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REMARKS

BY

THE HONORABLE RICHARD L. ROUDEBUSH
ADMINISTRATOR OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

AMERICAN LEGION
DEPARTMENT CONVENTION

INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA

JULY 12, 1975



Comrade Commander . . . my comrades of the American Legion:

I appreciate your kind invitation to attend your convention and to be a participant on this morning's program.

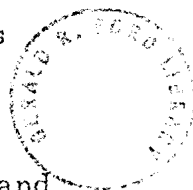
It is always good to take part in Legion functions and I particularly enjoy the chance to be with fellow Legionnaires in my home state. It is good to listen to your reports that Legion activities are flourishing, as always, throughout Indiana.

My pleasure at being here comes not only from my admiration for what you are doing but also my interest in finding out about current activities of your posts and your state organization. It is also supported by the pride and satisfaction I have achieved from being a life member of Frank Huntsinger Post 45 at my home town of Noblesville.

I have known first hand of the accomplishments of the Legion and I have known of the energy and dedication of its members, not just for the large policies and projects pursued on a national level . . . but for the things that help our neighbors and improve our home towns and the communities where the post is located.

But recently I have come to know more and more of the value and the strength of the Legion in affairs that involve the Veterans Administration.

As Administrator of Veterans Affairs, I have come more and more to value the job that the Legion does in supporting programs that help veterans and in helping these programs be most effective.



But, then, all of that is part of the history and the tradition of the American Legion. For 56 years the Legion has served the needs of veterans and dependents . . . and, of course, served the Nation as well.

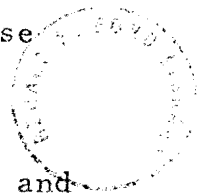
As we enter America's 200th year, I believe we are also entering a period that will be important in determining the course of veterans' programs and the level of activities on behalf of veterans for some years ahead.

There are several factors that make this period somewhat different from times just passed. While these factors will not cause great departures from present ways of doing things, the changing situation does merit our notice.

First of all, we are now in a period of peace and at a time when the rate of growth of the veterans' population has slowed.. The time will soon come when the population will peak and then start a decline, not a precipitous drop but a steady decrease unless we engage in further military action.

Second, while activity related to readjustment of Vietnam era veterans back into civilian life is at a high level right now, the bulk of this great absorption process will soon be behind us and we will be devoting a greater percentage of our attention to the needs of those who have made these adjustments.

Third, the needs of many veterans of the two World Wars and Korea will increase as they grow older and the fact that they are so great in number may create a volume of activity that is unprecedented



for the kind of help they will require.

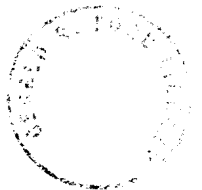
The kind of help Vietnam Era veterans will need will be changing at the same time.

And finally, as Americans become more accustomed to peace and as memories of the Vietnam War recede, the voices of those who would cut back veterans' benefits or transfer VA activities to other agencies will probably grow stronger.

I repeat that these factors are not going to have overnight impact or cause immediate change in VA or in the Nation's mission to its veterans and survivors. But they do foreshadow a probable shift in requirements and an accompanying shift in focus and emphasis in VA programs.

The need for health care of older veterans will be greater. The need to provide financial assistance for older veterans will increase. And, while G.I. Bill activity will continue at a high level for several years, it will soon start to decline.

One thing that will not change is the obligation that America has to its veterans. And one thing that will not change, as far as I'm concerned, is full dedication to meeting that obligation on the part of VA.



At the Legion conference on veterans affairs and rehabilitation in Washington last March, I took note of the fact that, as we move further into the post-Vietnam Era, we can expect more frequent suggestions

that agency responsibilities be realigned to take programs from VA and mingle them with programs that serve non-veterans as well as veterans.

I think it is realistic to expect such proposals. I think we must be prepared to prevent this from happening.

There are those who would merge our compensation and pension activities with other systems that provide monetary help for citizens who are not veterans.

There are those who would open VA hospitals to non-veterans under a comprehensive health care delivery plan.

These changes would be made without regard to the special contribution that veterans have made to the Nation. They would nullify hard-won gains that veterans have made over the years and would change the traditional place of veterans in American society.

I told the Legion meeting in March . . . and I have told many gatherings since then . . . that I am unalterably opposed to any move that would dissipate veterans programs. I am unalterably opposed to any plan that would weaken or lessen the importance of the agency that was established especially for our country's veterans.

I know that you are opposed to such possible plans or proposals. I know because you have made your position on this matter very clear so many times in the past.

You have always been stalwart friends of VA and you have always supported the right of veterans to have an agency of their own, a unit to which they could look for service and help at any time in their

lives.

We at VA appreciate your friendship and support. We are trying to do the best job possible and we will continue to give you our very best effort.

This year VA will spend some \$16.5 billion on programs which we have been assigned to administer on behalf of veterans and veterans dependents. I don't need to tell you that this is an extremely large amount of money.

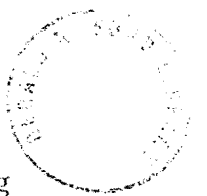
It is several times the total of the entire federal budget when the American Legion was in its infancy. It is much larger than the amount spent by all of the federal government in the year prior to our entering World War II.

It is more than triple the VA budget of just ten years ago.

But it is an amount that is needed to do the job we have been instructed to do. It is a generous budget but it is a most worthy cause.

Not too long ago, I told a meeting of VA management people that this budget imposed on all of us at VA an additional responsibility to see that the best results possible come from each part of our operation.

I said that the amount of money the taxpayers are entrusting us to expend means that we must do better than ever in our jobs.



I told them that, while results could not be measured strictly in terms of dollars spent, the extraordinary number of dollars we now are given to spend must bring not only the most service but the most expert service that VA has ever given.

I am glad to report these remarks to you because I want you to know that VA does not accept lightly the trust that the American people and Congress are showing in us and the responsibility they are assigning us.

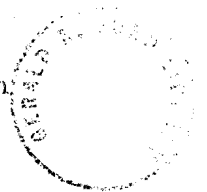
We do not accept lightly our mission to the 725,000 veterans in Indiana. We consider most seriously the need to make the quarter of a billion dollars VA spends in Indiana each year do as much as possible for these most deserving of all citizens.

We at VA want to work with you and other Hoosier veterans organizations in the most responsible and productive manner possible. You have always given us wise advice, strong backing, hard work and close cooperation. My comrades, I know it all will continue.

I have enjoyed these few minutes with you this morning. I intend to remain throughout the day and . . . I emphasize this . . . be a spectator at the parade.

I will be at your national convention in Minneapolis next month and I hope to see many of you there.

May you enjoy yourselves for the balance of this convention and may the year ahead be a good one for the American Legion in Indiana.



THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

December 4, 1974

The Speaker of the
House of Representatives

Sir:

I ask the Congress to consider proposed supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year 1975 in the amount of \$813,700,000 for the Veterans Administration.

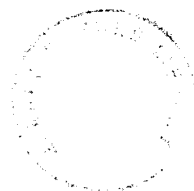
This supplemental request is necessitated by the Congressional override of my veto of H.R. 12628, "Vietnam Veterans Readjustment Assistance Act of 1974." It requires an appropriation which is \$502 million more than would have been required if my proposal for an 18.2% benefit increase had been adopted.

The details of these proposals are set forth in the enclosed letter from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, with whose comments and observations I concur.

Respectfully,

Herald R. Ford

Enclosure





Estimate No. _____
93rd Congress 2nd Session
EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20503

DEC 3 1974

The President

The White House

Sir:

I have the honor to submit for your consideration supplemental requests for appropriations for fiscal year 1975 for the Veterans Administration, as follows:

VETERANS ADMINISTRATION

Readjustment Benefits

For an additional amount for "Readjustment benefits", \$811,700,000.

General Operating Expenses

For an additional amount for "General operating expenses", \$2,000,000.

The proposed supplemental appropriations would provide for:

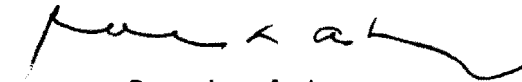
Readjustment Benefits: to meet educational assistance benefit payments for post-Korean veterans and survivors. P.L. 93- raised most education and training program benefits 22.7%, and the rest by 18.2%. Additionally, a new direct education loan program was created, and nine more months of entitlement was granted. Eligibility requirements were lowered to allow slightly disabled post-Korean conflict veterans to become eligible for the full tuition program. The work-study program was increased, and other minor changes were included.

General Operating Expenses: to meet the administrative costs primarily related to the creation of the direct education loan program. An additional increase will be required to provide for other changes in the new amendments.

This supplemental request is required as a result of Congress' failure to sustain your veto of H.R. 12628, "Vietnam Veterans Readjustment Assistance Act of 1974." It will add \$502 million more to your current fiscal year 1975 spending plan than would have been required had your proposal for an 18.2% benefit increase been sustained.

I have carefully reviewed the proposals for appropriations contained in this document and am satisfied that these requests are necessary at this time. I recommend, therefore, that these proposals be transmitted to the Congress.

Respectfully,



Roy L. Ash
Director

Enclosure

