

REMARKS OF SENATOR BOB DOLE
DEPARTMENT CONVENTION
OF THE
KANSAS DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS
JUNCTION CITY, KANSAS
JUNE 2, 1974

IT IS A SPECIAL PLEASURE FOR ME TO ADDRESS YOU TODAY AND I WANT TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO TALK BRIEFLY ABOUT ACTIONS IN THE CONGRESS RELATING TO DISABLED VETERANS.

BUT BEFORE I DO, I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE A MOMENT OR TWO TO MAKE SOME MORE GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

AS VETERANS, YOU AND I SHARE A COMMON SET OF EXPERIENCES. I FOUGHT IN AN EARLIER WAR, AS MANY OF YOU DID, BACK IN THE FORTIES.

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THAT WAR HAD THE SUPPORT OF THE NATION. NO ONE LIKED IT, BUT PRACTICALLY EVERYONE AGREED IT WAS NECESSARY, AND SO THE NATION MOBILIZED IN SUPPORT OF THE WAR EFFORT AND WE DETERMINED WE WOULD END IT AS QUICKLY AS WE COULD BY WINNING IT.

THAT WAS THE ATTITUDE THEN, AND THE AFFECT IT HAD ON THE TREATMENT OF RETURNING VETERANS IS READILY APPARENT IN CONTRAST TO THE SCALE OF BENEFITS AND SERVICES WHICH OTHERS OF YOU, VETERANS OF A MORE RECENT WAR, HAVE BEEN AFFORDED.

SIMPLE EQUITY SOUGHT

THIS LACK OF EQUITY IS APPARENTLY BECAUSE THE VIETNAM WAR WAS SO UNPOPULAR, BECAUSE IT WAS SO CONTROVERSIAL AND BY THE TIME IT ENDED WAS SO DIVISIVE.

AS A NATION -- UNFORTUNATELY AS A CONGRESS -- WE SEEM TO BE TRYING TO PUT IT OUT OF OUR MINDS AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.

AND IN THE PROCESS, WE ARE FORGETTING THE VETERAN TOO. OR AT LEAST HAVE TENDED TO IGNORE SOME OF HIS LEGITIMATE NEEDS AND THE DEMANDS SIMPLE JUSTICE PLACES ON THIS COUNTRY TO GIVE THE RECENT VETERAN TREATMENT EQUAL TO THAT AFFORDED THOSE OF AN EARLIER DAY.

A FEW OF US IN THE CONGRESS ARE WORKING TO RECTIFY THE SITUATION AND, AS YOU MAY KNOW, SEVERAL IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS ARE IN PROGRESS RIGHT NOW WHICH SHOULD BE BENEFICIAL TO VETERANS.

COMPENSATION INCREASES

OF GREATEST IMPORTANCE TO ALL OF YOU IS UNDOUBTEDLY THE INCREASE IN DISABILITY COMPENSATION WHICH CONGRESS RECENTLY SENT TO THE PRESIDENT FOR SIGNATURE. IN MY OPINION, THIS INCREASE HAS BEEN NEEDED FOR QUITE SOME TIME.

I HAVE BEEN ESPECIALLY AWARE OF THE RISING COST OF LIVING IN RECENT MONTHS. EXPENSES FOR GASOLINE, HEATING FUELS AND OTHER PETROLEUM PRODUCTS HAVE INCREASED BY NEARLY DOUBLE TO MORE THAN TRIPLE THE PRICE OF SIX MONTHS AGO.

THE BILL SENT TO THE PRESIDENT PROVIDES FOR A 15 TO 18 PERCENT INCREASE IN DISABILITY COMPENSATION, ACCORDING TO THE DEGREE OF DISABILITY. I THINK THESE INCREASES ARE GREATLY NEEDED TO OFFSET THE INFLATIONARY RISES IN THE COST OF LIVING, AND I SUPPORTED THIS MEASURE IN THE SENATE. EVEN IT MAY NOT BE ADEQUATE TO TOTALLY OFFSET THE TREMENDOUS INFLATION WE HAVE SEEN IN PAST MONTHS, BUT HOPEFULLY, IT WILL BENEFIT EVERY ONE OF YOU HERE.

I AM REVIEWING THE POSSIBILITY OF INTRODUCING MY OWN BILL TO PUT DISABILITY COMPENSATION ON A COST-OF-LIVING ESCALATOR BASIS. THERE MAY BE SOME OPPOSITION TO THIS TYPE OF BILL IN CONGRESS BUT IT WOULD PREVENT THE LAG IN COMPENSATION INCREASES BEHIND INFLATION. A CHANGE IN THE LAW TO INCREASE COMPENSATION AUTOMATICALLY AS THE COST OF LIVING GOES UP WOULD ALLOW DISABLED VETERANS TO BETTER COPE WITH HIGHER PRICES INSTEAD OF WAITING FOR CONGRESS TO ACT ON EACH INCREASE.

VIETNAM VETERANS

I HAVE BEEN WORKING ON SEVERAL OTHER VETERANS' MEASURES IN THE SENATE RECENTLY. MOST OF THESE BILLS ARE RELATED TO VIETNAM VETERANS. BECAUSE OF CONTROVERSY AND CRITICISM WHICH AROSE OVER THE VIETNAM WAR, WHICH I MENTIONED EARLIER, THE CONGRESS HAS NOT GIVEN VETERANS OF THAT WAR THE LEVEL OF ASSISTANCE THEY DESERVE, AND I AM DIRECTING MY EFFORTS -- ALONG WITH A FEW OF MY COLLEAGUES -- TO CHANGE THIS.

AS ALL OF YOU HERE KNOW SO WELL, BULLETS AND SHRAPNEL DO AS MUCH DAMAGE IN ONE WAR AS THEY DO IN ANY OTHER -- WHETHER IT BE VIETNAM, KOREA OR WORLD WAR II. SO I THINK VIETNAM-ERA VETERANS DESERVE AT LEAST A LEVEL OF ASSISTANCE EQUIVALENT TO THAT WHICH THEIR PREDECESSORS RECEIVED.

EDUCATION BENEFITS

THE G.I. BILL IS THE CENTER OF FOCUS RIGHT AT THIS POINT AND SEVERAL MONTHS AGO, I HELPED INTRODUCE THE COMPREHENSIVE VIETNAM ERA VETERANS EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS ACT. IT'S GOOD TO SEE THAT THE SENATE VETERANS' AFFAIRS COMMITTEE HAS ADOPTED SEVERAL OF THE PROVISIONS INCLUDED IN THIS BILL. THESE MEASURES INCLUDE TUITION PAYMENTS, INCREASED MONTHLY ASSISTANCE RATES, EXTENSION OF THE 8 YEAR ELIGIBILITY PERIOD AND THE 36 MONTH ENTITLEMENT PERIOD, AND THE WORK-STUDY PROGRAM.

UNTIL ONLY A FEW DAYS AGO, SEVERAL THOUSAND VETERANS IN KANSAS WERE SCHEDULED TO LOSE ELIGIBILITY UNDER THE G.I. BILL BECAUSE OF THE FAILURE OF CONGRESS TO EXTEND THE PERIOD. I INTRODUCED A SEPARATE BILL TO PERMIT AN EXTENSION OF ELIGIBILITY FROM 8 TO 10 YEARS AND WAS HAPPY TO SEE THAT A TEMPORARY 30-DAY EXTENSION WAS RECENTLY SENT BY THE CONGRESS TO THE PRESIDENT. THIS MEASURE WILL PREVENT INTERRUPTIONS IN VETERANS SCHOOLING UNTIL A PERMANENT MEASURE CAN BE PASSED.

WHEN THE COMPREHENSIVE VETERANS EDUCATION BILL IS REPORTED TO THE SENATE BY THE VETERANS' AFFAIRS COMMITTEE, I PLAN TO OFFER AMENDMENTS TO PUT EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS ON A COST-OF-LIVING ESCALATOR AND TO REVITALIZE THE FARM COOPERATIVE TRAINING PROGRAM. THESE MEASURES SHOULD BE BENEFICIAL TO KANSAS VETERANS.

OTHER ACTION NEEDED

OTHER MEASURES I AM WORKING ON WOULD MAKE VIETNAM VETERANS ELIGIBLE FOR VA BUSINESS AND FARM LOANS, AND FOR VETERANS LIFE INSURANCE, AS VETERANS OF OTHER WARS HAVE BEEN ELIGIBLE. THE VETERANS HOUSING LOAN PROGRAM ALSO NEEDS TO BE IMPROVED AND REVITALIZED.

IN ADDITION, I HAVE PREPARED A BILL REQUIRING THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR TO SURVEY VIETNAM VETERANS TO DETERMINE IF THEIR JOBS ARE COMMENSURATE WITH THEIR SKILLS. THIS ACTION WOULD HOPEFULLY LEAD TO SOME ASSISTANCE TO THOSE VETERANS WHO WERE FORCED TO TAKE LOW PAYING JOBS BECAUSE OF FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS OR OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES AND WHO WOULD OTHERWISE BE STUCK WITH INADEQUATE EMPLOYMENT FOR MANY YEARS AND PERHAPS FOR LIFE.

VA ACTION

YOUR LIVES ARE ALL GREATLY AFFECTED BY THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION. THE VA IS PLANNING AN OUTLAY OF \$13.6 BILLION FOR FISCAL YEAR 1975. THIS MONEY SHOULD MEAN SEVERAL IMPROVEMENTS FOR KANSAS VETERANS.

VA MEDICAL CARE AND HOSPITALS ARE VITAL TO DISABLED VETERANS, AND AS YOU KNOW, WE RECENTLY ANNOUNCED AN ALLOCATION REQUEST OF \$2.7 MILLION TO MODERNIZE THE VA HOSPITAL IN WICHITA. THE VA HAS PROVIDED THE DETAILS ON THE IMPROVEMENTS TO BE MADE, BUT I UNDERSTAND THAT THIS EXPANSION IS ONLY THE FIRST OF FIVE PHASES WHICH WILL ULTIMATELY REPLACE THE EXISTING HOSPITAL WITH ALL NEW FACILITIES.

MEDICAL CARE

IN ADDITION, I HAVE BEEN ADVISED THAT THE VA HOSPITAL IN WICHITA IS WORKING CLOSELY WITH WICHITA STATE UNIVERSITY AND KANSAS UNIVERSITY TO OBTAIN MORE PERSONNEL AND EXPERTISE FROM UNIVERSITY MEDICAL SCHOOLS. IN VIEW OF THE SHORTAGE OF DOCTORS AND MEDICAL PERSONNEL, THIS COOPERATION SHOULD BE ESPECIALLY BENEFICIAL TO KANSAS VETERANS.

OTHER PROGRAMS INCLUDE THE PILOT PROJECT "OPERATION VETREACH" IN WICHITA. THIS PROGRAM IS DESIGNED TO HELP VETERANS IN THE INNER CITY FIND EMPLOYMENT AND TAKE ADVANTAGE OF OTHER VA PROGRAMS. "VETREPS" ARE BEING ESTABLISHED BY THE VA ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES ALL ACROSS KANSAS AND HOPEFULLY WILL BE HELPFUL TO VETERANS GOING TO SCHOOL.

THE CONGRESS HAS A RESPONSIBILITY TO SEE THAT VETERANS RECEIVE FAIR AND ADEQUATE TREATMENT. WE HAVE THE RESPONSIBILITY TO WATCH OVER THE IMPLEMENTATION OF VA PROGRAMS. I ENCOURAGE ALL OF YOU TO FEEL FREE TO CONTACT ME WITH SUGGESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE OR PROBLEMS YOU MAY ENCOUNTER.

PROGRAMS FOR HANDICAPPED

SINCE ALL OF YOU HAVE A DISABILITY OF SOME TYPE, YOU ARE AWARE OF THE MANY PROBLEMS HANDICAPPED PEOPLE HAVE. MY INTEREST IN IMPROVING CONDITIONS FOR THE HANDICAPPED HAS EXISTED FOR MANY YEARS.

ALTHOUGH MANY IMPROVEMENTS HAVE BEEN OR ARE BEING MADE, MANY ARE YET TO BE MADE. SOME OF MY OWN MEASURES HAVE BEEN ENACTED AND I AM CONTINUING TO WORK ON OTHERS.

EMPLOYMENT

EMPLOYMENT IS ALWAYS OF GREAT CONCERN BECAUSE OF THE PREJUDICES HANDICAPPED PEOPLE ENCOUNTER. HOWEVER, THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973 IS PRESENTLY BEING ENACTED AND SHOULD BE BENEFICIAL TO INCREASED EMPLOYMENT. DISCRIMINATION AGAINST DISABLED PEOPLE BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN REDUCED. "HIRE THE HANDICAPPED" PROGRAMS ALSO APPEAR TO BE MAKING HEADWAY AMONG PRIVATE FIRMS.

SPECIAL HOUSING NEEDS SHOULD BE BETTER HANDLED BY FEDERAL PROGRAMS. A MEASURE CONCERNING HOUSING FOR THE HANDICAPPED, SOMEWHAT SIMILAR TO MY OWN, WAS RECENTLY INCLUDED IN THE OMNIBUS HOUSING BILL PASSED BY THE SENATE.

FINALLY, TRANSPORTATION AND ARCHITECTURAL BARRIERS NEED TO BE FURTHER REDUCED, FOR DISABLED VETERANS AND OTHERS. I HAVE MADE SEVERAL EFFORTS IN THESE AREAS ALREADY AND PLAN TO CONTINUE WORKING ON TAX MEASURES TO ENCOURAGE THE REDUCTION OF BARRIERS.

HOPEFULLY, THESE EFFORTS WILL BE BENEFICIAL TO ALL OF YOU. MANY IMPROVEMENTS ARE YET TO BE MADE AND I HOPE CONGRESS CAN ADDRESS THESE MATTERS PROMPTLY.

MORE THAN SIMPLE DUTY

AGAIN, THE VETERAN WHO HAS FOUGHT FOR HIS COUNTRY HAS DONE MORE THAN SIMPLE DUTY, AS EACH OF YOU PERSONALLY KNOWS. HE HAS EARNED AN EXPRESSION OF GRATITUDE FROM THE NATION.

FOR MY PART, I INTEND TO CONTINUE TO WORK IN THE SENATE TO SEE THAT THIS GRATITUDE IS GIVEN PROPER EXPRESSION THROUGH A PROGRAM OF TANGIBLE BENEFITS AND NECESSARY ASSISTANCE TO THE VIETNAM ERA VETERANS AND TO ALL WHO HAVE IN THE PAST, IN ANY WAR, PUT ON THE UNIFORM OF THIS COUNTRY AND FOUGHT TO KEEP IT WHAT IT IS -- THE MOST FREE AND THEREFORE THE GREATEST COUNTRY IN THE WORLD.

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