spectrum of ongoing and planned initiatives, such as the Pre-Discharge Examinations, Personnel Information Exchange System (PIES), Electronic Burial Claims, Virtual VBA, Decision Review Officer (DRO) Program, and personal hearing teleconferencing, just to name a few. In addition, VBA has begun implementing the recent recommendations of the Secretary's Claims Processing Task Force focusing on improving the operating efficiency of the process and procedures by which claims are adjudicated. These involve special initiatives to better manage the claims and appeals. There will be an emphasis on better training for the newly hired adjudicators. Performance standards are being implemented that provide for personal and organization accountability. VBA is continuing the development of its information technology program.

While we support these much-needed changes, we are concerned that they only indirectly address the core problem of continued poor quality decision making. Without a vigorous, comprehensive quality assurance program, thousands of claims will continue to process needlessly through the regional offices, the Board of Veterans Appeals, and the courts wasting time, effort and taxpayers' money. Veterans have a right to a fair, proper, and timely decision. They should not have to endure financial hardship and delay before receiving the benefits to which they are entitled by law.

The workload and budgetary requirements of National Cemetery Administration (NCA) will continue to grow over the next 15–20 years. The death rate of World War II veterans will peak in 2008, but the annual death rate of veterans will not return to 1995 levels under 2020. The death rates of Korean and Vietnam Era veterans will greatly accelerate thereafter. The American Legion continues to fully support the further development of the State Cemetery Grants Program.

The Veterans Millennium Health Care and Benefits Act (Public Law 106–117) requires VA to provide long-term nursing care to veterans rated 70 percent disabled or greater. The new law also requires VA to provide long-term nursing care to all other veterans for service-connected disabilities and to those willing to make a co-payment to offset the cost of care. Further, it requires VA to provide veterans' greater access to alternative community-based long-term care programs. These long-term care provisions will place greater demand on VA and on the State Veterans Home Program for years to come.

The American Legion believes that it makes economic sense for VA to look to States governments to help fully implement the provisions of PL 106–117. VA spends on average $225 per day to care for each of their nursing care patients and pays private-sector contract facilities an average per diem of $149 per contract veteran. The national average daily cost of care for a State Veterans Home nursing care resident is about $140. VA reimburses State Veterans Homes a per diem of $40 per nursing care resident. Over the long term, VA saves millions of dollars through the State Veterans Home Program.

The American Legion supports the State Veterans Home Program and believes the federal government must provide sufficient construction funding to allow for the expected increase in long-term care veteran patients.

On September 11, 2001, I was about to present testimony before a Joint Session of the Veterans' Affairs Committees, when we were directed to evacuate the Cannon House Office Building. Like Americans around the world, I was shocked by the barbaric, terrorist actions taken against innocent airline passengers, those in the World Trade Towers, and those in the Pentagon. My heart swelled with pride as fearless rescue workers, fellow service members, and private citizens rushed to assist the victims, only to experience the heartache as the Twin Towers collapsed turning heroes into victims in a matter of seconds. At that specific moment, the importance of that testimony paled in comparison. The American Legion's efforts, like the rest of America, shifted to what we do best—helping at the community, state, and national level.

SUMMARY

Since I was unable to formally present my testimony, I did submit The American Legion's recommendations for the VA budget for FY 2003 for the record. Today, it is important that I share that information to this Committee:

Program	P.L. 106–377	P.L. 107–73	Legion's FY 2003 request
Medical Care	$20.2 billion	$21.3 billion	$23.1 billion.
Medical and Prosthetics Research	350 million	371 million	420 million.
Construction:			
Major	66 million	183 million	310 million.
Minor	170 million	211 million	219 million.
State Veterans' Home	100 million	100 million	110 million.
State Veterans' Cemeteries	25 million	25 million	30 million.
NCA	110 million	121 million	140 million.
General Administration	1 billion	1.2 billion	1.3 billion.

The American Legion believes that the true character of any democracy is best reflected in the way it treats its veterans of the armed forces—the true preservers and defenders of liberty.

Mr. Chairman, and Members of the Committee, that concludes my written statement.●

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Ms. Evans, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The nominations received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

PRESIDENTIAL MESSAGES

The following presidential messages were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, which were referred as indicated:

PM–69. A message from the President of the United States, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Economic Report of the President along with the Annual Report of the Council of Economic Advisers for 2002; to the Joint Economic Committee.

ECONOMIC REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT

To the Congress of the United States:

Since the summer of 2000, economic growth has been unacceptably slow. This past year the inherited trend of deteriorating growth was fed by the events, the most momentous of which was the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. The painful upshot has been the first recession in a decade. This is cause for compassion—and for action.

Our first priority was to help those Americans who were hurt most by the recession and the attacks on September 11. In the immediate aftermath of the attacks, my Administration sought to stabilize our air transportation system to keep Americans flying. Working with the Congress, we provided assistance and aid to the affected areas in New York and Virginia. We sought to provide a stronger safety net for displaced workers, and we will continue these efforts. Our economic recovery plan must be based on creating jobs in the private sector. My Administration has urged the Congress to accelerate tax relief for working Americans to speed economic growth and create jobs.

We are engaged in a war against terrorism that places new demands on our economy, and we must seek our every opportunity to build an economic foundation that will support this challenge. I am confident that Americans have proved they will rise to meet this challenge.

We must have an agenda not only for physical security, but also for economic security. Our strategy builds upon the charter of Americans: removing economic barriers to their success, combining our workers and their skills with new technologies, and creating an environment where entrepreneurs and businesses large and small can grow and create jobs. Our vision must extend beyond America, engaging other countries in the virtuous cycle of free trade, raising the potential for global growth, and securing the gains from worldwide markets in goods and capital. We must ensure that this effort builds economic bonds that encompass every American.

America faces a unique moment in history: our Nation is at war, our homeland was attacked, and our economy is in recession. In meeting these great challenges, we must draw strength from the enduring power of free markets and a free people. We

must also look forward and work toward a stronger economy that will buttress the United States against an uncertain world and lift the fortunes of others worldwide.

GEORGE W. BUSH.

THE WHITE HOUSE, *February 2002*.

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, which were referred as indicated:

EC–5292. A communication from the Secretary of State, transmitting, pursuant to Section 1006(b) of the USA PATRIOT Act, P.L. No. 107–56, a report relative to a worldwide watchlist of known or suspected money launderers, for the purpose of enforcing the new money-laundering inadmissibility; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC–5293. A communication from the Principal Deputy Associate Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Agency's Report on the Implementation and Enforcement of the Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) Control Policy; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

EC–5294. A communication from the Legislative and Regulatory Activities Division, Comptroller of the Currency, Administrator of National Banks, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''International Banking Activities: Capital Equivalency Deposits'' (12 CFR Part 28) received on January 28, 2002; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–5295. A communication from the Legislative and Regulatory Activities Division, Comptroller of the Currency, Administrator of National Banks, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Capital; Leverage and Risk-Based Capital Guidelines; Capital Adequacy Guidelines; Capital Maintenance: Nonfinancial Equity Investments'' (12 CFR Part 3); to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Mr. HOLLINGS (for himself and Mr. THURMOND):

S. 1910. A bill to suspend temporarily the duty on certain extruders, castings, TDO Tenders, Transport/winders, and slitters; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. INHOFE (for himself and Mr. CLELAND):

S. 1911. A bill to amend the Community Services Block Grant Act to reauthorize national and regional programs designed to provide instructional activities for low-income youth; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mr. SMITH of Oregon:

S. 1912. A bill to amend the Endangered Species Act of 1973 to require the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Commerce to give greater weights to scientific or commercial data that is empirical or has been field-tested or peer-reviewed, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

The following concurrent resolutions and Senate resolutions were read, and referred (or acted upon), as indicated:

By Mr. DEWINE (for himself, Mr. CHAFEE, Mr. DODD, Mr. KERRY, Mr. LOTT, Mr. DORGAN, Mr. HAGEL, Mr. DAYTON, Mr. SARBANES, and Mr. BINGAMAN):

S. Res. 204. A resolution expressing the sense of the Senate regarding the importance of United States foreign assistance programs as a diplomatic tool for fighting global terrorism and promoting United States security interests; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 358

At the request of Mr. FRIST, the name of the Senator from Virginia (Mr. WARNER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 358, a bill to amend the Social Security Act to establish a Medicare Prescription Drug and Supplemental Benefit Program and for other purposes.

S. 682

At the request of Mr. MCCAIN, the name of the Senator from Colorado (Mr. CAMPBELL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 682, a bill to amend title II of the Social Security Act to restore the link between the maximum amount of earnings by blind individuals permitted without demonstrating ability to engage in substantial gainful activity and the exempt amount permitted in determining excess earnings under the earnings test.

S. 686

At the request of Mrs. LINCOLN, the name of the Senator from Michigan (Mr. LEVIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 686, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide a credit against tax for energy efficient appliances.

S. 866

At the request of Mr. REID, the name of the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. CONRAD) was added as a cosponsor of S. 866, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to provide for a national media campaign to reduce and prevent underage drinking in the United States.

S. 1062

At the request of Mr. DURBIN, the name of the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. DORGAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1062, a bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to promote organ donation and facilitate interstate linkage and 24-hour access to State donor registries, and for other purposes.

S. 1209

At the request of Mr. BINGAMAN, the name of the Senator from Vermont (Mr. LEAHY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1209, a bill to amend the Trade Act of 1974 to consolidate and improve the trade adjustment assistance programs, to provide community-based economic development assistance for trade-affected communities, and for other purposes.

S. 1456

At the request of Mr. BENNETT, the names of the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. HUTCHINSON) and the Senator from Virginia (Mr. ALLEN) were added as cosponsors of S. 1456, a bill to facilitate the security of the critical infrastructure of the United States, to encourage the secure disclosure and protected exchange of critical infrastructure information, to enhance the analysis, prevention, and detection of attacks on critical infrastructure, to enhance the recovery from such attacks, and for other purposes.

S. 1478

At the request of Mr. SANTORUM, the names of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. WYDEN) and the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN) were added as cosponsors of S. 1478, a bill to amend the Animal Welfare Act to improve the treatment of certain animals, and for other purposes.

S. 1558

At the request of Mr. SANTORUM, the name of the Senator from Virginia (Mr. WARNER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1558, a bill to provide for the issuance of certificates to social security beneficiaries guaranteeing their right to receive social security benefits under title II of the Social Security Act in full with an accurate annual cost-of-living adjustment.

S. 1675

At the request of Mr. BROWNBACK, the name of the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. HAGEL) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1675, a bill to authorize the President to reduce or suspend duties on textiles and textile products made in Pakistan until December 31, 2004.

S. 1678

At the request of Mr. MCCAIN, the name of the Senator from Maryland (Mr. SARBANES) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1678, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide that a member of the uniformed services or the Foreign Service shall be treated as using a principal residence while away from home on qualified official extended duty in determining the exclusion of gain from the sale of such residence.

S. 1680

At the request of Mr. WELLSTONE, the names of the Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN), the Senator from Delaware (Mr. BIDEN), the Senator from Delaware (Mr. CARPER), the Senator from Nevada (Mr. REID), the Senator from New York (Mr. SCHUMER), the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. JOHNSON), the Senator from Missouri (Mr. BOND), and the Senator from New York (Mrs. CLINTON) were added as cosponsors of S. 1680, a bill to amend the Soldiers' and Sailors' Civil Relief Act of 1940 to provide that duty of the National Guard mobilized by a State in support of Operation Enduring Freedom or otherwise at the request of the President shall qualify as military service under that Act.