

April 12, 1979

Wagner, and Mr. President of the Senate, Speaker Marvel, and members of the Nebraska Unicameral, it's an honor for me to have this opportunity to address you on issues of importance to veterans in the state of Nebraska. I'm also pleased that I will be able to discuss these issues with Governor Thone and Lt. Gov. Luedtke later this morning. I have spoken with DAV leaders in Nebraska about veterans legislation that was developed and passed by this body over the years and I'm going to say that you have shown a great deal of insight and sensitivity in dealing with the needs of the veterans in your state. You've shown great foresight in establishing a statewide veterans home system, which has become a model studied by other states. The continued expansion of the Nebraska veterans home system demonstrates your keen awareness of the growing needs of veterans in your state. In addition, I would like to commend this body on the establishment 57 years ago of the Nebraska Veterans Aid Fund. Your continued support of this vital program has assured many veterans of badly needed assistance that might not otherwise have been available. DAV leaders in Nebraska have told me of your excellent cooperation on several other issues of major concern to disabled veterans, and I was very pleased to hear that Nebraska has a strong Veterans Council to which the members of this body have given close attention, as attested to by the cooperation by the presence of various other veterans organizations that are present here today, other than the Disabled American Veterans. All of this I believe adds up to a record of achievement in veterans affairs that should be the envy of other states. At this point I'd like to bring up one issue of concern to the Disabled Veterans of this state and to veterans nationwide. The extensive medical programs of the Veterans Administration have come under intensive attack. Cutbacks in medical staffing and other critical areas of patient care are being carried out on a massive scale during the current fiscal year, and the Carter administration is planning further crippling cutbacks for the fiscal year 1980. Sick and disabled veterans are being turned away from the doors of our VA hospitals and clinics. The DAV has alerted Governor Thone to the impact that these cutbacks are having in many states across our country. Many eligible veterans who are denied care from the VA have no other source of treatment. Those who are eligible for care under other federal, state and local programs are beginning to place an additional burden or an added burden on non-VA medical facilities and programs. Often this is a burden that sources of treatment are not prepared to meet. In addition, treatment in non-VA facilities is substantially