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Rehabilitation: VA BUDGET

Dollar-wise, the President's budget message sent to the Congress, Jan. 19, presents a slightly improved situation for the Veterans Administration. While the President proposed that the federal spending for the year starting next July 1 would be reduced by $3.9 billion, such a reduction is not reflected in the proposed budget for VA.

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Comparatively speaking, the estimated budget for the current fiscal year (1959), including some supplementals still to be submitted to the Congress, provides $5,070,863,000 for 1959. The amount proposed (1960) is $5,029,485,000. This reduction of $41,378,000 is offset by the fact that the estimated workload in readjustment benefits will be reduced to the extent of $112 million. If the workload is greater than is presently estimated, then Congress will take care of the situation through a supplemental appropriation.

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The item by item figures show: General operating expenses reduced by $2,565,000 an account of the estimated reduction in the vocational rehabilitation and education workload.

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Medical administrative costs are reduced $3,802,000 by reason of a recommended reduction in medical research. There is good likelihood that this may be restored by the Congress. Only fear in this regard is that such a Congressional increase might be taken out of some other VA budget item, as has been done in the past.

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There is an $18,657,000 increase in the item for inpatient care. That means the patients cared for in VA hospitals. The budget calls for a slight increase (233) in the average daily patient load. The total for VA hospitals for 1960 is placed at 111,296.

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Officials say that the dollar increase in the inpatient item will permit an increase of 2,562 in the VA hospital staffs. This increase, if realized, will permit improvement of the quality of medical care in VA hospitals. This fund would be used to provide 727 employees for each 1,000 patients in neuropsychiatric care, 1,252 employees for each 1,000 patients in tuberculosis, and 1,333 employees for each 1,000 general medical and surgical patients. The ideal, or long time goal of VA is to have one employee for each patient in neuropsychiatric care, 1.5 employees for each tubercular patient, and 2 employees for each general medical and neurological patient. That goal never has been reached in VA.

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There are constantly increasing costs in VA hospital operations which may prevent increasing the staff to the extent recommended. These include costs such as the annual salary increases of employees. This one item may be as much as an average of $50 a year for all hospital employees.

As contrasted with fiscal 1959, the new budget message recommends an increase in funds for outpatient care. The increase in this item of the budget amounts to $1,533,000. This program provides outpatient care and home town care for service-disabled war veterans as its primary function.

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There is an increase of $54,500,000 in funds for compensation and pension. This is largely to pay for increases in in the number of pension cases.

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Readjustment benefits funds are cut by $112 million. This cut may be restored in supplemental appropriations if the workload shows a need for such action.

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There is an increase of $864,000 for the construction program in VA hospitals and domiciliaries. The Budget Bureau, it is said, would not include construction funds for the hospitals of Oakland, Calif., Cleveland, O., Wade Park, and Washington, D.C., hospitals which were authorized by Congress a decade ago. There is some hope that such construction funds will be approved for fiscal 1961 unless Congress raises the ante in the interim.

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Funds for veterans insurance and indemnities programs are increased by $1,900,000.

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This is the first budget wholly prepared under direction of Administrator of Veterans Affairs Sumner G. Whittier. In briefing sessions conducted with representatives of veterans organizations, the VA staff gave the impression of being highly pleased with the budget as it has gone from the White House to the 86th Congress. Reaction to the budget from members of Congress is not available at this time.

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In the years covering the period 1950-59, the President's messages have had a deadly sameness in language and purpose regardless of the politics of the man in the White House. It would appear that the Budget Bureau has assigned a new writer to do the veterans section of the budget message for fiscal 1960.

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It is somewhat startling, for example, to have the President say: "We must continue veterans' pensions and increase pension rates for those who are without other resources, particularly if they have families."

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This is not to say that such a proposal is offered without modifying qualifications. There seems to be a sincere desire on the part of the White House, the House Veterans Affairs Committee, and others, to provide an increase in the pension rates which have not been changed since 1954.

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Rehabilitation: VA BUDGET

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The new gimmick in the President's pension proposal is that "eligibility should be determined according to effective tests of need, both as to income and as to net worth, so that payments will no longer be made where the veteran or his family has adequate resources for basic necessities from other sources. Heretofore, eligibility has been determined by the income of the veteran, where other requirements are met.

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Another departure from past custom is that part of the message which says: "I have asked the Administrator of Veterans Affairs to present to the Congress legislation both to provide more equitable treatment of needy veterans and to modernize the veterans' pension program in the light of social developments and changes."

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It is not known when the administrator will have such legislative proposals ready to submit to the Congress. There is some indication that representatives of The American Legion would be given an opportunity to study such proposals.

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It is possible that such proposals would contain a grandfather clause which would protect those now on the rolls.

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While officials at VA have not discussed rates or many details that would be attached to the proposals, the situation is vastly different than that existing under previous administrators. During such administrations the philosophy was that the administrator served only to administer the programs authorized by the Congress. The American Legion has maintained that the Administrator of Veterans Affairs should be the spokesman for the nation's veterans' affairs in all matters affecting war veterans' benefits programs.

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On a quick appraisal of available publications it appeared the only lay fiscal authority commenting upon the Veterans Administration budget for 1960 was the Wall Street Journal. That publication for Jan. 20 carried a columns-long story based upon studies of VA pension plans made by the House Veterans Affairs Committee through the General Accounting Office. This story included the astounding statement implying that the administration favored a plan which would provide a pension which would guarantee that the annual income of the single veteran would be $2,000 and $2,500 for the veteran with dependents. This plan, according to the Journal, would call for increases of $100 and $300 million annually in VA pension payments for the first few years but eventually would bring savings in this budget item.

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About the only definite thing now known about veterans' pension legislation is that both the Administrator of Veterans Affairs and the chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee would like to make drastic changes in existing pension law so that the very needy would get more and the not so needy wouldn't get so much.

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The American Legion awaits information as to the exact terms in which such pension proposals will be submitted to Congress by one or both of these sources. Meanwhile, The Legion has its own proposals for pension liberalization drafted by the Chicago 1958 National Convention and the National Executive Committee. National Cmdr. Preston J. Moore will present the Legion's pension and hospital program proposals to the HVAC on March 3.

AMERICANISM

"Apathy is Public Enemy No. 1 of the free world today. Fly Freedom's Flag on Lincoln's Birthday and Washington's Birthday, and encourage your neighbors to do the same." -- James F. Daniel, Jr., chairman, Nat'l. Americanism Commission.

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Left wing and subversive groups, encouraged by wide-spread apathy concerning the activities of Communists, have initiated intensive campaigns to destroy the House Committee on Un-American Activities. A Washington newspaper recently published a one-half page ad viciously attacking the Committee and listing 35 sponsors. Affiliations of 18 were promptly inserted in the Congressional Record.

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Independent drives are being spearheaded by the American Civil Liberties Union and the subversive Emergency Civil Liberties Committee. The latter organization was the subject of a recent House Committee report entitled "Operation Abolition." These two groups and their affiliates are flooding the offices of Congressmen with demands for the abolition of the House Committee on Un-American Activities. Now is the time to write or wire your Congressmen and voice your disapproval of this attempt to nullify security.

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"Espionage has played a vital role in keeping the U.S.S.R. abreast of the United States in the scientific and technological field and in giving it the opportunity to outstrip us in some areas once it has acquired our basic secrets ... The facts (brought out in this report) make it crystal clear that Communist embassies, consulates, U.N. delegations, trade and other missions have been, and are presently, used as legal covers for international Communist spy rings." -- House Un-American Activities Committee, "Patterns of Communist Espionage," Jan. 1959.

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"49 Stars": -- Concurrent with the admission of Alaska to the Union, President Eisenhower, on Jan. 3, 1959, signed the Executive Order establishing the design for the new 49-star flag. The new flag will not become official until July 4, 1959, and should not be flown until then. 48-star flags may be continued in use even after July 4, 1959, until they are unserviceable.

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Nat'l. Emblem Sales advises that a few sizes in some qualities of the new flag should be available for sale before March 1; however, there will be some delay before all sizes and qualities can be stocked. As soon as a complete line is available, a bulletin will be sent to each post well in advance of July 4, 1959.

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The Emblem Division has come up with an attractive offer which is being introduced in the March issue of "The American Legion Magazine." They have learned that the first 49-star flags available will be 3 x 5 foot cotton flags. To promote the display of flags, they are offering "two for one." Buy any of the advertised 48-star flags to display on Memorial Day and Flag Day and to keep as a souvenir, and they will give you a new similar size 49-star flag to fly after July 4.

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1958 membership in the Sons of The American Legion reached 10,133 on Jan. 1, 1959, as membership exceeded ten thousand for the first time in twelve years. New Jersey led the nation with 1,702 members.

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LEGISLATION

On Jan. 12 Senator Wayne Morse (Ore.) introduced for himself and 23 other Senators a resolution (S. Res. 19) to establish a standing legislative committee on veterans' affairs in the Senate. Subsequently two additional Senators joined the sponsorship.

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For 35 years The American Legion has urged such a committee in the belief that the veterans' program is sufficiently important as to warrant the full-time consideration of a Senate committee. Speaking on the resolution -- which requires Senate approval only -- Senator Morse said: "There is nothing new or daring about this resolution, it was actually recommended to the Senate in 1946 by the LaFollette-Monroney Committee which made so many outstanding recommendations on the reorganization of Congress ... As we know, the House accepted and carried out that recommendation; the Senate did not ...."

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The Senator deplored the present practice of dividing legislation affecting veterans and their families among several Senate committees, all having many other legislative duties. He went on to say: "When so many House-passed veterns' bills die in the Senate without even reaching the floor, we simply are not doing our duty to those citizens who have served in the Nation's Armed Forces ... In offering this resolution I sincerely hope it will receive the early consideration of the Rules (Senate Rules) Committee."

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The co-sponsors of the resolution are: Senators Holland, Fla.; Talmadge, Ga.; Moss, Utah; Murray, Mont.; Chavez, N.M.; Langer, N.D.; Neuberger, Ore.; Young, N.D.; Humphrey, Minn.; Gruening, Alaska; Javits, N.Y.; Martin, Ia.; Kuchel, Calif.; Church, Ida.; Engle, Calif.; Byrd, W. Va.; Cannon, Nev.; Kefauver, Tenn.; McGee, Wyo.; Keating, N.Y.; Bartlett, Alaska; Randolph, W. Va.; Yarborough, Tex.; Jackson, Wash.; and Wiley, Wis.

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We urge members of The American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary everywhere to write to their Senators (except Senator Morse and the other Senators named above) requesting that they join with the sponsors of Senate Resolution 19 (S. Res. 19) which would provide a long needed Veterans Committee in the Senate.

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There are 241 members of the House and 61 Senators in the 86th Congress who are members of The American Legion; 31 state governors are Legionnaires.

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KUDOS: -- Salute to Jerome F. (Jerry) Duggan of St. Louis, Nat'l. Legislative Chrmn., and the entire Legislative Commission for Jan. 13-15 meeting in Washington, D.C. ... Sessions featured House Veterans Affairs Committee Chrmn. Olin E. "Tiger" Teague -- who promised priority action in 1959 for veterans' housing and hospitalization ... In a straight-from-the-shoulder talk, Congressman Teague admitted his committee wasn't the most sought after on the appointment list and its members came in for considerable heat ... "First things first," said Teague. "Until we get this hospital program where it should be, I'm against general pension of $100 per month to every veteran regardless of need." He charged that 20% of veterans on pension rolls don't need help. "Hundreds of thousands, on the other hand, he said "live on next to nothing." He wants a more equitable compensation program.

BUILD-UP FOR BIRTHDAY

National Commander Preston J. Moore will appear on a NBC-TV spectacular with Frances Langford on March 15 at 10:00-11:00 P.M. EST ... Check your local NBC outlet for further details ... "Frances Langford Presents" is the tentative title of this exciting color show featuring Bob Hope, Hugh O'Brian (Wyatt Earp), Julie London, George Sanders, Edgar Bergen and Charlie, Jerry Colonna, The Four Freshmen, David Rose and his orchestra -- plus a host of others. The TV show marks the return of Frances Langford to show business -- and will pay tribute to The American Legion's 40th birthday ... The popular star of "Purple Heart Diary" and other movies won the hearts of WW II G.I.'s on six fighting fronts; advance reports indicate this show will be one to remember ... It is a natural for birthday publicity locally ... Post publicity men are advised to check with local NBC-TV station for a suitable tie-in.

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Most post commanders have plans well set for The American Legion Birthday celebration March 15-17 ... Slogans such as "40 Years of Service", "Life Begins at Forty", "Forty Years of Service in Peace as in War" and many other appropriate lines can be worked in to a birthday theme ... Use them in local Legion news stories and review of post history.

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George Rulon, Membership Director, reminds us that proper recognition of those 40-year members at any birthday party should be very much in order ... Presentation of wallet-sized cards -- obtainable from Department Hdqtrs. -- and beautiful certificates suitable for framing -- from Nat'l. Emblem Sales -- will add much to the occasion ... Birthday mats for local papers are available through Nat'l. Hdqtrs. The Big Birthday is also a natural target for your membership goal of 1959. Wind up the drive by March 15.

NATIONAL SECURITY

Important: Many posts currently engaged in The American Legion Light Duty Rescue program have written the Nat'l. Security Division to request information on how to secure matching funds to pay for their Light Duty Rescue equip- Here's how you do it:

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1. Consult your local or county Civil Defense Director to procure requirements for establishing a Light Duty Rescue Team.

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2. Organize the membership of the Light Duty Rescue Team as per instructions of the local or county Civil Defense Director.

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3. Establish your equipment requirements from the list of Civil Defense Approved Equipment.

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4. Notify your local or county Civil Defense Director by letter that you have completed the requirements of paragraphs 2 and 3 and that you are placing an order for the equipment chosen (paragraph 3) with the supplier and that you will file for Federal Matching Funds upon receipt of the equipment.

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5. Immediately after receipt and payment of the equipment, present the paid invoice to the Civil Defense Director with whom you have been working. He will assist you in filing the proper forms to regain 50% of the total cost of the approved equipment received.

NOTE TO EDITORS: PERMISSION GRANTED TO USE OR REPRINT ALL NATIONAL NEWSLETTER ITEMS.

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NATIONAL NEWSLETTER

THE AMERICAN LEGION

CHILD WELFARE MONTH

Child welfare activities in The American Legion are carried on 365 days a year, but during April, posts and Auxiliary units are asked to conduct special activities to focus attention on the program ... The accent on April as Child Welfare Month provides an excellent public relations vehicle to publicize their interest in children and youth.

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Here's some suggestions: Sponsorship of a "Family Night" for new families in the community; a career night for high school students; visitations to children's institutions or hospitals in your area; a community project for or with youth; provide top speaker on such subjects as education, recreation, juvenile delinquency, facilities for retarded children, or health program.

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Plan April Child Welfare Month observance ... Following is not a blueprint, but comes from past experience of many posts:

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1. During February or early March, Post Commander should notify his Child Welfare Chairman that he would like a special April program.

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2. Post Child Welfare Chairman should call committee meeting as soon as possible or, if necessary, a special committee should be appointed to assist the chairman.

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3. Wherever possible the planning committee should include representation from the Auxiliary, 40/8 and 8/40. Coordinated effort will produce better results.

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4. The committee works out a plan appropriate for the community and to the ability of the post. Plan should then be presented to the commander and, if necessary, to the post for approval.

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5. In April the plan is put into operation.

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Don't overlook publicizing The American Legion's interest in children and youth. Contact local newspapers and furnish them a report of your post's or unit's child welfare accomplishments or details of your April project. Radio and TV time can usually be secured if stations are contacted well in advance.

DATES TO REMEMBER

February	
	Posts should plan early for 1959 Junior Baseball.
1-8	Religious Emphasis Week
7-13	Boy Scout Week
12	Lincoln's Birthday. * ABC Network delayed broadcast from Lincoln's Tomb, Springfield, Ill., 3:00 - 3:30 (EST), check local listings.
22	Washington's Birthday*
March	
3-6	Nat'l. Rehabilitation Commission meeting, Washington, D.C.
15-17	American Legion Birthday
29	Easter Sunday
30	Deadline for Certification of Dept. Oratorical Contest winners of Nat'l. Americanism Commission.
April	
	Posts should plan early for School Award presentations in June.
6-12	National Boys' Club Week -- visit local Boys' Clubs.
20	Nat'l. High School Oratorical Contest Finals, Lodi, Calif.
29-30	
May 1	Nat'l. Executive Committee meetings, Nat'l. Hdqtr., Indianapolis
August	
24-27	41st National Convention, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minn. "Plan Your Vacation to Include the Convention!"

* Flag Display.

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AMERICANISM *(Continued from page 2)*

The Nat'l. Americanism Commission of The American Legion has selected Baltimore, Md., Greenville, S.C., Bartlesville, Okla., and Salt Lake City, Utah, as the sites of the sectional tournaments of the 1959 Nat'l. High School Oratorical Contest next April. The national finals of the contest will be at Lodi, Calif., April 20.