

The original documents are located in Box 23, “2/14/76 - Remarks at Bay Pines VA Hospital, Bay Pines, Florida” of the President’s Speeches and Statements: Reading Copies at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS -- V. A. HOSPITAL

THANK YOU, BILL. (Cong. Young introduces you)
CONGRESSMAN LOU FREY
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TALKING POINTS -- BAY PINES VA HOSPITAL

I have just had the opportunity to tour the Bay Pines Veterans Hospital. This visit gave me the opportunity to see first hand the operation of an important VA medical facility.

Last month, in my State of the Union Address, I spoke of the importance of assuring the quality of medical care which our veterans receive. One of my first acts as President was to review a study which identified deficiencies in our VA medical care system and recommended steps which could be taken.

In response to that study the budget which I submitted to the Congress in January 1975 called for almost 7,000 new positions for VA medical personnel directly linked to concerns identified in the Quality of Care study. That budget request also sought \$404 million for needed health and safety related improvements to existing facilities.

The budget I submitted last month calls for a further increase of over 1,700 medical personnel to complete the staffing recommendations of the Quality of Care study. I have also asked for an additional \$211 million for improvements to existing facilities.

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My latest budget request of over \$4 billion for hospital and medical care for veterans is the highest ever.

This past October I was pleased to sign legislation which responded to my request to improve the pay scale for VA physicians so we could be sure to attract and retain first class medical talent in the VA system.

We certainly owe our nation's veterans the finest possible medical care. The dedication of those who work for the VA is an important part of the care our veterans receive. I was certainly impressed by what I saw here today.

I know that the local communities in this area of Florida take pride in the medical facilities.

Working together we will continue to provide our veterans the care they so richly deserve.

Thank you very much.