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MEETING ON CONSTRUCTION OF
VA HOSPITALS WITH THE PRESIDENT
AND ROUDEBUSH
Tuesday, May 11, 1976
4:30 p.m.

Oval Office

Handwritten notes:
VA Computer
out - now -
76
Roudebush
L.A.
in



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

May 11, 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT
FROM: JIM CANNON *Jaw*
SUBJECT: Construction of VA Hospitals

You are meeting this afternoon with Administrator Roudebush to advise him of your decisions regarding the construction of eight new VA hospitals. There is considerable Congressional and local community interest in these hospitals. At about the time of your meeting this afternoon, Max Friedersdorf will start Congressional notification of your decisions and Steve McConahey will make similar calls to State and local officials.

I recommend that after your meeting with Administrator Roudebush that you issue the attached statement which summarizes the decisions you have made.

The statement has been cleared by Max Friedersdorf, Paul O'Neill, and Doug Smith.

Recommendation:

That you approve release this afternoon of the attached statement.

Attachment

Page 1

We owe our veterans the finest in the way of medical care. One of my first acts as President was to consider the Quality of Care Survey which made recommendations for improvement in the Veterans Administration medical care system, and I am pleased that in the last two years we have been able to implement those recommendations. I have asked in my last two budget submissions for approximately 9,000 new staff positions for the medical care program of the Veterans Administration and I have also asked for over \$600 million for needed repairs and construction to assure the safety and quality of VA facilities. My 1977 budget request of over \$4 billion for VA medical care activities was a record high for the system.

I have considered the recommendations of Administrator of Veteran Affairs, Richard Roudebush, on another important step in our effort to provide quality medical care to our veterans -- the construction of eight major replacement hospitals throughout the country. The eight proposed facilities have been the subject of a series of planning studies conducted by independent contractors. These studies were undertaken in response to a Congressional expression that hospitals be built and were subsequently reviewed by the Administrator who gave me his recommendations as to the relative priority to be assigned to the construction of each proposed new hospital.

I have today advised the Administrator of my decision to proceed immediately to provide design funds for all eight hospitals. I will also seek construction funds in Fiscal Year 1977 for the two projects assigned the highest priority by the Administrator -- Richmond, Virginia and Bay Pines, Florida. To implement this decision I will shortly ask the Congress to provide an additional \$249 million above my previous budget request for VA construction.

I have also decided to seek construction funds for the other six replacement hospitals at the rate of two a year for the succeeding three fiscal years. These projects would be funded in accordance with the VA's priority ranking. In addition to Richmond and Bay Pines, the other locations are Martinsburg, West Virginia; Portland, Oregon; Seattle, Washington; Little Rock, Arkansas; Baltimore, Maryland and Camden, New Jersey.

My actions today do not include decisions on construction details and the number of beds at each facility. These decisions will be made after further review and analysis.

Over one million people are served annually by Veterans Administration hospitals, nursing homes and domiciliary facilities. They deserve to continue to receive care of the highest quality and the latest in medical research. This requires adequate hospital facilities. The actions I am announcing today reflect my commitment that the nation's veterans be assured of the finest in quality medical care.

May 11, 1976

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

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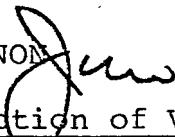
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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Date

5/13

TO:

Jim Cannon

FROM: DAVID LISSY

FYI

For Appropriate Action

COMMENTS



VETERANS ADMINISTRATION
OFFICE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20420
May 12, 1976



MEMORANDUM FOR:

The Honorable David Lissy
Associate Director
The Domestic Council
The White House

Reaction to the President's announcement last night in regard to his authorization to construct eight VA hospitals has been universally good so far as we can determine at this early juncture. The only slight "negatives" come from areas where there was contesting over site locations - such as in Philadelphia vs Southern New Jersey, and Vancouver, Washington, vs Portland, Oregon.

Enclosed for your information is a copy of a letter I dispatched before noon today to the 25 largest veteran organizations. A copy of the President's statement was attached to each letter. Letters to the Washington-based offices of these organizations were hand-delivered this morning supplementing the letters mailed to out-of-town National Commanders.

Copies of the President's statement were also delivered this morning to the staffs and members of VA legislative and appropriation committees in the House and the Senate, and phone calls were also placed to these committees.

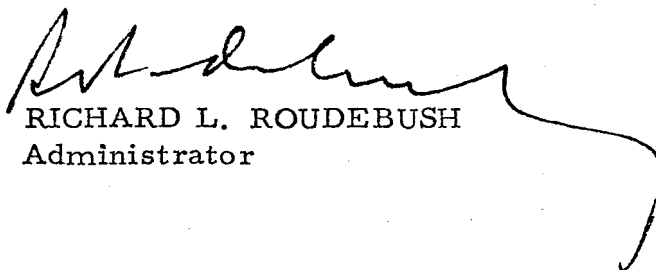
A general news release on the President's pronouncement will be sent late today or early tomorrow to all of the veteran publications on VA's mailing lists. The Presidential statement will be attached to each news release.

Thanks to the White House's alertness in notifying the most interested Members of Congress yesterday evening, the President's decision has been front-page news in morning papers in the eight affected communities, and similar exposure can be expected in today's P.M. papers. As more precise details for each hospital are worked out in the immediate days ahead, this news will be released in the eight locations by VA.

We are also making arrangements for the President's statement to be inserted in the Congressional Record along with an eulogistic statement by the Congressmen who place the matter in that publication.

I and other top officials of the agency plan, of course, to suitably note the President's favorable action in speeches and press meetings in our upcoming travels.

Attached for your further information are copies of the eight morning paper stories we had obtained by telephone up to the time this memo was prepared.



RICHARD L. ROUDEBUSH
Administrator

Attachments

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

May 14, 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR:

DAVID LISSY

FROM:

JIM CANNON

SUBJECT:

VA Hospital Construction

The President asked me yesterday about what time the VA hospitals announcement was made for the White House and what impact it had.

Would you put together a brief information report for the President telling him what time the announcement was sent out of here summarizing Roudebush's memorandum of May 12 and including a copy of the letter Roudebush sent to the veterans' organizations?

Many thanks.

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

May 14, 1976

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DAVID LISSY

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Many thanks.

copy Veterans
copy 06

AIR FORCE Sergeants Association

INTERNATIONAL HEADQUARTERS, POST OFFICE BOX 31050, WASHINGTON, D.C. 20031



18 May 1976

The Honorable Richard L. Roudebush
Administration, Veterans Administration
Washington, D. C. 20420

Dear Mr. Roudebush:

Richard L. Roudebush
5/19

On behalf of the International Executive Council, staff and the thousands of members of our association, I wish to express my sincere appreciation for your fine letter and the enclosed statement by the President on his decision authorizing construction of all eight VA hospitals.

We are proud to fulfill our obligation to the many veterans of our nation through the close working relationship we enjoy with the Veterans Administration, and are especially pleased with the strong and effective leadership you have brought to the administration.

To assist you and the members of your staff in communicating the progress in VA programs to our members, we are happy to inform you that your letter, along with the statement of the President, will appear as a full page feature in the June issue of our magazine.

Please be assured of our continued support of your efforts and the cooperation of our staff in furthering the essential programs and benefits for our service veterans.

With all good wishes, I remain,

Yours in dedication and service,

ME Hammer

M. E. "MIKE" HAMMER, CMSgt, USAF
International President

MEH:wc



00A
COPY 06



Retired Officers Association

1625 Eye Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006 (202) 331-1111

May 17, 1976

The Honorable Richard L. Roudebush
Administrator of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Administration
Washington, D. C. 20420

R. W. Carpenter III
5/20

Dear Mr. Roudebush:

The President's decision to proceed with the initial stages of design and construction of eight new hospitals was welcome news, indeed.

The great strides taken during your tenure to upgrade health care for veterans are very much appreciated by our Association. We will inform our 230,000 members of the President's action in the next issue of our magazine, THE RETIRED OFFICER.

Sincerely,

John W. Carpenter III
JOHN W. CARPENTER III
Lieutenant General, USAF, Retired
President

JWC:bls



VETERANS OF WORLD WAR I
OF THE U.S.A., INC.

LOUIS F. ZARUBA
NATIONAL COMMANDER
RES.: 2820 MCKINLEY PLACE, N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20013



NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS
916 PRINCE STREET
ALEXANDRIA, VA. 22314

May 13, 1976

Mr. Richard L. Roudebush
Administrator of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Administration Central Office
810 Vermont Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D. C. 20420

Dear Mr. Roudebush:

Just a short note to thank you for your letter of May 12th pertaining to the President's decision to officially approve and authorize construction of eight new and replacement VA hospitals which you submitted to him for his recommendation, and a copy of the President's statement regarding same. I consider this information vital and important.

You are truly an outstanding Administrator of Veterans Affairs and I commend you for your sincere interest in all veterans.

Thanking you again for your thoughtfulness, and with best personal regards, I remain,

Cordially,

Louis F. Zaruba
National Commander

LFZ:es

~~SECRET~~ A
DG
JW
DM



VFW

00A

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, WASHINGTON OFFICE

Richard L. Roudsush
5/19

May 17, 1976

Richard L. Roudsush, Administrator
Veterans Affairs
Veterans Administration
810 Vermont Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20420

Dear Rowdy:

Pete has asked me to express his sincere appreciation for your letter announcing the President's approval to request design funds for the eight so badly needed replacement hospitals and the request for construction funding for two of them in FY77.

While Pete has pledged the full support of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. to see that these hospitals are built, he points out that an earlier decision would have allowed the first concurrent resolution to contain the funds for design and construction. This also would have precluded our strong protests that the VA budget request for medical construction was inadequate and unjust. Perhaps it was our protest which caused the decision.

In any event, we will watch carefully the supplemental request for this construction. We, like the President, have the commitment "that the nation's veterans be assured of the finest in quality medical care." We intend to see that they get that care.

Sincerely yours in comradeship,

Cooper

COOPER T. HOLT
Executive Director

CTH/ket



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

~~7:30~~ Ric

Paul

O'Neil

August 31, 1976

MEMORANDUM

TO: DAN MCGURK
FROM: DAVID LISSY *mf*
SUBJECT: VA PENSIONS

What are we doing to minimize the chances the VA will send out checks for reduced amounts in October - per the attached memo from Roudebush?

We should be sure the VA does not get so far along in reprogramming its computers that we cannot turn the process around.

8/1/76

cc: Cannon
Quern
Diefenderfer

File

Paul says
we will be ok.
[Signature]





VETERANS ADMINISTRATION
OFFICE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20420
August 27, 1976



MEMORANDUM FOR: The Honorable Max Friedersdorf

FROM: Richard L. Roudebush
Administrator of Veterans Affairs

SUBJECT: Veterans Administration Review and Forecast
of Legislative Activities for the week ending August 27, 1976

I. REVIEW

Pension: We have been advised that no Senate action to extend the current rates and income limitations beyond September 30, 1976, can be expected until at least September. The House-passed pension increase bill, H.R. 14298, would have extended current rates and income limitations beyond September 30, the current expiration date, and would have increased rates by 7% (and income limitations accordingly) on January 1, 1977. The Senate, however, on August 4 substituted its pension reform text and passed H.R. 14298 returning it again to the House. If we do not receive final Congressional action by September 10, we will be forced to begin to reprogram our computers so as to ensure that the October checks will be issued in the reduced amounts mandated by the provisions of Public Law 94-169.

II. FORECAST

Termination - GI Education: We have been informally advised that the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs will hold a meeting on Wednesday, September 1, 1976, to take up the revised version of Amendment 2005 to S. 969, the education amendments bill. It is anticipated that the measure will be reported to the Senate Floor shortly after that session. We also understand that Senator Durkin (D-N.H.), will propose a "package" of amendments to the bill. One proposal which may be included is an amendment which would permit veterans pursuing short-term, high cost programs to accelerate their monthly benefit payments with concurrent charge to their educational entitlement.



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Date 9-15

TO: *Allen Moore*

FROM: DAVID LISSY

*OMB has the action
on the Thurmond letter
re: VA cemetery
program.*

[Signature]

file



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Date 9.7

TO: *Allen Moore*

FROM: DAVID LISSY

*This is the Thurmond
letter I mentioned to
you. I've called Fero Fankle
again and asked him to
find out what is being
done.*

ML



VA

JOHN C. STENNIS, MISS., CHAIRMAN

STUART SYMINGTON, MO.
HENRY M. JACKSON, WASH.
HOWARD W. CANNON, NEV.
THOMAS J. MCINTYRE, N.H.
HARRY F. BYRD, JR., VA.
SAM MUNN, GA.
JOHN C. CULVER, IOWA
GARY HART, COLO.
PATRICK J. LEAHY, VT.

STROM THURMOND, S.C.
JOHN TOWER, TEX.
BARRY GOLDWATER, ARIZ.
WILLIAM L. SCOTT, VA.
ROBERT TAFT, JR., OHIO
DEWEY F. BARTLETT, OKLA.

T. EDWARD BRASWELL, JR., CHIEF COUNSEL AND STAFF DIRECTOR

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

August 31, 1976

The President
The White House
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. President:

For some time I have been concerned about the need for additional cemeteries in the National Cemetery System, and in particular, the need for a new National Cemetery in Columbia, South Carolina.

I am convinced that one new cemetery in each Federal region is not adequate to meet the projected burial space needs in the next several years.

The Office of Management and Budget has limited new cemetery plans to one in each Federal region. As a practical matter, the so-called regional concept is unworkable. Every man who served his country honorably should have the opportunity to be buried within a reasonable distance from his home. Under the regional plan, some veterans would be buried hundreds of miles away from their homes. This would not be fair to the widows, children, and other loved ones.

I am convinced that if one site is selected in a region, other states in the region will feel neglected. As a matter of equity and fairness to all veterans, I urge you to order OMB to abandon the regional concept.

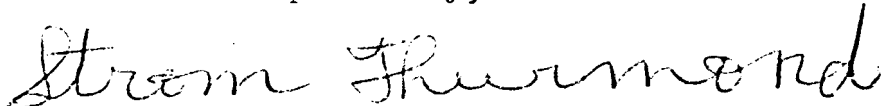
OMB is currently making budget decisions based on the regional concept. If you are able to reverse this OMB policy, it will then be possible for the VA to begin to plan cemeteries in a number of states. Time is of the essence in this matter, and I hope you can act to reverse the current OMB policy.

The President
Page 2
August 31, 1976

I consider this matter to be of great importance, and am enclosing a news article from U. S. News and World Report which supports my view.

With kindest regards and best wishes,

Respectfully,


Strom Thurmond

ST/raa

VETS' GRAVE SITES: POLITICAL BOMB?

...of veterans are ... out of ... cemeteries ... is now available ... Just 61 of ... cemeteries still ... available.

The Government, as a result, is moving to open several new cemeteries for veterans, and to expand existing ones. Nevertheless, officials predict what they call a "political explosion" as cemeteries near the nation's largest population centers are forced to close.

The problem is one of both space and numbers: many veterans and few sites. An outgrowth of the Civil War, national cemeteries are theoretically open to most former military personnel.

A veteran is entitled by law to burial in a military cemetery if he or she has a discharge other than dishonorable. So are spouses and dependent children.

If the veteran is not buried in a Government cemetery, his estate is entitled to a \$150 allowance. In many cases, this fails to cover the true cost.

For this reason, as well as for sentiment and prestige, large numbers of ex-servicemen and ex-servicewomen or their survivors are seeking burial spots in national military cemeteries.

Grave sites abroad. Studies by the Veterans Administration show that 50 per cent of the veterans who die within 50 miles of an active national cemetery are buried there.

Over the years, more than 1.3 million burials have been made in these cemeteries. That doesn't include graves in 23 U.S. military cemeteries overseas which are now closed to new burials.

All told, about 1 in 4 Americans is eligible to be buried in a national cemetery—roughly 50 million individuals.

But far fewer grave sites are available. There are fewer than 2.5 million unused burial sites today. And veterans' families are finding that when death occurs, often there are no active national cemeteries nearby.

Twenty-one States are without active national cemeteries.

For residents in the Washington-Baltimore area, for example, the closest national cemeteries with plots that haven't been spoken for are hundreds of miles away—at Long Island, N.Y., Raleigh, N.C., or Chattanooga, Tenn.

Virginia has 15 national cemeteries, which is more than any other State. But they are all filled and the remaining plots reserved.

Gettysburg in Pennsylvania, one of the best-known cemeteries, ceased digging new plots last August—112 years after its dedication when President Lincoln delivered his Gettysburg Address.

In California—the State with the largest veteran population—three national cemeteries have been closed in recent years, and the last will fill up this year.

Work has started on a fifth cemetery at March Air Force Base near Riverside, but it will not be available for interments until sometime later this year.

The VA also has plans for new ceme-

teries in Pennsylvania, Massachusetts and Quantico Marine Base in Virginia.

Long Island National Cemetery in New York, the busiest in the system today, is expected to be filled in the next two years—with no replacement expansion in sight.

One place where expansion is under way is at the most famous national cemetery of all—Arlington—across the Potomac from Washington, D.C.

Some 36,000 grave sites are being added to the 31,000 plots presently available at the cemetery, where the graves of President Kennedy and other famous Americans are located. Those additions are expected to keep the cemetery open beyond the year 2000.

But Arlington sites since 1967 have been restricted to Medal of Honor winners, career soldiers and certain elected and appointed federal officeholders with military service.

This bar to the average veteran is a continuing sore point. The head of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Thomas Walker, recently said: "They should change the name of Arlington to the national cemetery for the elite."

To stretch the capacity of many cemeteries, families have been given only one grave site since the early 1960s. Family members are buried side-by-side or one above another.

Reservations honored. Reservations made for plots in the past are still honored, but since 1961, relatives have been able to speak for a plot only after a death occurs.

At some cemeteries, land has been purchased to secure an additional 90,000 grave sites. And the VA plans to increase capacity further by constructing a series of buildings to hold the ashes of the veterans and dependents who choose to be cremated.

But these efforts to increase cemetery capacity fall far short of the demand of VA officials of the VA.

In the past year, 37,000 burials took place at VA cemeteries. This is expected to jump to 54,000 a year by 1978.

The acceleration of deaths, principally World War II veterans, at a time when national cemeteries are filling up caused one official to remark: "We are headed for a political explosion."

NATIONAL CEMETERIES OPEN FOR BURIAL OF VETERANS

EAST

New York: Bath, Long Island.

MIDWEST

Illinois: Camp Butler, Danville, Mound City, Quincy, Rock Island.
 Indiana: Marion. Iowa: Keokuk.
 Kansas: Fort Leavenworth, Fort Scott, Leavenworth. Minnesota: Fort Snelling. Missouri: Jefferson Barracks, Springfield. Nebraska: Fort McPherson. Ohio: Dayton.
 South Dakota: Black Hills. Wisconsin: Wood.

SOUTH

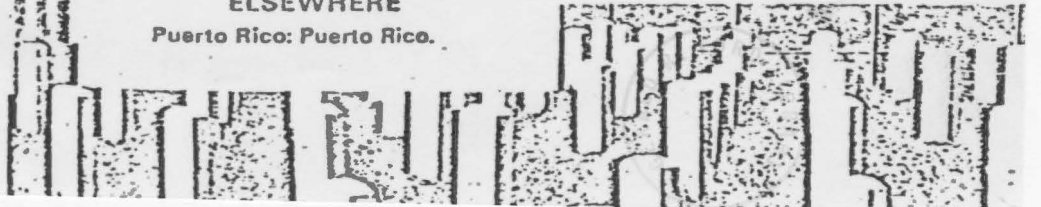
Arkansas: Fayetteville, Fort Smith, Little Rock. Florida: Barrancas. Georgia: Andersonville. Kentucky: Camp Nelson, Lebanon, Mill Springs. Louisiana: Alexandria, Fort Hudson. Mississippi: Biloxi, Corinth, Natchez. North Carolina: New Bern, Raleigh, Salisbury. Wilmington. Oklahoma: Fort Gibson. South Carolina: Beaufort, Florence. Tennessee: Andrew Johnson, Chattanooga, Fort Donelson, Memphis, Mountain Home, Nashville, Shiloh. Texas: Fort Bliss, Fort Sam Houston, Houston.

WEST

Alaska: Sitka. California: Los Angeles. Colorado: Fort Logan, Fort Lyon. Hawaii: Pacific. Montana: Custer. New Mexico: Fort Bayard, Santa Fe. Oregon: Roseburg, White City, Willamette.

ELSEWHERE

Puerto Rico: Puerto Rico.



Some items in this folder were not digitized because it contains copyrighted materials. Please contact the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library for access to these materials.

12:00 - BILL SIGNING - VETERANS
COMPENSATION AND VETERANS
PENSION - East Garden
(15 minutes)

Thursday. September 30, 1976



THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

September 29, 1976

SIGNING CEREMONY

H.R. 14298 - VETERANS AND SURVIVORS PENSION ADJUSTMENT
ACT OF 1976

H.R. 14299 - VETERANS DISABILITY COMPENSATION AND
SURVIVORS BENEFITS ACT OF 1976

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 1976

12 NOON

THE EAST GARDEN

FROM: JAMES M. CANNON *J.M. Cannon*

I. PURPOSE

To sign enrolled bills H.R. 14298 and H.R. 14299, which provide benefit increases to veterans, dependents and survivors who receive pensions or disability compensation as well as other changes in the Veterans Compensation and Pension Laws.

II. BACKGROUND, PARTICIPANTS & PRESS PLAN

A. Background: You will sign enrolled bill H.R. 14298, which on January 1, 1977, increases by seven percent the benefits of approximately 2.3 million veterans and their dependents and survivors receiving veterans pensions. The last increase in benefits was on January 1, 1976. The consumer price index is expected to rise approximately five percent between the date of the last increase and the date this increase will become effective.

You will sign enrolled bill H. 14299, which on October 1, 1976, increases by eight percent the benefit rate of 2.2 million veterans receiving disability payments and the benefit rate of approximately 368,000 people receiving survivors benefits. The last increase in benefits was on August 1, 1975. The consumer price index is expected to rise 6.4 percent between the date of the last increase and the date this increase will become effective.

B. Participants: (Complete List at Tab A)

C. Press Plan: Full press, photo opportunity.

III. PREPARED STATEMENT

Bob Orben will supply a reading copy of the prepared statement.

Veterans

"Read" folder. file

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

INFORMATION

October 4, 1976

1976 OCT 4 11 5 01

MEMORANDUM FOR: JIM CANNON
ART QUERN

FROM: BILL DIEFENDERFER *wmo*

SUBJECT: S. 969 - LEGISLATION CHANGING
THE G.I. BILL PROGRAM

Boat
Frank
John

Early on October 2, 1976, the Congress passed S. 969, which would modify the G.I. Education Bill of Rights program by:

- Terminating the current G.I. Bill for all who enter the Armed Forces after December 31, 1976.
- Creating a 5-year experimental peace time program, which requires the veteran to share in the cost through payroll deductions during his period of service.
- Increasing by 8 percent the benefits for all participants except those enrolled in flight training schools.
- Extending benefit eligibility to 45 months for all those who were previously eligible for 36 months of benefits.
- Terminating as of June 1, 1977, prepayment and limited advance payment of benefits, except that limited advances can be made if the veteran requests, and his school agrees, to handle such transactions.
- Limiting use of benefits for correspondence courses to those courses exceeding 6 months in length.

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- Requiring that veterans personally sign benefit checks.
- Increasing the maximum G.I. Bill loan to \$1,500.
- Including administration measures to tighten up the operation and management of the G.I. Bill program.

A more detailed analysis of the legislation should be available shortly.

cc:

Allen Moore
David Lissy