

victory. With firm grassroots backing from DAV and Auxiliary members, legislators committed to strong veterans' programs saved the VA from several severely harmful cuts in the VA proposed by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

Restored to the VA's FY 1982 budget were 933 nurses, 297 physicians, 4,000 medical support personnel, and more than 2,000 Department of Veterans Benefits employees. Cutbacks of 1½ million outpatient visits and more than 3,600 nursing care patients were avoided. And OMB-sponsored plans to cen-

DAV Opposes Changes To Treatment Eligibility

The DAV has come out in strong opposition to any legislative changes in eligibility for medical treatment at VA health care facilities.

Some legislative changes were suggested in a recently prepared draft report by the VA's Task Force II on Veterans Eligibility for Medical Care.

DAV National Director of Services Norman B. Hartnett stated the DAV's objections in a letter to Richard M. Ryan, Jr., a consultant to the VA task force and a representative of the VA's Special Medical Advisory Group.

"We find particularly obnoxious," said Hartnett, the suggested "denial of access to VA medical care to service-connected veterans who are either temporarily or permanently rated at less than 10 percent and non-service-connected veterans who are under age 65 and not rated permanently and totally disabled."

Noting the continuing threats to preservation of the VA medical system, Hartnett explained that suggesting legislative changes could "open the gates to our opponents to expand upon the restrictive measures proposed in the draft document."

Task Force II on Veterans Eligibility for Medical Care was formed last August to update the findings of a 1974 task force, which did a comprehensive study of eligibility criteria for VA medical treatment.

JULY 1981

George H. Seal Memorial Award Nominee, Edward W. Rogers, who is this year's DAV winner.

tralize the VA claims processing system, making it increasingly difficult for veterans and their families to file and pursue claims, were shelved.

In the end the Congressional Veterans' Committees were required to come up with only \$110 million in legislative savings for FY 1982 by the First Concurrent Budget Resolution. The resolution is not a binding document. It simply sets Congressional spending targets.

"Now we must convince the Appropriations and Budget Committees in Congress to fund the VA up to the full levels established in the budget resolution," explained DAV National Legislative Director John F. Heilman.

He pointed out that the increased VA funding proposed by the budget resolution has the support of President Reagan. The President's backing was reiterated recently in a letter Donald L. Custis, M.D., acting VA administrator, wrote to Vietnam veterans who were conducting a hunger strike at Wadsworth VA Medical Center in Los Angeles.

Dr. Custis told the hunger strikers that the funding levels set by the budget resolution will allow the VA to "operate with no reductions in personnel" in health care, including the psychological readjustment program for Vietnam era veterans, or in the VA claims processing system.

President Reagan had previously stressed his support of the budget resolution, with its increased funding of VA programs, in a nationally televised speech before Congress April 28.

In the DAV's testimony before the Senate Subcommittee on HUD-Independent Agencies, Joeckel challenged OMB assertions that its original budget proposals would result in no cuts of direct VA health care staffing, no cuts in health care services, no impact on service-connected disabled veterans, and no closures of VA facilities.

VA hospitals and clinics "in effect" on VA claims processing.

The DAV spokesman urged the senators to reject the OMB plans recommended in the Reagan administration's original budget request and fund VA programs to the full levels set by the First Concurrent Budget Resolution.

"In our battle to win adequate funding for VA programs next year, we still have a long way to go," commented Heilman, who explained that the Congressional budgeting process will probably stretch into the fall again this year before the final budget figures are established.

Agent Orange Video Tape Wins Awards

"Agent Orange: A Search For Answers," a 30-minute video tape produced by the VA for Vietnam veterans, has received awards from the International Television Association (ITVA) and the Health Education Communication Association (HECA).

The ITVA awarded its "Golden Reel of Excellence" for the program's highly effective form of communication, which helped the user organization better achieve its stated goals." The video tape was also cited by ITVA for creativity, innovative techniques, and high production values.

The HECA presented the VA its "Award of Merit" for "outstanding achievement in the use of television for education in the health sciences."

The special tape, designed for Vietnam veterans, describes the various herbicides used in Vietnam, with particular attention to the herbicide, Agent Orange. The viewer is shown possible side effects associated with herbicides and steps to follow when contacting a VA medical center about suspected exposure.

All VA medical centers, regional offices, and Vet Centers have been supplied with the video tape, and copies are available to veterans service organizations, television stations, and other interested parties.

Page 11

DAV July 1981

Vol. 23 Issue 7