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Congress of the United States
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STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE BOB DOLE, 1ST DISTRICT, KANSAS, BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMPENSATION AND PENSIONS OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS, SEPTEMBER 19, 1967

VETERANS' INCOME THREATENED

Mr. Chairman, I appreciate this opportunity to speak before the Committee on Veterans' Affairs in support of my bill, H. R. 3952, and other similar measures.

This legislation, if enacted, will increase by twenty percent the income limitations imposed upon persons qualifying for Veterans' pension benefits. Passage of this bill will compensate those 29,000 veterans whose overall income was reduced by the Social Security pension increases enacted in 1965.

The veteran who received an increase in his Social Security benefits in 1966, and at the same time learned that those few added dollars from one source caused him to lose a major portion of his income from another, can have little confidence in the sincerity of his government's professed desire to assist him.

Mr. Chairman, since the House has passed a 12 1/2% increase in Social Security benefits this year -- a measure pending in the Senate -- it appears that once again veterans will face a reduction in income from a government still professing that same desire to be of assistance. This reduction in income would occur at the end of the calendar year in which the Social Security increase became effective.

Committee's Concern Noted

Mr. Chairman, I am cognizant of the commitment that the House conferees have made and the acute awareness of your committee with respect to the problems of which I speak. I note with pleasure on page 19 of Report Number 554, the Conference Report on the Veteran's Pension and Readjustment Assistance Act of 1967, the following statement by the House conferees:

"The conferees wish to make clear that it is their intention to take the necessary action to assure that any increase in social security payments which might result from enactment of H. R. 12080 (which was reported by the House Committee on Ways and Means on August 7, 1967) will not result in a reduction of combined income from VA pension, dependency and indemnity compensation, and social security or in removal of any person from the VA pension or dependency and indemnity compensation rolls."

As the Committee is well aware, if the 12 1/2% increase in Social Security benefits becomes law, substantially more than 29,000 veterans, according to the

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best estimates, will suffer a reduction in income which they can ill afford. Many of these veterans, qualifying for both Social Security and Veteran's pension benefits, are veterans of World War I, and are totally dependent on these sources for their sustenance.

Bill Will Reflect Cost of Living Increase

By increasing the income limitation stipulations across the board by twenty percent, we allow the veteran to receive the increased Social Security benefits, which reflect -- at least partially -- the increase in the cost of living over the past few years, and at the same time receive the Veteran's benefits which the Congress intended for him when the present pension rates were established. There has not been an income limitation adjustment since 1960, and certainly we all know the spiraling cost of living must be taken into account when we consider those senior citizens on fixed incomes.

In dollars and cents, my bill will allow a veteran with no dependents to receive \$100 per month if his income is not in excess of \$720 -- instead of the present \$600 limitation. A veteran, presently receiving a pension of \$105 for himself and his wife, will be allowed to increase his outside earnings from \$1000 to \$1200 per year.

These very modest liberalizations in the law will materially benefit thousands of veterans whose Social Security income has been just within the limitation, but will exceed the limitation should the 12 1/2% increase in Social Security take effect. When the veteran receives his Social Security increase, he will find it, instead of being a blessing in these inflationary times, a barrier to full veteran's benefits which he so completely deserves.

Mr. Chairman, I hope the Committee will act favorably on this important bill. Thank you.