STATEMENT OF SENATOR STROM THURMOND ON AUGUST 14, 1958, ON S. 4213, TO PROVIDE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION TRAINING FOR DISABLED PEACETIME VETERANS

PURPOSE OF BILL

Mr. President, the purpose of this bill is to restore the employ-ability of disabled Peacetime veterans, i.e., persons who enter the military service subsequent to January 31, 1955. This is accomplished by amending Public Law 894, 81st Congress, as amended, so as to provide a program of vocational rehabilitation for these veterans.

To obtain benefits under the bill, a peacetime veteran must be in need of vocational rehabilitation training to overcome the handicap of a physical or mental disability incurred in or aggravated by active military service. The Administrator of Veterans' Affairs would determine whether the disabled veteran does have need of such training and would also prescribe, consistent with the degree of disability, the kind of training necessary to prepare the veteran for employment.

The bill also affects in a minor way the program of vocational rehabilitation already provided for Korean veterans. Presently, all Korean veterans do not have the same length of time within which to complete a program of vocational rehabilitation. This problem is corrected by language in the bill which provides a uniform completion period measured from the veteran's date of discharge or release from service.

BACKGROUND OF BILL

Mr. President, the program provided for disabled Peacetime veterans is patterned after similar programs hitherto provided by the Congress for disabled veterans of World War II and of the Korean Conflict. The Labor Committee carefully studied the existing rehabilitation programs and found them to be most worthwhile, both from the standpoint of the Nation and of the individual veteran. Physical handicaps which were once regarded as
insurmountable/have been overcome by the Nation's disabled veterans who have trained under the programs. Moreover, since rehabilitation work has progressed rapidly during the 16-year history of the programs, even greater benefits can be expected from the rehabilitation program established by this bill.

NEED FOR PROGRAM

Mr. President, clearly there is a need for a vocational rehabilitation training program for disabled peacetime veterans. Never before in this Nation's history has there been a compulsory draft law during peacetime. Yet, today, by virtue of the Universal Military Training and Service Act, individuals must serve in the Armed Forces throughout troubled parts of the world, thereby subjecting themselves to mental and physical hazards which are peculiar to military service and which do not exist in normal civilian employment. The actual occurrence of service-connected disabilities will, of course, be far less during periods of peace, as compared to periods of war or armed conflict. Nonetheless, in the view of the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, when a peacetime veteran does sustain a service-connected disability which causes a serious employment handicap, he is entitled to be restored as nearly as possible to the employability status he might have attained/had the handicap not occurred. The Committee, therefore, recommends that rehabilitation training now be recognized as a proper obligation of the Government to veterans who enter the Armed Forces subsequent to January 31, 1955, and who have need of such training to overcome the handicap of a physical or mental disability incurred in or aggravated by active military service.
NUMBER OF PERSONS AFFECTED

Mr. President, through June 30, 1958, there have been approximately 16,500 peacetime veterans declared by the Veterans' Administration to have service-connected disabilities. By the end of fiscal year 1963, the Veterans' Administration estimates there will be an additional 71,500 disabled peacetime veterans.

Mr. President, the bill S. 4213 has been endorsed by the majority of the principal veterans organizations and has also received favorable recommendations from both the Veterans Administration and the Bureau of the Budget.

Mr. President, I move that the bill, S. 4213, as amended, be adopted by the Senate.