cost-of-living increase, the VA will not approve an increase in income limitations sufficient to protect the veterans pension. The only one they will approve is one they have figured out how a few thousand will be reduced from the pension roll.

If this erosion is not stopped, it will only take a few more years to wipe out the pension rolls, then the veteran will have to take his place on the welfare rolls with those who have made no contribution to the great country we cherish. With this last increase in social security, the VA stated that only 20,000 would be terminated. We shall have to take the figure as we have no way of knowing the exact number terminated; as for their other statement that no one would lose any aggregate income, we have letters to prove that is not the case.

We are well aware that the VA is repeating the words of the Office of Management and Budget, who like their forerunners of the Budget Bureau are only interested in dollars, and not the human lives who suffer from the reduction of benefits. They have told us that the average reduction in pensions was \$7 per person. The letters we have received reveal how they arrive at that figure.

Of the 1,129,181 veterans and widows of World War I now receiving a pension, the majority of them, over 600,000, are widows, who draw smaller pensions than the veterans. Therefore, their reduction was smaller. The majority of veterans reductions run from \$10 to \$50. We estimate an average of in the high teens as we cannot give a percentage because we do not have the help to tabulate the thousands of letters to obtain one. A large number list their total income and show how they will receive a net loss in 1973 from 1972.

These veterans and widows are faced with the statement released by the Agricultural Department that family food prices rose \$64.00 in 1972 over 1971. Food is of great concern to those on pension; medicine is another problem for them. Many letters state that their pension this year will not buy their medicine. As for the other items except rent, the cost-of-living index is of no consequence to them for they have no money for recreation, vacations, or other expenses they once had. It is simply a matter of getting enough for existence. A letter from one veteran, 78 years old, said, "at 78 years of age, maybe I can live on one meal a day."

We bring these appeals to you from World War I veterans who are unemployable and whose bodies are weakened by age and rigors of warfare they experienced in the service of their country.

We wish to call to your attention to some more sample letters from the mass we have received to substantiate our statements.

Senator TALMADGE. Without objection, they will be received in the record at the conclusion of the hearing.

## CASE NO. 1

Mr. HOUSTON. A veteran who received a \$29 increase in his railroad retirement received notice that his \$65-per-month pension was terminated. A net loss of \$36 per month or \$432 per year.

## CASE NO. 2

An 81-year-old veteran who received a \$35 increase in his social security payment and lost his \$78-per-month pension. A net loss of \$43 per month or \$516 per year.

## CASE NO. 3

A veteran, A & A case whose increase in social security with that of his wife amounted to \$69.60. His pension with A & A amounted to \$170.60 per month was terminated January 1, 1973. A net loss of \$101 per month or \$1,212 per year.

Mr. Chairman, these letters reveal a desperate situation among these old veterans and widows of veterans, who are asking us to bring their situation to you. We can deliver to you any number of these letters you may wish, 100, 1,000, 10,000—a briefcase full or boxes filled in a pickup truck. Widows are asking us why? They had pride in being the wife of a veteran and now a widow, who if she has the necessities of life, must surrender her pride she has held to and turn to welfare for the bare necessities. Veterans by the thousands have told us in their letters that they have been forsaken by their Government in their old age.

From a study of the letters we have received we feel that an increase of \$600 in income limitations per year will be necessary to enable a greater portion of these veterans to have the same income they received last year. It will not cover them all, the only way to restore them to their last year's family income would be to waive the social security or railroad retirement 20-percent increase as accountable for pension purposes.

As we look at the rich heritage of this Nation, President Abraham Lincoln, standing at the halfway point in our history said, "To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and his orphan" realized the source of our strength. To abandon this principle, and adopt an alien conception of government, antiveteran as some of our social planners are seeking to do, would be one sure way to lead to the downfall of this Nation.

The Veterans of World War I, U.S.A., Inc., are concerned with veterans benefits for the veterans of all wars, however, our primary concern is for the veterans of World War I, whose average age is now 78.1 years.

As has been done in previous years a resolution was passed at our last national convention mandating us to ask for special consideration for the veterans of World War I.

We would remind you, Mr. Chairman, of this appeal we have made down through the years. In each session of the Congress a number of bills are introduced calling for special consideration for this group of veterans, and to this date, no action has been taken on them. Special legislation has been enacted for all other groups of veterans.

These veterans become more disillusioned as they become older and their numbers become smaller. They have lived to witness this Government provide funds to subsidize foreign governments with billions of dollars. They have lived to witness funds being appropriated to subsidize aliens entering this country, while they were denied compensation or pension large enough to meet their basic needs. They have lived to see our Government go topheavy on welfare. They are not callous in their sympathy for deserving individuals or families receiving welfare. They have become personally involved, and used their influence throughout their lives in aiding those in need. They now witness and read of exorbitant amounts of welfare payments going to undeserving individuals and families, including hotel bills, rent subsidies, including a free trip to Puerto Rico. This was reported in the Sunday Herald, Norwalk, Conn., February 4, 1973, for recipients who have made no contribution to the development of this Nation. At the same time they have endured the embarrassment of privation holding onto their pride.

This group of American veterans, the veterans of World War I, are endowed with and held onto the principle, that if one did not work, one did not eat, and during their years of physical ability they followed this concept. Now they see cases where from one to four generations have no other expectancy than public welfare. We are only making this comparison of welfare versus World War I veterans to bring into focus the neglect of the veterans compared with other segments of our society today.

The veterans of World War I are not asking for legislation awarding them any preferential treatment to the veterans of any other war. They are only asking that they receive fair and just treatment with the veterans of other wars.

We would remind the members of this distinguished committee that the veterans of World War I did not receive anything comparable to the GI bill of World War II and subsequent wars. They did not receive a service pension like the veterans of wars previous to World War I, from the Revolutionary War through the Spanish-American War.

In the annals of American history only the Veterans of World War I have been so isolated for discrimination. Their only recognition was the awarding of Adjusted Service Compensation Certificates purported to compensate for a pay raise due them during their active service. This consisted of \$1 per day for stateside, and \$1.25 per day for overseas, which they did not receive, amounting to an average of \$546 labeled a "bonus." World War I veterans have resented this label ever since.

In each Session of the Congress a number of bills have been introduced seeking to correct this injustice, though none have been considered. It is to be hoped that this Congress will have the courage to pay a "debt" long overdue and enact some special consideration for this group of veterans.

#### NATIONAL CEMETERIES

For many years the Veterans of World War I has recommended that the national cemetery system, administered by the Department



of the Army, be transferred to the Veterans' Administration. The establishment of the present national cemeteries was chiefly one of expediency, and future usage was no consideration. Their establishment followed conflicts in which this Nation has engaged. A number may be found in one State, while other States, or large areas, have no national cemetery. Veterans who have rendered honorable service in the Armed Forces have been entitled to burial in a national cemetery and no national cemetery is available to them. Those veterans who express the wish to be buried in a national cemetery create an extreme hardship on the families in many cases. To carry out the wish of the veteran, families have to transport the body to another State, sometimes at a great distance, creating additional expense and depriving them of the opportunity of visiting the burial place of the departed veteran. In many cases the veteran is deprived of burial in a national cemetery because the family is unable to bear the expense. As this committee so well knows, practically all other veteran programs are the responsibility of the Veterans' Administration. The transfer of the national cemeteries to the Veterans' Administration will be in keeping with the concept that all veterans programs be vested in one agency.

The Veterans of World War I is, therefore, hopeful that this 93d Congress will correct this most needed situation where the majority of former service personnel are denied burial in a national cemetery.

#### RESTORATION OF NATIONAL HOLIDAYS

A mandate from our national convention commits us to work for the restoration of Veterans Day (Armistice Day) to November 11 and Memorial Day to May 30. These holidays have historical significance in our Nation, whereas the days now prescribed by law have no meaning and are not observed by the majority of our people. The prescribed days only provide another day for leisure, thereby forcing those who want to observe Veterans Day or Memorial Day to take time off from their work to observe one which has some meaning to them and to the Nation.

We consider it a privilege, Mr. Chairman, to have had the opportunity to appear before this distinguished committee and present the program of the Veterans of World War I, expressing the views on matters mandated to us by our last national convention. We thank you.

Senator TALMADGE. Thank you very much, Commander. It is an excellent statement. You may rest assured the committee will give your views and recommendations every consideration.

Senator THURMOND?

Senator THURMOND. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Commander Soderholm, is that the way you pronounce that?

Mr. SODERHOLM. Yes, that is right.

Senator THURMOND. Where are you from?

Mr. SODERHOLM. Woodburn, Oreg.

Senator THURMOND. We are delighted to have you here, and we also are glad to have Mr. Henderson, the national adjutant here, and glad to have Colonel Houston, the director of legislation.

We have worked very closely with these gentlemen, as you know, and last year we passed a bill for the World War I veterans and got

it through the Senate. It went to the House and was stopped there. Possibly you can do some work on the House because we have introduced it again this year, and I am quite sure the committee will pass it and the Senate will pass it again this year. So, I hope you will get busy and see what you can do over in the House on this bill.

Now, you have raised some other points here, Colonel Houston, in your statement that I think are important, but I am not going to take time to discuss all of them.

I just want to say that this committee is very interested in your problems. I thoroughly sympathize with you, and I think the VA hospital system is one of the most important things to you. And, I thoroughly agree that this VA hospital system should be kept as a VA hospital system and we should not just set up some system of hospitals for the general public because the veterans, they are the ones—the veterans are a breed apart, they are the ones who have borne the brunt of battle in the time of war, they are the ones who responded to the call of the country in the time of emergency. They are the ones who fought for the freedom of the people who stayed at home. And, in my judgment, there should be special consideration and they should have a special hospital system just as we give them a priority in the matter of employment. We give 5 points for nondisabled veterans and 10 points for a disabled veteran.

The Congress has recognized this and people of the country have accepted that because without the veterans we wouldn't have a country today, we wouldn't have our freedom.

So, I am thoroughly in sympathy with your statements along this line.

With regard to the pension, you are being reduced because of an increase in social security and other things, we attempted to correct that, too, and I am quite sure that Congress will take any further steps necessary to bring this out, because the Congress is interested in the veterans and wants to do what it can to assist them.

We thank you for your fine service and we assure you of our deep interest in your important work, and I congratulate your excellent organization for all it is doing for the veterans in standing up for this country and exhibiting the patriotism that you have shown in the past.

Mr. SODERHOLM. Thank you, sir.

Senator TALMADGE. Without objection, at this point in the record, I ordered to be printed the letters addressed to Colonel Houston, the statement of the Blinded Veterans Association, with attachments of resolutions, and other pertinent documents for the record.

Without objection the committee will stand in recess, subject to the call of the Chair.

(Whereupon, at 3:10 p.m., the Committee on Veterans' Affairs was recessed subject to the call of the Chair.)

(The previously mentioned letters addressed to Colonel Houston follow:)

JANUARY, 10, 1973.

Mr. HERBERT HOUSTON:

DEAR SIR: I have been notified that my 65 dollars a month would be cut off starting Jan. 1st. 1973. Due to \$29.00 R.R. Ret. I belong to Barracks No. 0053 Portland Oregon, No. 104736

MARCEL A. VUYLSTEKE,  
3266 S.E. Grant St.,  
Portland Oregon.

Raise in RR retirement.....	\$29. 00
Pension terminated.....	65. 00
Net loss.....	36. 00

98 ROSEHILL PLACE,  
Irvington, N.J.

DEAR MR. HOUSTON: Recently the House Veterans Affairs Committee shelved S. 3070 which had been passed by the Senate. As a result my father, W.W. I veteran, age 81, and a widower, will suffer a net loss in income during 1973.

The 20% increase in Social Security made him ineligible for his veterans pension and he has been so notified. He gained \$35 per month from S.S. and lost his \$78 per month veterans pension—Net Loss \$43 per month.

I think any World War I veteran deserves better than this—Don't you? My father belongs to Barracks No. 90.

Very truly yours,

GEORGE M. WHEELER  
(The Son.)  
GEORGE G. WHEELER  
(The Veteran.)

Pension loss.....	\$936
SS increase \$35.00.....	420
Net loss.....	516

Re John C. Lucadema, Sr. Age 75, 291 N. E. 170th St., North Miami Beach, Fla. 33162 Member of Barracks No. 3495 Recently transferred from Barracks 879 because this was closer to home.

HERBERT M. HOUSTON,  
*Legislative Director, Veterans of World War I, U.S.A., Alexandria, Va.*

DEAR MR. HOUSTON: I am writing this in behalf of my husband who is unable to write. This is in regard to your article in THE TORCH, Dec. 1972.

While Mr. Lucadema is a member of Barracks No. 3495 he is unable to attend many meetings. He has been a recipient of a VA pension of \$170.60 per month which includes the Aid and Attention stipend for the past two years. He gave up his disability pension some time ago as this pension was greater. The check received Dec. 1st included a questionnaire to be filled out. This I took to a Service Officer at the Vet's Hospital as I was taking Mr. Lucadema there for Lab tests.

I have my own Social Security check as well as Mr. Lucadema's and this 20% increase amounted to \$69.60 per month for both checks. It appears that our income is now about \$41.00 over the limit and because of this we stand to lose this pension of \$170.60 per month unless new legislation is enacted and instead of benefiting from the Social Security increase we will have a net loss of \$101.00 per month in income.

Ours is the identical case which you mentioned in your column where the Government gives the veteran an increase on one hand and takes more away from him in the other.

We are grateful to you for your efforts in behalf of W.W. I veterans and confident some adjustment will be made.

Very truly yours,

Mrs. JOHN C. LUCADEMA.

GALION, OHIO, February 2, 1973.

BUDDY HOUSTON: I am Past Commander of Richland Co., Barracks No. 1037, Mansfield Ohio. I am writing you in regards to your article in the Torch, December issue.

My pension are as follows over the years:

1968.....	\$84.00 per month.
1969.....	\$81.00 per month \$3.00 cut.
1971.....	\$75.00 per month \$6.00 cut.
1972.....	\$78.96 per month \$3.96 raise.
1973.....	\$67.62 per month \$11.34 cut.

Wishing you the best of luck in your Report to the House Committee.

Fraternally yours,

H. J. STURM.

(The previously mentioned statement of Blinded Veterans Association with attachments, follow:)

BLINDED VETERANS ASSOCIATION,  
Washington, D.C., May 3, 1973.

STATEMENT OF DAVID L. SCHNAIR, NATIONAL SERVICE OFFICER,  
BLINDED VETERANS ASSOCIATION

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today and to speak of some of the major concerns of the Blinded Veterans Association. However, before addressing myself to these concerns, I would like to congratulate the new Member of this Committee and to assure you—and all your fellow Committee Members—of our organization's full cooperation and support. The Blinded Veterans Association anticipates a close and fruitful association with each of you and members of your staff during this session of Congress.

Also before turning to a review of our concerns, I would like to give a brief background of the Blinded Veterans Association and its objectives. The BVA was founded in March 1945 as a membership organization of veterans who lost their sight as a result of their service in the armed forces of the United States. It was incorporated under the laws of the State of New York in 1947 and chartered by Act of Congress in 1958. Its members include blinded veterans of World War I, World War II, the Korean conflict, the Vietnam Era and Peacetime service.

Fortunately, the number of living veterans with service-connected blindness is relatively small. However, the problems of the individual blinded veteran and his family in adjusting to blindness can be great. Therefore, the Blinded Veterans Association, since its inception, has concentrated its efforts on assuring the maintenance of high quality rehabilitation services by the Veterans Administration and in motivating and assisting the blinded veteran to take advantage of these services. Our goal, in effect, is to assist each other to lead as normal a life as possible as productive citizen in our home communities. Needless to say, this goal would be virtually impossible to attain without the aid of the excellent benefit structure provided by the Congress and administered by the Veterans Administration.

Now I would like to describe some of the legislative priorities of the BVA.

DISABILITY COMPENSATION

(a) *General.*—The loss of sight is many losses. It is expensive and it is a financial handicap. In many instances many of us, both old and newly blinded alike, and for many reasons, remain the victims of our handicap and must live and provide for our families on the fixed income of our disability compensation. Because of our disabilities and conditions stemming from them, many of us are unemployed and underemployed; often our disabilities prevent our wives from obtaining employment to augment the family income, the method used by more and more families to meet the increased cost of living which has risen steadily over the years. For those of us who must make it on the fixed income of our disability compensation, the disparity between our compensation and rising costs begins after the enactment of a compensation increase and widens steadily until it is reached by a subsequent increase. Except for a very brief period, we are always behind.

Accordingly, we are indeed grateful for the August 1972 compensation increases provided by the legislation which became Public Law 92-328, but we feel there is an urgent need for additional, larger increases since the cost of living has continued to rise and there seems to be no end in sight.

(b) *Automatic Cost-of-Living Increases.*—There is an obvious extension of this basic need, however. This is reflected in the BVA's wholehearted endorsement of legislation which would provide for automatic cost-of-living (Consumer Price Index) increases in compensation, dependency and indemnity compensation and pension payments. We have testified in favor of such proposals for a number of years and are pleased to learn that such legislation has been embodied in H.R. 321 and H.R. 2941; we believe this matter deserves this Committee's earliest attention and strongly urge that provisions be included in this legislation to make the increases effective as soon as possible after enactment rather than until some date months in the future.

## SURVIVORSHIP BENEFITS

(a) *General.*—In recent years the continuing number one legislative priority of the VA, after compensation increases to stay abreast of the cost of living, has been provision of adequate survivorship benefits for the families of deceased permanent and totally disabled veterans. As the present time, when a permanently and totally disabled veteran in receipt of disability compensation dies from causes not clearly service-connected, his survivors are not eligible for Disability and Indemnity Compensation, the system provided when families are deprived of support by the service-connected death of a veteran. The veteran's survivors are left to whatever they may be entitled under the pension system. We in the BVA believe this wrong and unconscionable.

A totally disabled veteran has little or no chance to build up his estate because of his inability to obtain adequate insurance and adequate employment, the normal means of creating a suitable estate. The veteran's disability may make him ineligible for insurance or may make its cost prohibitive. His inability or limited ability to engage in gainful employment limits the amount of savings he can accumulate and, more importantly, prevents him from building up Social Security benefits available to the rest of the population. Under the circumstances, therefore, we think it is the inescapable obligation of the government to assist these veterans in solving this problem occasioned by their military service.

(b) *Disability and Indemnity Compensation.*—Legislation proposed in H.R. 2477 is one approach to meeting this vital need. We believe that entitlement to DIC for the survivors of a veteran having a permanent and total service-connected disability is justified on the basis of a profound effect such a severe disability must inevitably have on his general health and well-being. However, we cannot believe that the disability has had a less profound effect if the veteran dies less than twenty years after the original disability was incurred! Certainly the needs of the veteran's family are not less because of his shorter service. Therefore, we would recommend that H.R. 2477 be modified to eliminate the requirement that a veteran must be permanently and totally disabled for at least twenty years in order that his survivors be eligible for DIC. Similarly, we believe that the provisions of H.R. 3017 which would bar DIC payment when the death of a service-connected totally disabled veteran was occasioned by accidental causes having no relationship to the service-connected disability is discriminating. The veteran and his family most assuredly are still subject to the same problems in creating an adequate estate whether his death is accidental or not. Accordingly, we urgently request that any such provision in proposed legislation be eliminated.

(c) *Extend benefits of Public Law 92-425.*—An alternative in providing security for the survivors of permanent and totally disabled service-connected veterans which we would recommend for your consideration is to extend the provisions of Public Law 92-425, promulgated in 1972. This Law established the Survivor Benefit Plan which provides families of deceased retired military personnel an annuity up to 55% of their retired pay. While the retired serviceman pays a portion of the cost of the system through deductions from his retired pay, the Government bears a substantial cost of the benefits, particularly for those involving lower grade enlisted personnel. The BVA has enthusiastically welcomed the enactment of the Survivor Benefit Plan but feels that this legislation has left a glaring inequity which affects a substantial number of our members as well as many other disabled veterans. I refer to the fact that the Plan makes no provision for the survivors of disabled enlisted men of World War II. The reason for this is simple; enlisted personnel were not entitled to disability retirement until the enactment of the Career Compensation Act of 1949.

We strongly urge that this indefensible deficiency be corrected at this session of Congress. Every day of delay jeopardizes the financial well-being of families of these disabled servicemen. Our remedial proposal is simple: that the benefits of the Survivorship Plan be extended to all servicemen who are not now eligible because they are not in a retired status and who, at the time of their separation from the service, were determined by the Veterans Administration to have a severely disabled service-connected status. Their retired pay, based on their military status, should be adjusted and updated, as has been done in the case of officers retired at the same time on account of physical disability. They would be expected to make the same contributions that are chargeable under the Survivor Benefit Plan.

We realize, Mr. Chairman, that there can be a difference of opinion as to whether such a program should be administered by the Department of Defense, which now administers the existing program, or by the Veterans Administration.

We recognize that these men are, in fact, disabled veterans, not retired military personnel, and that the legislation we are proposing would not confer retired status on them. But the important thing is not to let such differences stand in the way of the earliest possible corrective action. We say, again, each day's delay means that this one group of families of disabled servicemen is being subjected to major, if not catastrophic, financial penalties as a result of a technicality in the law. We cannot believe that Congress intended such an unfair blow to fall on the survivors of men who sacrificed equally for their country as others whose families are not protected.

It should be emphasized that we do not believe that extending the Survivor Benefit Plan is the only approach that can be taken to meet this pressing need. We are highlighting it here simply because it is related to such recent Congressional action. We still think that legislation that would make Dependency and indemnity Compensation payable to the survivors of deceased permanently and totally disabled veterans has much merit and continue to regard it as a highly acceptable alternative. The important thing, of course, is to make available these vitally needed benefits with the least possible delay.

*(d) Continue Payment of Disability Compensation to Survivors for One Year.*— Another measure the BVA would recommend is the passage of legislation providing for the continuation of payment of the full amount of disability compensation to the veteran's survivors for one year following the death of the veteran. Such payment would bear no relation to the cause of the veteran's death nor to his widow's financial resources; the sole criterion for eligibility would be the veteran's permanent and total service-connected disability. It seems clear to us that the death of a totally disabled service-connected veteran imposes a severe financial loss on the veteran's family and that the veteran's survivors deserve assistance from the government in making the necessary transition in adjusting to their financial losses. Canada has set an example in this regard, granting the surviving widow of a veteran rated 50% or more disabled from service-connected causes the full amount of his disability compensation for one year after his death as a means of assisting her to adjust to new financial circumstances.

#### AID AND ATTENDANCE

We ask your urgent consideration of legislation to amend paragraph (r), Section 314, Title 38 of the U.S. Code, to provide an additional aid and attendance allowance to certain service-connected blinded veterans. Legislation to this effect has been introduced at our request by Representative Dorn as H.R. 1636. This bill would provide a monthly aid and attendance allowance to any veteran who is totally blind with 5/200 visual acuity or less and who is otherwise entitled to the compensation authorized under Title 38, Section 314, subsections (1), (m), or (n) or the intermediate rates thereunder.

The BVA's request for this additional allowance is based on the obvious fact that one must see danger in order to avoid it. Often, the first indication of such danger to a blind person is too late—when the veteran has already fallen and sustained bodily and serious injury. It is a well established fact that, due to his disability, the blinded veteran is immediately cut off from 85% of the means of communication which sighted people enjoy. The blind person needs assistance in finding a restaurant table, in reading menus, in locating street addresses and entrances to buildings, to name a few of the activities of his daily life. For these and many other reasons, all due to the veteran's service-connected blindness, the BVA feels that the increased allowance we are requesting is essential in order that the blinded veteran would be compensated for the expense he incurs for aid and attendance in his everyday activity. We urge Congress to take action on this legislation during the present session.

#### INCREASE AWARDS FOR DISABILITIES IN COMBINATION WITH BLINDNESS

Another inequity which the BVA feels is in need of legislative action during this session of Congress also would involve an amendment to Section 314, Title 38. Resolution No. 28, adopted at our 1971 National Convention, requests the Congress to amend Section 314 to grant compensation under subsection (o) for loss or loss of use of a hand or leg when it occurs in combination with blindness. As in the previous instance, similar legislation has been introduced at our request by Representative Dorn as H.R. 1637. Our request for this legislation is based on the realization that the loss of the tactile sense caused by an artificial hand or foot is considerably more handicapping when it occurs in combination with blindness

since such loss deprives the blinded veteran of essential contacts with the environment and that the use of an orthopedic cane to assist a blinded veteran who also has lost a leg deprives him of the use of a long cane as a mobility tool. We strongly endorsed the provisions of H.R. 1637 and respectfully urge this present Congress to take action on this legislation.

#### ENDORSEMENT OF PENDING LEGISLATION

Having cited the major concerns of the BVA, I now would like to mention a number of pending Bills which the BVA endorses. These include: Bills which would provide that recipients of veterans compensation or pension will not have the amount of such compensation or pension reduced as the result of increases in monthly Social Security benefits; S. 59, designed to amend Title 38 to provide improved medical care to veterans; S. 49, a Bill establishing a National Cemetery System within the Veterans Administration and providing for a burial plot allowance of \$150 payable in the case of a veteran who is not buried in a national or other Federal cemetery; H.R. 1633, which would extend to those disabled veterans who served on or after February, 1955, the same eligibility for the automobile allowance grant as is presently available to disabled veterans who served during World War II and the Korean conflict; S. 1001, designed to amend Title 38 to increase the statutory rate for anatomical loss or loss of use of under subsection (k) to \$80; S. 150, which provides for out-patient dental services to permanently and totally service-connected veterans; and H.R. 3426, the objective of which is to amend Title 38 to extend certain benefits presently provided to service-connected blinded veterans to veterans who are blind as a result of non-service-connected disability but who have other service-connected disabilities rated as total. We strongly urge action on all these Bills during the present session of Congress.

#### OTHER RESOLUTIONS REQUESTING LEGISLATION

At the 1971 and 1972 National Conventions, the members of the Blinded Veterans Association adopted three Resolutions urging legislation of interest to this Committee on which no action has been taken to date. We are attaching these Resolutions to this Statement and respectfully refer them to this Committee for the Members' review and consideration.

In concluding, Mr. Chairman, I would like to express the sincere appreciation of the members of the Blinded Veterans Association to the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee for the sympathetic role it has played in the development of needed veteran legislation. Our membership indeed is grateful for the dedicated service and highly important contribution this Committee has rendered to American veterans. We hope that the Congress will act on the various legislative recommendations we have made, legislation which we firmly believe is urgently needed. Again, thank you for this opportunity to appear before you today.

#### Attachment No. 1

#### RESOLUTION No. 16/71

Whereas, the Blinded Veterans Association with its Congressional Charter has the responsibility to all Veterans to secure meaningful legislation that will benefit Veterans: And be it

*Resolved*, That the Blinded Veterans Association in Convention assembled at the Playboy Plaza Hotel at Miami Beach, Florida, August 4th through 7th, 1971 instruct National Representative to testify favorably before the proper Congressional Committee in support of (legislation) granting retirement to severely disabled veterans of World War I and II.

#### Attachment No. 2

#### RESOLUTION No. 3/72

Whereas, the pension of a blinded veteran, without wife or child, is reduced to \$30 per month after two (2) full calendar months of hospitalization in a VA hospital, and

Whereas, this sometimes results in hardship on the veteran because he must choose between remaining in a hospital and losing his housing and/or not meeting his obligations, and

Whereas, such a choice disrupts or detracts from the experience of the blinded veteran undergoing blind rehabilitation at a VA Rehabilitation Center, and

Whereas, such hardship can be documented for those veterans who are blind and non-service-connected and without dependents: Therefore be it

*Resolved*, That the Blinded Veterans Association in convention assembled in Los Angeles, on July 19, 1972, call upon the members of Congress to enact legislation which will allow such non-service-connected veterans to retain their pension while hospitalized when a case of actual hardship exists, which would involve the loss of belongings or housing.

Attachment No. 3

RESOLUTION No. 16/72

Whereas, the federal government has enacted into law a special housing grant which is in the amount of \$17,500 and which is designed to aid certain totally disabled veterans in the purchase or construction of special housing designed to accommodate prosthetic devices for these veterans, and

Whereas, those totally disabled veterans are defined as paraplegics, bilateral amputees and blinded veterans who suffer the loss or loss of use of one lower extremity, and

Whereas, all other totally disabled veterans have been excluded from the provisions of the U.S. Code, Title 38, Chapter 21, and

Whereas, blinded veterans are by federal governmental definition legally, totally disabled veterans, and

Whereas, blinded veterans do need certain safe, necessary and convenient prosthetic devices in their homes, such as special electric wall outlets, railings, sliding doors, inter-com systems, special toilet facilities, special stairwell construction to prevent serious disabling falls, Braille thermometers, etc. etc.: Now let it hereby be

*Resolved*, That the Blinded Veterans Association, in Convention in Hollywood, California, on this 22d day of July, 1972, secure federal legislation designed to include blinded veterans in U.S. Code, Title 38, Chapter 21, without such blinded veterans having to suffer any additional disability beyond total blindness which is service-connected.

