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Statement on bills to provide readjustment benefits to peacetime veterans

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The Subcommittee will come to order.

This morning, the Subcommittee on Veterans' Affairs opens a series of public hearings on proposals to extend to veterans of peacetime service in the Armed Forces readjustment benefits similar in character to those which veterans of wartime service received under the Veterans Readjustment Assistance Act of 1952, popularly known as the Korean G. I. Bill of Rights.

Serving with me as Members of this Subcommittee are Senator Lister Hill of Alabama, Senator John F. Kennedy of Massachusetts, Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona and Senator John Sherman Cooper of Kentucky.

Five major bills relating to this broad subject have been referred to this Subcommittee for appropriate consideration and action. These are:

S. 667, introduced by Senator Hubert H. Humphrey
S. 714, introduced by Senators Richard Neuberger, Smith of Maine, Morse, Humphrey, Magnuson, Mansfield and McNamara
S.1158, introduced by Senator Thomas H. Kuchel
S.1282, introduced by Senator Francis Case, and
S.1551, introduced by Senator Thomas Hennings.

These bills extend some or all of the provisions of the Veterans Readjustment Assistance Act of 1952 either for a specific period of time or until such time as existing laws authorizing compulsory military service cease to be effective. In addition to extending education and training allowances under the Korean G. I. Bill to veterans of peacetime service, S. 714, Senator Neuberger's bill,
would add a new part to Title II of the Act to provide payment of tuition and fees directly to educational institutions.

These bills raise a fundamental policy question which the Congress must decide. Never before in our history has the United States during peacetime had compulsory military service. In recognition of the nation's responsibility to our men and women who served in the Armed Forces during wartime, Congress has enacted a great variety of legislation for war veterans including, in our generation, the G. I. Bill of Rights for World War II and Korean veterans. The question confronting us today is whether or not some or all of the readjustment benefits granted to veterans who served in wartime should be made available to the millions of young Americans who, under the Selective Service Act, are required to serve in the Armed Forces during peacetime.

So far as the Chairman of this Subcommittee is concerned, he approaches the consideration of this question with an open mind and with the sincere hope that the testimony to be adduced in these hearings will be such as to permit him and the other Members of Congress to reach the right decision.

We intend to secure testimony from all the interested Departments of the Federal government, from the sponsors of the proposed legislation, from veterans and veterans' organizations, from educational associations, and from any others who may be able to give us enlightenment.

In addition to the five bills I have mentioned, the Subcommittee will also consider three proposals which would amend provisions of the existing law relative to education and training benefits or
allowances to veterans. These are:

S. 1129, introduced by Senator Young, to increase education and training allowances under the Korean G. I. Bill of Rights for those now receiving such allowances;

S. 166, introduced by Senator Eastland, to extend the period during which certain veterans may qualify for education and training benefits under either the World War II or Korean Bill of Rights; and

S. 1061, introduced by Senator McClellan and others, which would require certain private institutions and training establishments operating under the provisions of the Korean G. I. Bill of Rights to file non-Communist affidavits with the Veterans Administration.

At this time there will be placed in the record of these hearings/copies of the eight bills referred to and the reports thereon from the several departments and agencies of the federal government.

As its first witnesses, the Subcommittee has invited officials of the Veterans Administration to appear this morning to give the views of their agency on pending measures and to answer such questions as may arise in the discussions.

Before calling on them, may I add that we hope to hear tomorrow or at an early date from the Senators who have sponsored the various bills we are now considering.

Would the officials of the Veterans Administration now please proceed with their testimony.