MY GOOD FRIENDS OF SOUTH CAROLINA:

During the past week, I have had several conversations with officials in the Department of Defense and in the Department of the Army about the construction of a new hospital for Fort Jackson at Columbia.

I am happy to report that Deputy Secretary of Defense Reuben Robertson and Army Secretary Wilber Brucker have promised me to meet and consider the Fort Jackson Hospital very soon. An appropriation of $5,000,000 was made last year for the hospital. The delay is caused by the fact that the Department of Defense wants to build a 500-bed hospital instead of a 250-bed hospital as provided for by last year's appropriation.

I am urging that Secretary Brucker and Deputy Secretary Robertson approve a plan to go ahead with engineering and designing of a 500-bed hospital and then seek a larger appropriation to build it. It is estimated that $11,000,000 would be necessary for the 500-bed hospital.

Even 500 beds would not be enough permanently, but the hospital could be constructed so as to make it possible to expand it to 1,000 beds. I shall continue to exert every possible effort to make this permanent hospital at Fort Jackson a reality.

This week I joined Senator Potter of Michigan as co-sponsor of a resolution to establish a new Senate Committee
on Veterans Affairs. At the present time, all proposed legislation relating to veterans affairs/is handled by the Senate Labor and Public Welfare Committee.

My view is that veterans affairs are too important/not to be considered by a committee dealing entirely with that subject.

The committee which Senator Potter and I are proposing/would handle such matters as veterans measures generally, pensions of all wars of the United States, life insurance issued by the Government on account of service in the Armed Forces, compensation of veterans, vocational rehabilitation and education of veterans, hospitals, medical care and treatment of veterans, civil relief of soldiers and sailors, and the readjustment of servicemen to civil life.

I hope the Senate will approve the establishment of this new committee/because I believe it would make possible the improved handling of matters which are of great importance/to the men and women who have served our country in the Armed Forces.

Last year I was co-sponsor with Senator Long of Louisiana on a bill/which would permit veterans to reinstate national service life insurance policies which have lapsed. The bill was not passed. Only a weaker version was tacked onto another bill.

However, I am joining Senator Long again this year in sponsoring the bill again/and it will be introduced soon. Perhaps we will have more success this time in making it
possible for veterans to reinstate their insurance which has lapsed.

There are two matters of great importance to the people of South Carolina which I want to mention briefly, before closing this broadcast.

I have requested the chairman of the Senate Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce to start an investigation of why major oil companies have recently increased the price of gasoline by one cent per gallon. There is some discussion as to whether the investigation should be made by this committee, of which I am a member, or by the Senate Judiciary Committee.

My concern is not who makes the investigation. I want to find out why the price of gasoline was increased. I am hopeful that early action will be taken on this matter.

The other matter is that the Farmers Home Administration is sending a representative to South Carolina to survey the need for drought, disaster, emergency loans to farmers. My good friends on the farms will know that our State has already been turned down once. However, I was able to persuade the FHA to make a new survey of the situation. All of you farmers who need help should immediately make applications with your local FHA offices. This will let the FHA know how great the need is.

This is Strom Thurmond in Washington. Thanks for listening and I'll be back again next week through the courtesy of the radio station from which this program is being broadcast.