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OCTOBER 22, 1976

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

I am pleased to sign into law H.R. 2735, the Veterans Omnibus Health Care Act of 1976.

H.R. 2735 significantly improves the scope of medical care services available to our Nation's disabled veterans and their families. It expands the medical care available to veterans with 50 percent or more service-connected disabilities. It also makes available to the families of service-connected veterans a new program of mental health services in order to assure that the disabled veteran and his family can work as a group toward the veteran's rehabilitation and successful recovery. Other provisions of this bill will aid our aging veterans and the veteran population as a whole.

The bill includes an important Administration-sponsored proposal -- the one-year extension of the physician and dentist pay bonus to aid VA in the recruitment and retention of skilled medical personnel. Also included are a number of provisions which will assist VA in strengthening and improving the administration of its medical care system.

H.R. 2735 represents a constructive effort by the Congress and the Administration to improve care for disabled veterans within the context of a responsive and a responsible medical program. It focuses on those veterans who are our top priority -- the veterans with service-connected disabilities -- and for whom the VA medical system was developed.

I believe H.R. 2735 can aid the Administration in continuing to provide high quality medical care for our Nation's veterans, and I am proud, therefore, to approve this bill.

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