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Collection/Office of Origin: Speechwriting, White House Office of
Series: Speech File Draft Files
Subseries: Chron File, 1989-1993

OA/ID Number: 13498
Folder ID Number: 13498-007

Folder Title:
Disabled American Veterans Convention, Las Vegas (cancelled) 7/31/89 [1]

Stack:	Row:	Section:	Shelf:	Position:
G	25	6	4	4

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

JULY 27, 1989

INFORMATION

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

THROUGH: CHRISS WINSTON *cw*
FROM: MARK LANGE *ML*
SUBJECT: REMARKS FOR DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS CONVENTION

I. SUMMARY

Attached are remarks for the 68th National Convention of the Disabled American Veterans, at the Hilton Hotel in Las Vegas, Nevada -- 1:00 p.m., on Monday, July 31.

Roughly 3,500 disabled veterans will attend.

II. DISCUSSION

You will be introduced by Billy Kirby, a Texan and the DAV's National Commander. Also in attendance will be Secretary Derwinski, Senator Murkowski, Congressman Stump, and the DAV's National Adjutant Butch Joeckel.

Your remarks begin by outlining your defense strategy, given the activity in Congress.

You then turn to two themes: **First, conveying respect for disabled veterans** -- through protection of the flag, a seat in the Cabinet, civil rights protection, and health issues. **And second: the important voluntary contributions** disabled veterans can make in service to America.

The couplet of poetry on page four comes from David Bains' "War Poet."

(Lange/Wallace)
July 27, 1989
6:00 p.m.
[VETS.DOC]

PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS: DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS CONVENTION
 LAS VEGAS, NEVADA
 MONDAY, JULY 31, 1989
 1:00 P.M.

Thank you, Billy. National Adjutant Joeckel [JOKE-el],
Officers; Senator Murkowski, Congressman Stump, Secretary
Derwinski... and my brothers in arms:

I am proud to be with you today, at your 68th annual
convention. I understand I'm the first sitting President to meet
with this group. Well... I thought it was about time. [PAUSE]
Just sorry I couldn't get here sooner...

This is a gathering of extraordinary Americans. An assembly
of heroes. Together you represent over one million men and women
disabled in military service to our country.

In the name of freedom; for the sake of justice; to defend
democracy -- all of you have made the definitive commitment to
keep America first, free, strong, and proud. While you were
living up to that commitment, serving your country, many of you
will remember how in one brief, blinding instant, everything
changed. [PAUSE]

Maybe you remember the hands that reached for you. The
voices in darkness. The vessels that delivered you from the
horror of war.

All of you still bear those wounds -- and can bear them with
pride. Fighting to tear power from tyrants, struggling to secure

freedom around the world, the disabled veterans of America have paid the highest price the living can pay for freedom.

The moment you fell in service, you ascended in the hearts and minds of all Americans. Short of death itself, there can be no greater gift given to -- nor accepted by -- a grateful nation. No words are the equal of your actions.

[To preserve what you have won, the United States has a defense strategy centered on deterrence -- to maintain credible, capable military forces strong enough to prevent attack or coercion. Yet in the current Congressional debate on the Defense budget, some would tear down our ability to implement this strategy, by cutting weapons that we need, and adding weapons we don't need.

Those who attempt to change the critical elements of my defense program would dismantle our defense strategy, piece by piece. But they have no strategy with which to replace it. You who know sacrifice, deserve better. Our **nation** deserves better.

We have a closely-integrated strategic program, designed to enhance U.S. strength, bolster deterrence, and facilitate arms control. It demands that we modernize our ICBM force, redeploying the Peacekeeper in rail-garrison **now**, and completing the development to deploy the new Small ICBM. These mobile systems will bring improved survivability and stability to the land-based leg of our strategic triad.

A strong defense means sufficient funding for the Stealth Bomber. And it means support for the Strategic Defense

Initiative -- because SDI offers the promise of a **stable nuclear balance that relies increasingly on defense**. It will make any START treaty more effective. And it represents our best step toward stability -- the same goal we seek through offensive modernization and arms control. **That is the program the country needs -- and that is the program the Congress should ratify.]**

Fellow veterans: While America's debt to those wounded in wartime can never be repaid, it can and will be remembered. You should be able to take our gratitude for granted. But **what you deserve... is our respect.** [PAUSE]

That's why I'm here today: to talk about **respecting those wounded in service -- and encouraging them to find new strength, in service to America.**

First, respect. A nation that respects wounded veterans won't stand by as the flag that so many of them fought for -- and so many have died for -- is desecrated. Honest people can differ on the approach we take. But we all agree on principle: **It is wrong --simply, absolutely wrong -- to desecrate the American flag.**

Second, a nation that respects wounded vets makes sure they have a strong voice in the government that serves them. That's why I've been so pleased to welcome the Department of Veteran's Affairs to a place in the Cabinet. [PAUSE] And when I see my close friend and former Congressional colleague, Ed Derwinski, sitting at the table in Cabinet meetings, **I know we did something right for America's veterans.**

Third, a nation that respects wounded vets works to guarantee them a fair shot in the marketplace. So we're working on a significant new expansion in civil rights laws, with legislation to extend those protections to all Americans with disabilities.

Fourth, all veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange herbicide in Southeast Asia deserve and should expect a sound national policy in handling benefit claims. Ed Derwinski is devising new guidelines which will give a full and fair hearing to those veterans who may have suffered from exposure to Agent Orange in service to America.

And finally, a nation that respects wounded vets must do all it can to **make sure that they get quality health care.** [PAUSE] You know that improvements are needed -- and in spite of budget constraints, I'm committed to see that they're made.

This month Secretary Derwinski sent to Congress our proposal to create a national commission that will review VA medical facilities across the country. We want to improve the system to include specialized centers of excellence, ambulatory care, community-based care, and home health care options.

We also want to broaden access to services and control costs, by encouraging the VA and the Department of Defense to share facilities -- providing **better** services through better cooperation. **You've given your best -- the least we can do is provide you with the very best health care.**

So much has been expected of you -- in war, and in peace. So this may strike you as a paradox -- but today this President is asking you to do more. To give even more of yourselves, your time, your talents -- to others.

You may find, as many here have, that the more you give, the more you **have** to give. There may be no greater feeling in the world, than to have someone depending on you -- and to live up to their expectations.

About a year ago, at another convention, I referred to the Disabled American Veterans as part of "a brilliant diversity spread like stars, like a thousand points of light in a broad and peaceful sky."

You are such people -- part of a constellation of concerned citizens, committed to building a better America. In war, you have seen the worst. In peace, you're among the best.

Your country needs you once again.

Each of you has come to terms with war and its costs -- fighting private battles that those you fought for, and defended, can only dimly understand. A poet I admire, who did understand, wrote:

It may be that our later selves, or else our unborn sons,
Will search for meaning in the dust of long-deserted guns.

For many of you, that search for meaning has led you to the faces of young people threatened by drugs and alcohol. To a basketball court, or a little league team, that needs a coach.

To the small business that needs your skills. Or the local school that needs a teacher.

Maybe you know Allen Clark, our nominee as Assistant Secretary for Veterans Liaison and Program Coordination. He lost both legs to mortar fire at the age of 24. Over 15 months and 12 operations, he says he had plenty of time to think. "I wondered how I would be able to support myself," he says. "What I would be doing. Whether I would be able to pick up and hold children in my arms. How I could bring my life together again."

But he didn't stop there. He's inspired people across the country, saying "We can do anything that we decide we can do. We can train or retrain ourselves. We can redirect our lives. I thank the Lord for the opportunity to live a second life. One of my friends once told me you have never lived until you've almost died. **For those who fight for it, life has a flavor the protected will never know.**"

Just ask Ron Castille, who at 23 was already wounded and lying on the floor of a helicopter, when another machine gun slug ripped through the floor and hit him. Today he's district attorney for the city of Philadelphia -- serving the Youth Aid Council, the Urban Coalition, and founding an anti-drug program for kids. Ask him if his job is frustrating, and he'll tell you, "No, golf is really frustrating."

This year's Outstanding Disabled Veteran, Tommy Clack, has travelled to all 50 states as a speaker and lecturer. He's held posts in the Georgia Department of Veterans Services, the

Jaycees, the Red Cross, the Atlanta VA Medical Center, and organized a program that has helped over 400 veterans secure \$84 million in Small Business Administration loans since '83.

He hunts deer and ducks each fall from his wheelchair. They say he "always gets his deer." Lucky man.

I single out the few, because they represent the many. They, like every one of you, represent America's highest, most enduring ideals. They're the ideals of duty. Honor. Sacrifice. But above all, redemption. Because **once you're given a second chance, you never look back.**

We have within our reach -- and many of you have found -- a way to heal the wounds within. You have turned your gaze outward, and focused the brilliance of your will to live on those who most need it -- and in doing so, you have strengthened yourselves.

Your volunteer and auxiliary programs provide over two million hours of absolutely vital help each year in VA Medical Centers. And volunteers behind the wheel of vans in the DAV Transportation Program will travel over seven million miles this year, getting vets to facilities for medical treatment.

These are outstanding examples of private efforts meeting crucial needs. I'd like to commend all of you involved -- along with your director of voluntary services, Bruce Nitsche [NITS-shee]. [PAUSE]

Let me encourage you to apply your talents, your strength, your insight, your sensitivity, your compassion -- the depth and

brilliance of your gifts -- to bring new and hopeful light to every corner of America, whether in inner cities or mountain hollows.

Let this now be a war waged against drugs, alcohol abuse, child abuse, violence against women, illiteracy, pollution -- against all lost hopes and broken dreams. In this battle, your best weapon will be hope.

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Through thousands of acts of quiet valor, you are turning what lesser men and women might have seen as tragedy, to triumph.

For that -- and for your devotion and service to America -- I thank you. God bless you. And God bless the United States of America.

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1003 JUL 27 PM 7:30
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MS

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*Brux
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2

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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

July 26, 1989

MEMORANDUM FOR CHRISS WINSTON

FROM: ROGER B. PORTER *RBP*

SUBJECT: Presidential Remarks: Disabled American Veterans
Convention

The draft remarks effectively challenge assumptions about the disabled, in particular the notion that they are totally dependent on the able to help them. The call for the disabled to become more involved in volunteer activity makes this point quite well.

The paragraph on page 3 relating to disability legislation should be modified by substituting "work place" for "marketplace" and "We want legislation that fosters cooperation, not litigation" for "It's time to trade litigation for cooperation."

In the following paragraph, the current text would suggest that improvements to quality are needed. Veterans are more likely to see the need for improvement as quantitative rather than qualitative, and thus the text should be modified to read: "You know that more resources will be needed."

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

cc: James W. Cicconi

89 JUL 28 P 3: 55

WHITE HOUSE STAFFING MEMORANDUM

DATE: 7/26/89 ACTION/CONCURRENCE/COMMENT DUE BY: 7/26/89 3:00 PM

SUBJECT: PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS: DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS CONVENTION

	ACTION FYI			ACTION FYI	
VICE PRESIDENT	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MCCLURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
SUNUNU	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NEWMAN	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
SCOWCROFT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	PORTER	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
DARMAN	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	STUDDERT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
BATES	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	UNTERMAYER	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
BREEDEN	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	ROGERS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
CARD	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	WINSTON	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
CICCONI	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	PINKERTON	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
DEMAREST	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	PETERSMEYER	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
FITZWATER	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	WHMO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
GRAY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
HAGIN	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

REMARKS: Please forward any comments directly to Chriss Winston, Rm. 122, x2930, no later than 3:00 PM TODAY, Wednesday, July 26, 1989, with a copy to my office. Thank you.

RESPONSE:

James W. Cicconi
Assistant to the President
and Deputy to the Chief of Staff
Ext. 2702

(Lange/Wallace)
July 26, 1989
9:00 a.m.
[VETS.DOC]

1989 JUL 26 11 00

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And while you were living up to that commitment, serving
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The moment you fell in service, you ascended in the hearts and minds of all Americans. Short of death itself, there can be no greater gift given to -- nor accepted by -- a grateful nation. No words are the equal of your actions.

And while such a debt can never be repaid, it can and will be remembered. You should be able to take our gratitude for granted. But **what you deserve... is our respect.** [pause]

And that's what I want to talk to you about today: **respecting those wounded in service -- and encouraging them to find new strength, in service to America.**

First, respect. A nation that respects wounded veterans won't stand by as the flag that so many of them fought for -- and so many have died for -- is desecrated. Honest people can differ on the approach we take. But we all agree on principle: It is wrong -- **simply, absolutely wrong** -- to desecrate the American flag. It stands for too much. Too many have died for it.

Second, a nation that respects wounded veterans makes sure that they have a strong voice in the government that serves them. That's why I've been so pleased to welcome the Department of Veteran's Affairs to a place in the Cabinet. [pause] And when I see my close friend and former Congressional colleague, Ed

Derwinski, sitting at the table in Cabinet meetings, I know we did something right for America's veterans.

Third, a nation that respects wounded veterans works to guarantee them a fair shot in the marketplace. So we're supporting a significant new expansion in civil rights laws, with legislation to extend those protections to all Americans with disabilities. It's time to trade litigation for cooperation.

And fourth, a nation that respects wounded veterans must do all it can to make sure that they get quality health care.

[pause] You know that improvements are needed -- and in spite of budget constraints, I'm committed to see that they're made.

This month Secretary Derwinski sent to Congress our proposal to create a national commission, that will review VA medical facilities across the country. We want to improve the system to include specialized centers of excellence, ambulatory care, community-based care, and home health care options.

We also want to broaden services and control costs, by encouraging the VA and the Department of Defense to share facilities -- providing better services through better cooperation. You've given your best -- the least we can do is provide you with the very best health care.

My friends, so much has been expected of you -- in war, and in peace. So this may strike you as a paradox -- but today this President is asking you to do more. To give even more of yourselves, your time, your talents -- to others.

You may find, as many here have, that the more you give, the more you **have** to give. There may be no greater feeling in the world, than to have someone depending on you -- and to live up to their expectations.

About a year ago, at another convention, I referred to the Disabled American Veterans as part of "a brilliant diversity spread like stars, like a thousand points of light in a broad and peaceful sky."

You are such people -- part of a constellation of concerned citizens, committed to building a better America. In war, you have seen the worst. In peace, you're among the best.

Your country needs you once again.

Each of you has come to terms with war and its costs -- fighting private battles that those you fought for, and defended, can only dimly understand. A poet I admire, who did understand, wrote:

It may be that our later selves, or else our unborn sons,
Will search for meaning in the dust of long-deserted guns.

For many of you, that search for meaning has led you to the faces of young people threatened by drugs and alcohol. To a basketball court, or a little league team, that needs a coach. To the small business that needs your skills. Or the local school that needs a teacher.

Maybe you know Allen Clark, who lost both legs to mortar fire at the age of 24. Over 15 months and 12 operations, he says he had plenty of time to think. "I wondered how I would be able to support myself," he says. "What I would be doing. Whether I would be able to pick up children in my arms. How I could bring my life together again."

But he didn't stop there. He's inspired people across the country, saying "We can do anything that we decide we can do. We can train or retrain ourselves. We can redirect our lives. I thank the Lord for the opportunity to live a second life. One of my friends once told me you have never lived until you've almost died. For those who fight for it, life has a flavor the protected will never know."

Just ask Ron Castille, who at 23 was already wounded and lying on the floor of a helicopter, when another machine gun slug ripped through the floor and hit him. Today he's district attorney for the city of Philadelphia -- serving the Youth Aid Council, the Urban Coalition, and founding an anti-drug program for kids. Ask him if his job is frustrating, and he'll tell you, "No, golf is really frustrating."

This year's Outstanding Disabled Veteran, Tommy Clack, has travelled to all 50 states as a speaker and lecturer. He's held posts in the Georgia Department of Veterans Services, the Jaycees, the Red Cross, the Atlanta VA Medical Center, and organized a program that has helped over 400 veterans secure \$84 million in Small Business Administration loans since '83.

He hunts deer and ducks each fall from his wheelchair. They say he "always gets his deer." Lucky man.

I single out the few, because they represent the many. They, like every one of you, represent America's highest, most enduring ideals. They're the ideals of duty. Honor. Sacrifice. But above all, redemption. Because **once you're given a second chance, you never look back.**

We have within our reach -- and many of you have found -- a way to heal the wounds within. You have turned your gaze outward, and focused the brilliance of your will to live on those who most need it -- and in doing so, you have found yourselves strengthened.

Your volunteer and auxiliary programs provide over two million hours of absolutely vital help each year in VA Medical Centers. That makes sure that deserving veterans aren't turned away, and wards aren't closed.

And volunteers behind the wheel of vans in the DAV Transportation Program will travel over seven million miles this year, getting vets to facilities for medical treatment. These are outstanding examples of private initiatives meeting crucial needs. I'd like to commend all of you involved -- along with your director of voluntary services, Bruce Nitsche. [pron.]

Gathered here today, you represent a million Americans -- men and women we call "disabled," but who rightly ought to be known as the handi-capable.

Let me encourage you to apply your talents, your strength, your insight, your sensitivity, your compassion -- the depth and brilliance of your gifts -- to bring new and hopeful light to every corner of America, whether in inner cities or mountain hollows.

Let this now be a war waged against drugs, alcohol abuse, child abuse, violence against women, illiteracy, pollution -- against all lost hopes and broken dreams. In this battle, your best weapon will be hope.

I know you already have the courage and will to persevere. You've shed blood for America. And as long as your hearts beat within you, you can do good for America.

Together, we can prove that true patriotism can never be patronized, nor compromised. Together, we can show the world that everywhere there is a need in America, we have the strength to meet it.

Through thousands of acts of quiet valor, you are turning what lesser men and women might have let be tragedy, to triumph.

For that I thank you. God bless you.

And God bless the United States of America.

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REMARKS: DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS CONVENTION
LAS VEGAS, NEVADA
MONDAY, JULY 31, 1989
1:00 P.M.

THANK YOU, BILLY. NATIONAL ADJUTANT JOECKEL
[JOKE-EL], OFFICERS; SENATOR MURKOWSKI, CONGRESSMAN
STUMP, SECRETARY DERWINSKI... AND MY BROTHERS IN ARMS:

I AM PROUD TO BE WITH YOU TODAY, AT YOUR 68TH
ANNUAL CONVENTION. I UNDERSTAND I'M THE FIRST SITTING
PRESIDENT TO MEET WITH THIS GROUP. WELL... I THOUGHT
IT WAS ABOUT TIME. [PAUSE] THIS IS A GATHERING OF
EXTRAORDINARY AMERICANS. AN ASSEMBLY OF HEROES.
TOGETHER YOU REPRESENT OVER ONE MILLION MEN AND WOMEN
DISABLED IN MILITARY SERVICE TO OUR COUNTRY.

IN THE NAME OF FREEDOM; FOR THE SAKE OF JUSTICE;
TO DEFEND DEMOCRACY -- ALL OF YOU HAVE MADE THE
DEFINITIVE COMMITMENT TO KEEP AMERICA FIRST, FREE,
STRONG, AND PROUD. WHILE YOU WERE LIVING UP TO THAT
COMMITMENT, SERVING YOUR COUNTRY, MANY OF YOU WILL
REMEMBER HOW IN ONE BRIEF, BLINDING INSTANT, EVERYTHING
CHANGED. [PAUSE]

MAYBE YOU REMEMBER THE HANDS THAT REACHED FOR YOU.
THE VOICES IN DARKNESS. THE VESSELS THAT DELIVERED YOU
FROM THE HORROR OF WAR.

ALL OF YOU STILL BEAR THOSE WOUNDS -- AND CAN BEAR
THEM WITH PRIDE. FIGHTING TO TEAR POWER FROM TYRANTS,
STRUGGLING TO SECURE FREEDOM AROUND THE WORLD, THE
DISABLED VETERANS OF AMERICA HAVE PAID THE HIGHEST
PRICE THE LIVING CAN PAY FOR FREEDOM.

TO PRESERVE WHAT YOU HAVE WON -- TO HONOR WHAT YOU
HAVE DONE -- THE UNITED STATES MUST KEEP THE PEACE. TO
DO THAT WE HAVE A DEFENSE STRATEGY CENTERED ON
DETERRENCE -- TO MAINTAIN CREDIBLE, CAPABLE MILITARY
FORCES STRONG ENOUGH TO PREVENT ATTACK OR COERCION.
YET ACTION TO DATE IN THE CONGRESS ON THE DEFENSE
BUDGET, HAS BEEN INFLUENCED BY THOSE WHO WOULD BLOCK
OUR ABILITY TO IMPLEMENT THIS STRATEGY. THEY HAVE CUT
WEAPONS WE NEED, AND ADDED WEAPONS WE DON'T NEED.

THOSE WHO ATTEMPT TO CHANGE THE CRITICAL ELEMENTS OF OUR DEFENSE PROGRAM WOULD IN EFFECT, DISMANTLE OUR DEFENSE STRATEGY, PIECE BY PIECE. BUT THEY HAVE NO STRATEGY WITH WHICH TO REPLACE IT. YOU WHO KNOW SACRIFICE, DESERVE BETTER. OUR NATION DESERVES BETTER.

WE HAVE A CLOSELY-INTEGRATED STRATEGIC PROGRAM, DESIGNED TO ENHANCE U.S. STRENGTH, BOLSTER DETERRENCE, AND FACILITATE ARMS CONTROL. IT DEMANDS THAT WE MODERNIZE OUR ICBM FORCE, REDEPLOYING THE PEACEKEEPER IN RAIL-GARRISON NOW, AND COMPLETING THE DEVELOPMENT TO DEPLOY THE NEW SMALL ICBM. THESE MOBILE SYSTEMS WILL BRING IMPROVED SURVIVABILITY AND STABILITY TO THE LAND-BASED LEG OF OUR STRATEGIC TRIAD.

A STRONG DEFENSE MEANS SUFFICIENT FUNDING FOR THE STEALTH BOMBER. AND IT MEANS SUPPORT FOR THE STRATEGIC DEFENSE INITIATIVE -- BECAUSE SDI OFFERS THE PROMISE OF A STABLE NUCLEAR BALANCE THAT RELIES INCREASINGLY ON DEFENSE. IT WILL MAKE ANY START TREATY MORE EFFECTIVE. AND IT REPRESENTS OUR BEST STEP TOWARD STABILITY -- THE SAME GOAL WE SEEK THROUGH OFFENSIVE MODERNIZATION AND ARMS CONTROL. THIS IS THE PROGRAM THE COUNTRY NEEDS -- AND I WILL WORK TO SEE THAT THIS IS THE PROGRAM THE CONGRESS RATIFIES.

FELLOW VETERANS: WHILE AMERICA'S DEBT TO THOSE WOUNDED IN WARTIME CAN NEVER BE REPAID, IT CAN AND WILL BE REMEMBERED. YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO TAKE OUR GRATITUDE FOR GRANTED. BUT WHAT YOU DESERVE... IS OUR RESPECT. [PAUSE]

THAT'S WHY I'M HERE TODAY: TO TALK ABOUT RESPECTING THOSE WOUNDED IN SERVICE -- AND ENCOURAGING THEM TO FIND NEW STRENGTH, IN SERVICE TO AMERICA.

FIRST, RESPECT. A NATION THAT RESPECTS WOUNDED VETERANS WON'T STAND BY AS THE FLAG THAT SO MANY OF THEM FOUGHT FOR -- AND SO MANY HAVE DIED FOR -- IS DESECRATED. HONEST PEOPLE CAN DIFFER ON THE APPROACH WE TAKE. BUT WE ALL AGREE ON PRINCIPLE: IT IS WRONG -- -SIMPLY, ABSOLUTELY WRONG -- TO DESECRATE THE AMERICAN FLAG. SINCE OUR SACRED CONSTITUTION NEEDS CLARIFICATION ON THIS POINT I HAVE PROPOSED A VERY SIMPLE AMENDMENT -- THAT WILL MAKE IT CLEAR -- OUR FLAG MUST NOT BE DESCRATED.

SECOND, A NATION THAT RESPECTS WOUNDED VETS MAKES SURE THEY HAVE A STRONG VOICE IN THE GOVERNMENT THAT SERVES THEM. THAT'S WHY I'VE BEEN SO PLEASED TO WELCOME THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERAN'S AFFAIRS TO A PLACE IN THE CABINET. [PAUSE] AND WHEN I SEE MY CLOSE FRIEND AND FORMER CONGRESSIONAL COLLEAGUE, ED DERWINSKI, SITTING AT THE TABLE IN CABINET MEETINGS, I KNOW WE DID SOMETHING RIGHT FOR AMERICA'S VETERANS.

THIRD, A NATION THAT RESPECTS WOUNDED VETS WORKS TO GUARANTEE THEM A FAIR SHOT IN THE MARKETPLACE. SO WE'RE WORKING ON A SIGNIFICANT NEW EXPANSION IN CIVIL RIGHTS LAWS, WITH LEGISLATION TO EXTEND THOSE PROTECTIONS TO ALL AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES.

FOURTH, ALL VETERANS WHO WERE EXPOSED TO AGENT ORANGE HERBICIDE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA DESERVE AND SHOULD EXPECT A SOUND NATIONAL POLICY IN HANDLING BENEFIT CLAIMS. ED DERWINSKI IS DEVISING NEW GUIDELINES WHICH WILL GIVE A FULL AND FAIR HEARING TO THOSE VETERANS WHO MAY HAVE SUFFERED FROM EXPOSURE TO AGENT ORANGE IN SERVICE TO AMERICA.

AND FINALLY, A NATION THAT RESPECTS WOUNDED VETS MUST DO ALL IT CAN TO MAKE SURE THAT THEY GET QUALITY HEALTH CARE. [PAUSE] YOU KNOW THAT IMPROVEMENTS ARE NEEDED -- AND IN SPITE OF BUDGET CONSTRAINTS, I'M COMMITTED TO SEE THAT THEY'RE MADE.

THIS MONTH SECRETARY DERWINSKI SENT TO CONGRESS OUR PROPOSAL TO CREATE A NATIONAL COMMISSION THAT WILL REVIEW VA MEDICAL FACILITIES ACROSS THE COUNTRY. WE WANT TO IMPROVE THE SYSTEM TO INCLUDE SPECIALIZED CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE, AMBULATORY CARE, COMMUNITY-BASED CARE, AND HOME HEALTH CARE OPTIONS.

WE ALSO WANT TO BROADEN ACCESS TO SERVICES AND CONTROL COSTS, BY ENCOURAGING THE VA AND THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE TO SHARE FACILITIES -- PROVIDING BETTER SERVICES THROUGH BETTER COOPERATION. YOU'VE GIVEN YOUR BEST -- THE LEAST WE CAN DO IS PROVIDE YOU WITH THE VERY BEST HEALTH CARE.

SO MUCH HAS BEEN EXPECTED OF YOU -- IN WAR, AND IN PEACE. SO THIS MAY STRIKE YOU AS A PARADOX -- BUT TODAY THIS PRESIDENT IS ASKING YOU TO DO MORE. TO GIVE EVEN MORE OF YOURSELVES, YOUR TIME, YOUR TALENTS -- TO OTHERS.

YOU MAY FIND, AS MANY HERE HAVE, THAT THE MORE YOU GIVE, THE MORE YOU HAVE TO GIVE. THERE MAY BE NO GREATER FEELING IN THE WORLD, THAN TO HAVE SOMEONE DEPENDING ON YOU -- AND TO LIVE UP TO THEIR EXPECTATIONS.

ABOUT A YEAR AGO, AT ANOTHER CONVENTION, I REFERRED TO THE DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS AS PART OF "A BRILLIANT DIVERSITY SPREAD LIKE STARS, LIKE A THOUSAND POINTS OF LIGHT IN A BROAD AND PEACEFUL SKY."

YOU ARE SUCH PEOPLE -- PART OF A CONSTELLATION OF CONCERNED CITIZENS, COMMITTED TO BUILDING A BETTER AMERICA. IN WAR, YOU HAVE SEEN THE WORST. IN PEACE, YOU'RE AMONG THE BEST.

YOUR COUNTRY NEEDS YOU ONCE AGAIN.

EACH OF YOU HAS COME TO TERMS WITH WAR AND ITS COSTS -- FIGHTING PRIVATE BATTLES THAT THOSE YOU FOUGHT FOR, AND DEFENDED, CAN ONLY DIMLY UNDERSTAND. A POET I ADMIRE, WHO DID UNDERSTAND, WROTE:

IT MAY BE THAT OUR LATER SELVES, OR ELSE OUR UNBORN SONS,

WILL SEARCH FOR MEANING IN THE DUST OF LONG-DESERTED GUNS.

FOR MANY OF YOU, THAT SEARCH FOR MEANING HAS LED YOU TO THE FACES OF YOUNG PEOPLE THREATENED BY DRUGS AND ALCOHOL. TO A BASKETBALL COURT, OR A LITTLE LEAGUE TEAM, THAT NEEDS A COACH. TO THE SMALL BUSINESS THAT NEEDS YOUR SKILLS. OR THE LOCAL SCHOOL THAT NEEDS A TEACHER.

MAYBE YOU KNOW ALLEN CLARK, OUR NOMINEE AS ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR VETERANS LIAISON AND PROGRAM COORDINATION. HE LOST BOTH LEGS TO MORTAR FIRE AT THE AGE OF 24. OVER 15 MONTHS AND 12 OPERATIONS, HE SAYS HE HAD PLENTY OF TIME TO THINK. "I WONDERED HOW I WOULD BE ABLE TO SUPPORT MYSELF," HE SAYS. "WHAT I WOULD BE DOING. WHETHER I WOULD BE ABLE TO PICK UP AND HOLD CHILDREN IN MY ARMS. HOW I COULD BRING MY LIFE TOGETHER AGAIN."

BUT HE DIDN'T STOP THERE. HE'S INSPIRED PEOPLE ACROSS THE COUNTRY, SAYING "WE CAN DO ANYTHING THAT WE DECIDE WE CAN DO. WE CAN TRAIN OR RETRAIN OURSELVES. WE CAN REDIRECT OUR LIVES. I THANK THE LORD FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO LIVE A SECOND LIFE. ONE OF MY FRIENDS ONCE TOLD ME YOU HAVE NEVER LIVED UNTIL YOU'VE ALMOST DIED. FOR THOSE WHO FIGHT FOR IT, LIFE HAS A FLAVOR THE PROTECTED WILL NEVER KNOW."

JUST ASK RON CASTILLE, WHO AT 23 WAS ALREADY WOUNDED AND LYING ON THE FLOOR OF A HELICOPTER, WHEN ANOTHER MACHINE GUN SLUG RIPPED THROUGH THE FLOOR AND HIT HIM. TODAY HE'S DISTRICT ATTORNEY FOR THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA -- SERVING THE YOUTH AID COUNCIL, THE URBAN COALITION, AND FOUNDING AN ANTI-DRUG PROGRAM FOR KIDS. ASK HIM IF HIS JOB IS FRUSTRATING, AND HE'LL TELL YOU, "NO, GOLF IS REALLY FRUSTRATING."

THIS YEAR'S OUTSTANDING DISABLED VETERAN, TOMMY CLACK, HAS TRAVELLED TO ALL 50 STATES AS A SPEAKER AND LECTURER. HE'S HELD POSTS IN THE GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS SERVICES, THE JAYCEES, THE RED CROSS, THE ATLANTA VA MEDICAL CENTER, AND ORGANIZED A PROGRAM THAT HAS HELPED OVER 400 VETERANS SECURE \$84 MILLION IN SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION LOANS SINCE '83. HE HUNTS DEER AND DUCKS EACH FALL FROM HIS WHEELCHAIR. THEY SAY HE "ALWAYS GETS HIS DEER." LUCKY MAN.

I SINGLE OUT THE FEW, BECAUSE THEY REPRESENT THE MANY. THEY, LIKE EVERY ONE OF YOU, REPRESENT AMERICA'S HIGHEST, MOST ENDURING IDEALS. THEY'RE THE IDEALS OF DUTY. HONOR. SACRIFICE. BUT ABOVE ALL, REDEMPTION. BECAUSE ONCE YOU'RE GIVEN A SECOND CHANCE, YOU NEVER LOOK BACK.

WE HAVE WITHIN OUR REACH -- AND MANY OF YOU HAVE FOUND -- A WAY TO HEAL THE WOUNDS WITHIN. YOU HAVE TURNED YOUR GAZE OUTWARD, AND FOCUSED THE BRILLIANCE OF YOUR WILL TO LIVE ON THOSE WHO MOST NEED IT -- AND IN DOING SO, YOU HAVE STRENGTHENED YOURSELVES.

YOUR VOLUNTEER AND AUXILIARY PROGRAMS PROVIDE OVER TWO MILLION HOURS OF ABSOLUTELY VITAL HELP EACH YEAR IN VA MEDICAL CENTERS. AND VOLUNTEERS BEHIND THE WHEEL OF VANS IN THE DAV TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM WILL TRAVEL OVER SEVEN MILLION MILES THIS YEAR, GETTING VETS TO FACILITIES FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT.

THESE ARE OUTSTANDING EXAMPLES OF PRIVATE EFFORTS MEETING CRUCIAL NEEDS. I'D LIKE TO COMMEND ALL OF YOU INVOLVED -- ALONG WITH YOUR DIRECTOR OF VOLUNTARY SERVICES, BRUCE NITSCHKE [NITS-SHEE]. [PAUSE]

LET ME ENCOURAGE YOU TO APPLY YOUR TALENTS, YOUR STRENGTH, YOUR INSIGHT, YOUR SENSITIVITY, YOUR COMPASSION -- THE DEPTH AND BRILLIANCE OF YOUR GIFTS -- TO BRING NEW AND HOPEFUL LIGHT TO EVERY CORNER OF AMERICA, WHETHER IN INNER CITIES OR MOUNTAIN HOLLOWES.

LET THIS NOW BE A WAR WAGED AGAINST DRUGS, ALCOHOL ABUSE, CHILD ABUSE, VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, ILLITERACY, POLLUTION -- AGAINST ALL LOST HOPES AND BROKEN DREAMS. IN THIS BATTLE, YOUR BEST WEAPON WILL BE HOPE.

I KNOW YOU ALREADY HAVE THE COURAGE AND WILL TO PERSEVERE. YOU'VE SHED BLOOD FOR AMERICA. AND AS LONG AS YOUR HEARTS BEAT WITHIN YOU, YOU CAN DO GOOD FOR AMERICA.

TOGETHER, WE CAN PROVE THAT TRUE PATRIOTISM CAN NEVER BE PATRONIZED, NOR COMPROMISED. TOGETHER, WE CAN PROVE THAT EVERYWHERE THERE IS A NEED IN AMERICA, WE HAVE THE STRENGTH TO MEET IT. TOGETHER, WE CAN SHOW THE WORLD THAT ANY DEFINITION OF A SUCCESSFUL LIFE MUST INCLUDE SERVING OTHERS -- IN TIMES OF PEACE, AS WELL AS TIMES OF WAR.

THROUGH THOUSANDS OF ACTS OF QUIET VALOR, YOU ARE TURNING WHAT LESSER MEN AND WOMEN MIGHT HAVE SEEN AS TRAGEDY, TO TRIUMPH.

FOR THAT -- AND FOR YOUR DEVOTION AND SERVICE TO AMERICA -- I THANK YOU. GOD BLESS YOU. AND GOD BLESS THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

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