Public Law 96–385
96th Congress

An Act

Oct. 7, 1980

To amend title 38, United States Code, to provide cost-of-living increases in the rates of compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities and in the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for surviving spouses and children of veterans, to provide for limited grants for special home adaptations for certain severely disabled veterans, to provide for Veterans' Administration guaranties for loans to refinance certain existing veterans' home loans and to increase the maximum loan guaranties for home loans made to veterans, and to provide for the confidentiality of certain Veterans' Administration medical quality assurance records; and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That (a) this Act may be cited as the "Veterans' Disability Compensation and Housing Benefits Amendments of 1980".

(b) Except as otherwise expressly provided, whenever in this Act an amendment or repeal is expressed in terms of an amendment to, or repeal of, a section or other provision, the reference shall be considered to be made to a section or other provision of title 38, United States Code.

TITLE I—VETERANS' DISABILITY COMPENSATION BENEFITS

RATES OF DISABILITY COMPENSATION

SEC. 101. (a) Section 314 is amended—

(1) by striking out "$48" in subsection (a) and inserting in lieu thereof "$54";
(2) by striking out "$88" in subsection (b) and inserting in lieu thereof "$99";
(3) by striking out "$133" in subsection (c) and inserting in lieu thereof "$150";
(4) by striking out "$182" in subsection (d) and inserting in lieu thereof "$206";
(5) by striking out "$255" in subsection (e) and inserting in lieu thereof "$291";
(6) by striking out "$321" in subsection (f) and inserting in lieu thereof "$367";
(7) by striking out "$380" in subsection (g) and inserting in lieu thereof "$434";
(8) by striking out "$440" in subsection (h) and inserting in lieu thereof "$503";
(9) by striking out "$495" in subsection (i) and inserting in lieu thereof "$566";
(10) by striking out "$889" in subsection (j) and inserting in lieu thereof "$1,016";
(11) by striking out "$1,104" and "$1,547" in subsection (k) and inserting in lieu thereof "$1,262" and "$1,768", respectively;
(12) by striking out "$1,104" in subsection (l) and inserting in lieu thereof "$1,262";
(13) by striking out “$1,217” in subsection (m) and inserting in lieu thereof “$1,391”;
(14) by striking out “$1,383” in subsection (n) and inserting in lieu thereof “$1,581”;
(15) by striking out “$1,547” each place it appears in subsections (o) and (p) and inserting in lieu thereof “$1,768”;
(16) by striking out “$664” and “$989” in subsection (r) and inserting in lieu thereof “$759” and “$1,130”, respectively;
(17) by striking out “$995” in subsection (s) and inserting in lieu thereof “$1,137”; and
(18) by striking out “$192” in subsection (t) and inserting in lieu thereof “$219”.

(b) The Administrator of Veterans’ Affairs may adjust administratively, consistent with the increases authorized by this section, the rates of disability compensation payable to persons within the purview of section 10 of Public Law 85–857 who are not in receipt of compensation payable pursuant to chapter 11 of title 38, United States Code.

RATES OF ADDITIONAL COMPENSATION FOR DEPENDENTS

SEC. 102. Section 315(1) is amended—

(1) by striking out “$54” in clause (A) and inserting in lieu thereof “$62”;
(2) by striking out “$91” in clause (B) and inserting in lieu thereof “$104”;
(3) by striking out “$121” in clause (C) and inserting in lieu thereof “$138”;
(4) by striking out “$151” and “$30” in clause (D) and inserting in lieu thereof “$173” and “$34”, respectively;
(5) by striking out “$37” in clause (E) and inserting in lieu thereof “$42”;
(6) by striking out “$67” in clause (F) and inserting in lieu thereof “$77”;
(7) by striking out “$97” and “$30” in clause (G) and inserting in lieu thereof “$111” and “$34”, respectively;
(8) by striking out “$44” in clause (H) and inserting in lieu thereof “$50”;
(9) by striking out “$93” in clause (I) and inserting in lieu thereof “$112”; and
(10) by striking out “$82” in clause (J) and inserting in lieu thereof “$94”.

CLOTHING ALLOWANCE FOR CERTAIN DISABLED VETERANS

SEC. 103. Section 362 is amended by striking out “$240” and inserting in lieu thereof “$274”.

TITLE II—SURVIVORS’ DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION BENEFITS

RATES OF DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION FOR SURVIVING SPOUSES

SEC. 201. (a) Subsection (a) of section 411 is amended to read as follows:
“(a) Dependency and indemnity compensation shall be paid to a surviving spouse, based on the pay grade of the person upon whose
death entitlement is predicated, at monthly rates set forth in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>&quot;Pay grade&quot;</th>
<th>Monthly rate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>$491</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>&quot;Pay grade&quot;</th>
<th>Monthly rate</th>
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<tr>
<td>O-10</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"If the veteran served as sergeant major of the Army, chief master sergeant of the Air Force, sergeant major of the Marine Corps, or master chief petty officer of the Coast Guard, at the applicable time designated by section 402 of this title, the surviving spouse's rate shall be $549."

"If the veteran served as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Chief of Staff of the Army, Chief of Naval Operations, Chief of Staff of the Air Force, or Commandant of the Marine Corps, at the applicable time designated by section 402 of this title, the surviving spouse's rate shall be $1,023."

(b) Subsection (b) of such section is amended by striking out "$38" and inserting in lieu thereof "$43".

(c) Subsection (c) of such section is amended by striking out "$98" and inserting in lieu thereof "$112".

(d) Subsection (d) of such section is amended by striking out "$49" and inserting in lieu thereof "$56".
TITLE III—SPECIAL HOME ADAPTATION GRANTS FOR CERTAIN SEVERELY DISABLED VETERANS

EXTENSION OF SPECIALY-ADAPTED HOUSING GRANT PROGRAM

SEC. 301. (a) Section 801 is amended by inserting "(a)" before "The Administrator" and by adding at the end the following new subsection:

"(b)(1) Subject to paragraph (2) of this subsection, the Administrator, under regulations which the Administrator shall prescribe, shall assist any veteran (other than a veteran who is eligible for assistance under subsection (a) of this section) who is entitled to compensation under chapter 11 of this title for a permanent and total service-connected disability which—

"(A) is due to blindness in both eyes with 5/200 visual acuity or less, or

"(B) includes the anatomical loss or loss of use of both hands, in acquiring such adaptations to such veteran's residence as are determined by the Administrator to be reasonably necessary because of such disability.

"(2) Assistance under paragraph (1) of this subsection may be provided only to a veteran who the Administrator determines is residing in and reasonably intends to continue residing in a residence owned by such veteran or by a member of such veteran's family or, if the veteran's residence is to be constructed or purchased, will be residing in and reasonably intends to continue residing in a residence owned by such veteran or by a member of such veteran's family."

(b) Section 802 is amended—

(1) by inserting "(a)" before "The assistance";

(2) by striking out "section 801" and inserting in lieu thereof "section 801(a)"; and

(3) by adding at the end the following new subsection:

"(b) Except as provided in section 804(b)(2) of this title, the assistance authorized by section 801(b) of this title shall be limited to the lesser of—

"(1) the actual cost of the adaptations determined by the Administrator under such section 801(b) to be reasonably necessary, or

"(2) $5,000."

(c) Section 804 is amended—

(1) by inserting "(a)" before "Any veteran";

(2) by striking out "the assistance authorized by this chapter" and inserting in lieu thereof "except as provided in subsection (b) of this section, the assistance authorized by section 801 of this title"; and

(3) by adding at the end the following new subsection:

"(b) A veteran eligible for assistance under section 801(b) of this title shall not by reason of such eligibility be denied benefits for which such veteran becomes eligible under section 801(a) of this title or benefits relating to home health services under section 612(a) of this title. However, no particular type of adaptation, improvement, or structural alteration provided to a veteran under section 612(a) of this title may be provided to such veteran under section 801(b) of this title."

(d) Section 805 is amended by striking out "unit, or necessary land therefor," and inserting in lieu thereof "unit, or necessary land therefor, or adaptation".
REFINANCING OF VETERANS' ADMINISTRATION HOME LOANS

38 USC 1810. Sec. 401. (a) Section 1810 is amended—
(1) by inserting after clause (7) of subsection (a) the following new clause:

"(8) To refinance in accordance with subsection (e) of this section an existing loan guaranteed, insured, or made under this chapter.;"; and

(2) by adding at the end the following new subsection:

"(e)(1) For a loan to be guaranteed for the purpose specified in subsection (a)(8) of this section—

(A) the interest rate of the loan must be less than the interest rate of the loan being refinanced;

(B) the loan must be secured by the same dwelling or farm residence as was the loan being refinanced and such dwelling or residence must be owned and occupied by the veteran as such veteran's home;

(C) the amount of the loan may not exceed an amount equal to the sum of the balance of the loan being refinanced and such closing costs (including any discount permitted pursuant to section 1803(c)(3)(A) of this title) as may be authorized by the Administrator, under regulations which the Administrator shall prescribe, to be included in such loan;

(D) the amount of the guaranty of the loan may not exceed the original guaranty amount of the loan being refinanced; and

(E) the term of the loan may not exceed the original term of the loan being refinanced.

"(b) Section 1819(a) is amended—

(1) by adding at the end of paragraph (1) the following new clause:

"(F) To refinance in accordance with paragraph (4) of this subsection an existing loan guaranteed, insured, or made under this chapter.;"; and

(2) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

"(4)(A) For a loan to be guaranteed for the purpose specified in clause (F) of paragraph (1) of this subsection—

(i) the interest rate of the loan must be less than the interest rate of the loan being refinanced;

(ii) the loan must be secured by the same mobile home or mobile-home lot, or mobile home and mobile-home lot, as was the loan being refinanced and such mobile home (or a mobile home
on such lot) must be owned and occupied by the veteran as such veteran's home;

"(iii) the amount of the loan may not exceed an amount equal to the sum of the balance of the loan being refinanced and such closing costs (including any discount permitted pursuant to section 1803(c)(3)(A) of this title) as may be authorized by the Administrator, under regulations which the Administrator shall prescribe, to be included in such loan;

"(iv) the amount of the guaranty of the loan may not exceed the original guaranty amount of the loan being refinanced; and

"(v) the term of the loan may not exceed the original term of the loan being refinanced.

"(B) A loan to a veteran may be guaranteed by the Veterans' Administration under this chapter for the purpose specified in clause (F) of paragraph (1) of this subsection without regard to the amount of outstanding guaranty entitlement available for use by such veteran, and the amount of such veteran's guaranty entitlement shall not be charged as a result of any guaranty provided for such purpose. For purposes of section 1802(b) of this title, such loan shall be deemed to have been obtained with the guaranty entitlement used to obtain the loan being refinanced.

"(C) If a veteran is deceased and if such veteran's surviving spouse was a co-obligor under an existing loan previously guaranteed, insured, or made under this section, such surviving spouse shall, only for the purpose specified in clause (F) of paragraph (1) of this subsection, be deemed to be a veteran eligible for benefits under this chapter."

(c)(1) Section 1803(c)(3)(A) is amended by striking out "section 1810(a)(5)" and inserting in lieu thereof "clause (5) or (8) of section 1810(a) of this title or section 1819(a)(1)(F) of this title".

(2) The second sentence of section 1811(b) is amended by inserting "(other than the refinancing of a loan under section 1810(a)(8) or 1819(a)(1)(F))" after "section 1810(a) or 1819 of this title".

INCREASES IN MAXIMUM AMOUNTS OF VETERANS' HOME-LOAN GUARANTIES

Sec. 402. (a) Section 1810(c) is amended by striking out "$25,000" and inserting in lieu thereof "$27,500".

(b) Section 1811(d)(2) is amended—

(1) by striking out "$25,000" both places it appears in subparagraph (A) and inserting in lieu thereof "$27,500"; and

(2) by striking out "$17,500" both places it appears in subparagraph (B) and inserting in lieu thereof "$20,000".

(c) Section 1819(c) is amended by striking out "$17,500" each place it appears and inserting in lieu thereof "$20,000".

TITLE V—MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

EXTENSION OF AUTHORITY FOR VETERANS' ADMINISTRATION OFFICE IN THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES

Sec. 501. Section 230(b) is amended by striking out "1981" and inserting in lieu thereof "1985".
HEADSTONES AND MARKERS IN CERTAIN CASES

38 USC 906. Sec. 502. Section 906(a) is amended by adding at the end of such section the following new paragraph:

“(4) Any individual described in section 1002(5) of this title who is buried in a veterans' cemetery owned by a State.”.

PAYMENT OF PENSION IN CERTAIN CASES

38 USC 3104. Sec. 503. (a) Section 3104(a) is amended—

(1) by inserting “(1)” after “(a)”;

(2) by adding at the end of such subsection the following new paragraph:

“(2) Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph (1) of this subsection and of section 3105 of this title, pension under section 521 or 541 of this title may be paid to a person entitled to receive retired or retirement pay described in section 3105 of this title concurrently with such person's receipt of such retired or retirement pay if the annual amount of such retired or retirement pay is counted as annual income for the purposes of chapter 15 of this title.”.

38 USC 3203. Section 3203(a)(1)(C) is amended by striking out “of not less than two full calendar months” and inserting in lieu thereof “in connection with which pension was reduced pursuant to subparagraph (A) or (B) of this paragraph”.

LIMITATION ON PAYMENT OF COMPENSATION FOR SERVICE-CONNECTED DISABILITIES OR DEATH AND OF DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION FOR INCARCERATION FOR FELONY CONVICTION

Sec. 504. (a) Chapter 53 is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

38 USC 3113. "§3113. Limitation on payment of compensation and dependency and indemnity compensation to persons incarcerated for conviction of a felony

“(a)(1) To the extent provided in subsection (d) of this section, any person who is entitled to compensation or to dependency and indemnity compensation and who is incarcerated in a Federal, State, or local penal institution for a period in excess of sixty days for conviction of a felony shall not be paid such compensation or dependency and indemnity compensation, for the period beginning on the sixty-first day of such incarceration and ending on the day such incarceration ends, in an amount that exceeds—

“(A) in the case of a veteran with a service-connected disability rated at 20 percent or more, the rate of compensation payable under section 314(a) of this title; or

“(B) in the case of a veteran with a service-connected disability not rated at 20 percent or more or in the case of a surviving spouse, parent, or child, one-half of the rate of compensation payable under section 314(a) of this title.

“(2) The provisions of paragraph (1) of this section shall not apply with respect to any period during which a person is participating in a work-release program or is residing in a halfway house.

“(b)(1) All or any part of the compensation not paid to a veteran by reason of subsection (a) of this section may, as appropriate in an individual case, be apportioned under the same terms and conditions as are provided under section 3107 of this title."
“(2) All or any part of the dependency and indemnity compensation not paid to a surviving spouse or child by reason of subsection (a) of this section may, as appropriate in an individual case, be apportioned as follows:

“(A) In the case of dependency and indemnity compensation not paid to a surviving spouse, any apportionment shall be to the surviving child or children.

“(B) In the case of dependency and indemnity compensation not paid to a surviving child, any apportionment shall be to the surviving spouse or other surviving children, as applicable.

“(3) No apportionment may be made under this subsection to or on behalf of any person who is incarcerated in a Federal, State, or local penal institution for conviction of a felony.

“(c) The Administrator shall not assign to any veteran a rating of total disability based on the individual unemployability of the veteran resulting from a service-connected disability during any period during which the veteran is incarcerated in a Federal, State, or local penal institution for conviction of a felony.

“(d) The provisions of subsection (a) of this section shall apply (1) with respect to any period of incarceration of a person for conviction of a felony committed after the date of the enactment of this section, and (2) with respect to any period of incarceration on or after October 1, 1980, for conviction of a felony of a person who on October 1, 1980, is incarcerated for conviction of such felony and with respect to whom the action granting an award of compensation or dependency and indemnity compensation is taken on or after such date.

“(e) For purposes of this section—

“(1) The term ‘compensation’ includes disability compensation payable under section 351 of this title.

“(2) The term ‘dependency and indemnity compensation’ means death compensation payable under section 321 or 341 of this title, death compensation and dependency and indemnity compensation payable under section 351 of this title, and any benefit payable under chapter 13 of this title.”.

(b) The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by adding at the end the following new item:

“3113. Limitation on payment of compensation and dependency and indemnity compensation to persons incarcerated for conviction of a felony.”

CONFIDENTIALITY OF MEDICAL QUALITY-ASSURANCE RECORDS

Sec. 505. (a) Subchapter I of chapter 57 is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

“§ 3305. Confidentiality of medical quality-assurance records

“(a) Records and documents created by the Veterans’ Administration as part of a medical quality-assurance program are confidential and privileged and may not be disclosed to any person or entity except as provided in subsection (b) of this section.

“(b)(1) Subject to paragraph (2) of this subsection, a record or document described in subsection (a) of this section shall, upon request, be disclosed as follows:

“(A) To a Federal agency or private organization, if such record or document is needed by such agency or organization to perform licensing or accreditation functions related to Veterans’ Administration health-care facilities or to perform monitoring, required by statute, of Veterans’ Administration health-care facilities.
Withholding record from congressional committees.

"Medical quality-assurance program."

Regulations.

"(B) To a Federal executive agency or provider of health-care services, if such record or document is required by such agency or provider for participation by the Veterans' Administration in a health-care program with such agency or provider.

"(C) To a criminal or civil law enforcement governmental agency or instrumentality charged under applicable law with the protection of the public health or safety, if a qualified representative of such agency or instrumentality makes a written request that such record or document be provided for a purpose authorized by law.

"(D) To health-care personnel, to the extent necessary to meet a medical emergency affecting the health or safety of any individual.

"(2) The name of and other identifying information regarding any individual Veterans' Administration patient or employee, or any other individual associated with the Veterans' Administration for purposes of a medical quality-assurance program, contained in a record or document described in subsection (a) of this section shall be deleted from any record or document before any disclosure made under this subsection if disclosure of such name and identifying information would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy.

"(3) No person or entity to whom a record or document has been disclosed under this subsection shall make further disclosure of such record or document except for a purpose provided in this subsection.

"(4) Nothing in this section shall be construed as authority to withhold any record or document from a committee of either House of Congress or any joint committee of Congress, if such record or document pertains to any matter within the jurisdiction of such committee or joint committee.

"(5) Nothing in this section shall be construed as limiting the use of records and documents described in subsection (a) of this section within the Veterans' Administration (including contractors and consultants of the Veterans' Administration).

"(c) For the purpose of this section, the term 'medical quality-assurance program' means—

"(1) with respect to any activity carried out before the date of the enactment of this section, a Veterans' Administration systematic health-care review activity carried out by or for the Veterans' Administration for the purpose of improving the quality of medical care or improving the utilization of health-care resources in Veterans' Administration health-care facilities; and

"(2) with respect to any activity carried out on or after the date of the enactment of this section, a Veterans' Administration systematic health-care review activity designated by the Administrator to be carried out by or for the Veterans' Administration for either such purpose.

"(d)(1) Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this section, the Administrator shall prescribe regulations to carry out this section. In prescribing such regulations, the Administrator shall specify those activities carried out before such enactment date which the Administrator determines meet the definition of medical quality-assurance program in subsection (c)(1) of this section and those activities which the Administrator has designated under subsection (c)(2) of this section. The Administrator shall, to the extent appropriate, incorporate into such regulations the provisions of the
existing administrative guidelines and procedures governing such programs.

“(2) After the date on which such regulations are first prescribed, no activity shall be considered as having been designated as a medical quality-assurance program for the purposes of subsection (c)(2) of this section unless the designation has been specified in such regulations.

“(e) Any person who, knowing that a document or record is a document or record described in subsection (a) of this section, willfully discloses such record or document except as provided for in subsection (b) of this section shall be fined not more than $5,000 in the case of a first offense and not more than $20,000 in the case of a subsequent offense.”.

(b) The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 3304 the following new item:

“3305. Confidentiality of medical quality-assurance records.”.

**MINIMUM NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES OF AMERICAN BATTLE MONUMENTS COMMISSION**

Sec. 506. The third paragraph of the first section of the Act entitled “An Act for the creation of an American Battle Monuments Commission to erect suitable memorials commemorating the services of the American soldier in Europe, and for other purposes”, approved March 4, 1923 (36 U.S.C. 121), is amended by inserting after the second sentence thereof the following new sentence: “To ensure adequate care and maintenance of the cemeteries, monuments, and memorials under the jurisdiction of the Commission, the Commission, subject to the availability of appropriations, shall employ (1) not less than 50 personnel in the competitive service (as defined in section 2102 of title 5, United States Code), of whom not less than 43 shall be assigned to duty in foreign countries in which such cemeteries, monuments, and memorials are located, and (2) not less than 848 individuals who are citizens of the countries in which such cemeteries, monuments, and memorials are located, who shall be hired for local employment relating to the care and maintenance of such cemeteries, monuments, and memorials.”.

**LAND TRANSFER, CHEYENNE, WYOMING**

Sec. 507. (a) Subject to subsection (b), the Administrator of Veterans’ Affairs is authorized to execute such instruments as may be necessary to permit the city of Cheyenne, Wyoming, to use for public roadway purposes a tract of land consisting of four acres, more or less, which is a portion of a larger tract of land previously conveyed by the United States to such city under the authority of the Act entitled “An Act authorizing the Administrator of Veterans’ Affairs to convey certain property to the city of Cheyenne, Wyoming”, approved November 8, 1965 (Public Law 89-845; 79 Stat. 1304), for use by such city for park and recreational purposes only.

(b) Any instrument executed by the Administrator of Veterans’ Affairs under this section shall—

(1) provide that the four-acre tract of land referred to in subsection (a) may be used only for park and recreational purposes or for public roadway purposes, or both, and only in a manner that will not, in the judgment of the Administrator of Veterans’ Affairs, interfere in any manner with the care and
treatment of patients in the Veterans' Administration Center, Cheyenne, Wyoming;
(2) contain such additional terms, conditions, and restrictions as may be determined by the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs to be necessary to protect the interest of the United States; and
(3) provide that, if the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs determines that the city of Cheyenne has violated any provision of any such instrument, title to the tract of land conveyed under the authority of such Act shall revert to the United States as provided in the deed of conveyance executed pursuant to such Act.

(c) The legal description of the four-acre tract of land referred to in subsection (a) shall be determined by the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs. If a survey is required in order to make such determination, the city of Cheyenne shall bear the expenses of the survey.

TECHNICAL AMENDMENTS TO PUBLIC LAW 96-330

Sec. 508. (a) Section 4107(c)(3) is amended by striking out "section 4507" and inserting in lieu thereof "sections 4507 and 5384".

(b) Section 4109(b) is amended—
(1) by inserting "after August 25, 1980," after "any period of service"; and
(2) by inserting "after such date" after "such service".

TITLE VI—EFFECTIVE DATES

EFFECTIVE DATES

Sec. 601. (a) The amendments made by titles I and II shall apply only to payments for months beginning after September 30, 1980.
(b) The amendments made by title III and by sections 402, 501, 503, and 506 shall take effect on October 1, 1980.
(c) The amendments made by section 502 shall apply only with respect to individuals who die after September 30, 1980.
(d) The amendments made by sections 401, 504, 505, and 507 shall take effect on the date of the enactment of this Act.
(e) The amendments made by section 508 shall take effect as of August 26, 1980.

Approved October 7, 1980.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY:

HOUSE REPORT No. 96-1155 (Comm. on Veterans' Affairs).
SENATE REPORT No. 96-876 accompanying S. 2649 (Comm. on Veterans' Affairs).
CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, Vol. 126 (1980):
July 21, considered and passed House.
Aug. 6, considered and passed Senate, amended, in lieu of S. 2649.
Sept. 18, House concurred in Senate amendments with amendments.
Sept. 24, Senate concurred in House amendments.
WEEKLY COMPILATION OF PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS, Vol. 16, No. 41: