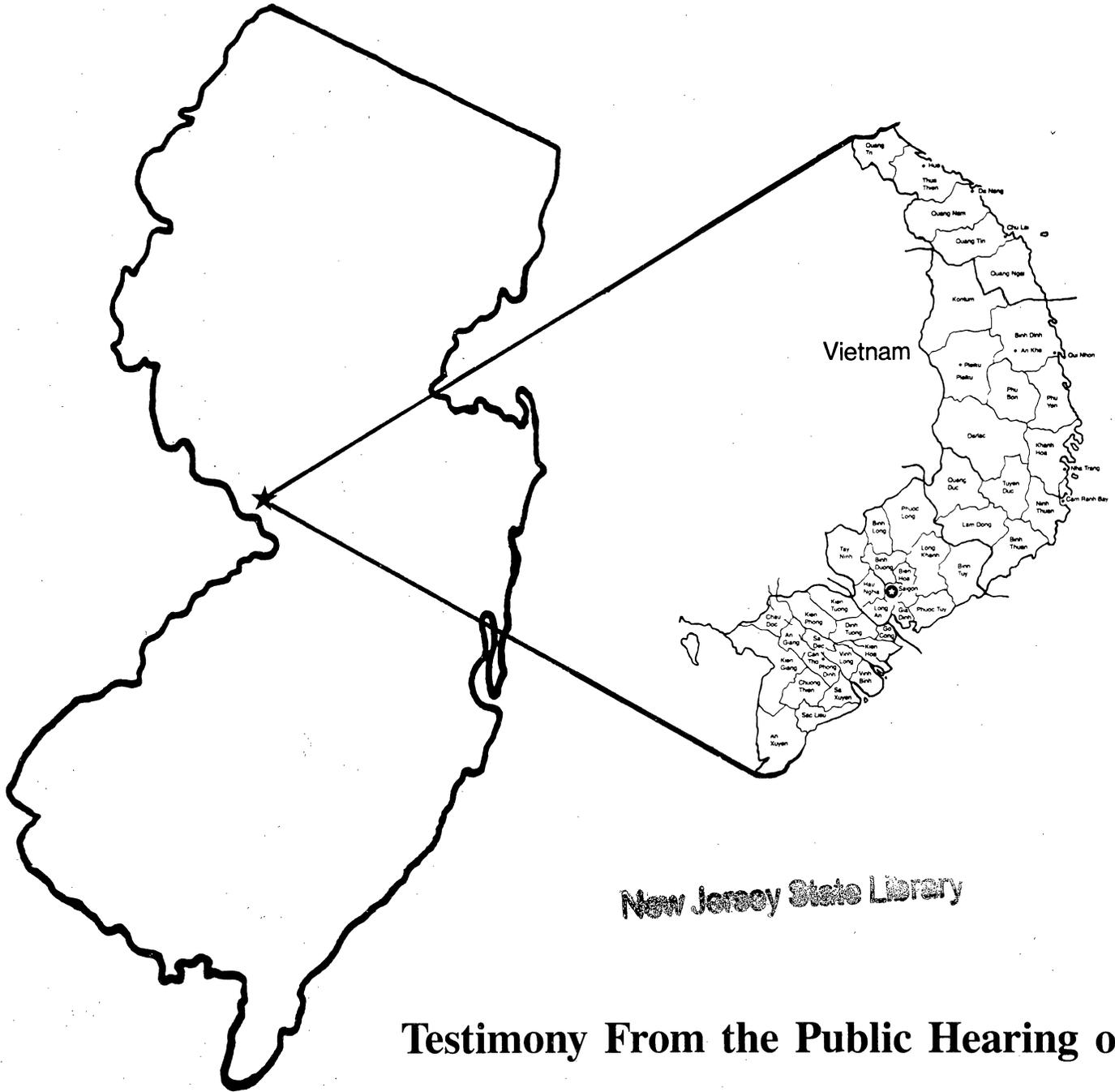


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The New Jersey Commission for the Study and Treatment Of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in Vietnam Veterans

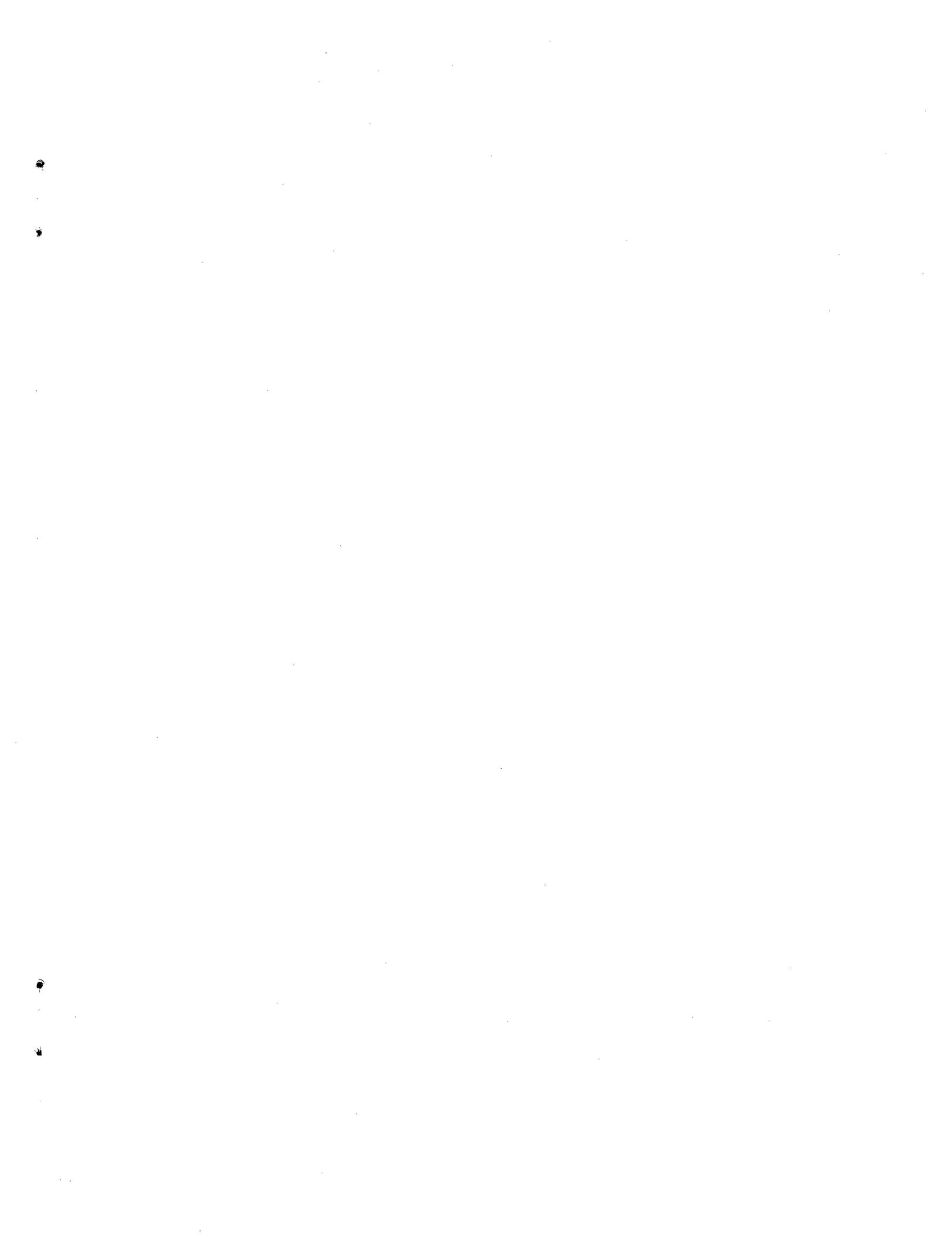
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Testimony From the Public Hearing on

November 9, 1989
Jersey City Armory
Jersey City, New Jersey



1
2 COMMISSION OF THE
3 STATE OF NEW JERSEY FOR
4 POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

5
6 JERSEY CITY ARMORY

7 Jersey City, New Jersey

8 Thursday, November 9, 1989

9 7:00 p.m. - 9:20 p.m.
10

11 B O A R D M E M B E R S:

12 JOHN DUBYNA, Vice-Chairman

13 STEVE SECARE

14 ABUBAKR SADIG

15 DAVID WELSH
16

17 A L S O P R E S E N T:

18 DEBORAH EGER, Project Specialist

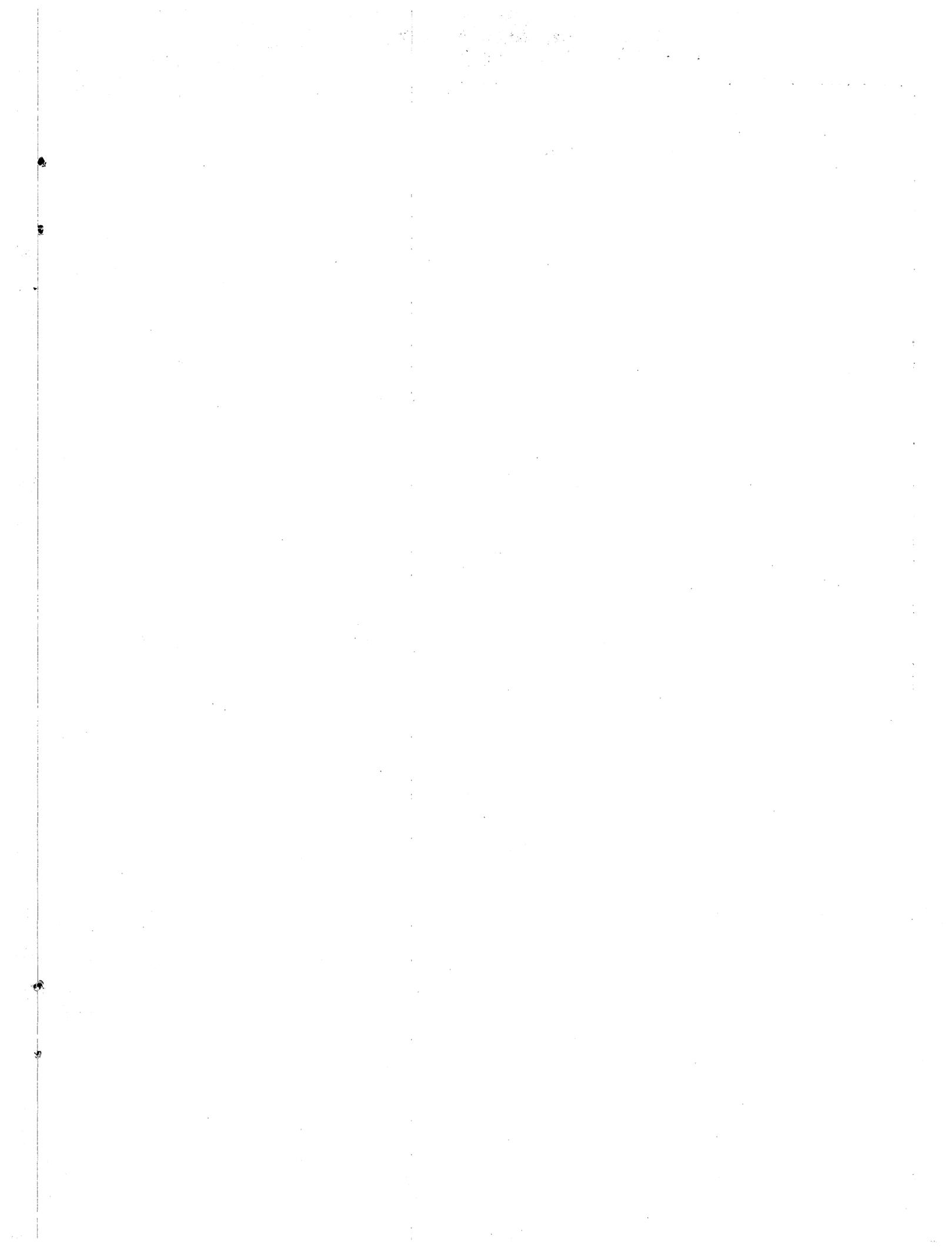
19 GARY COOPER, Public Information Officer
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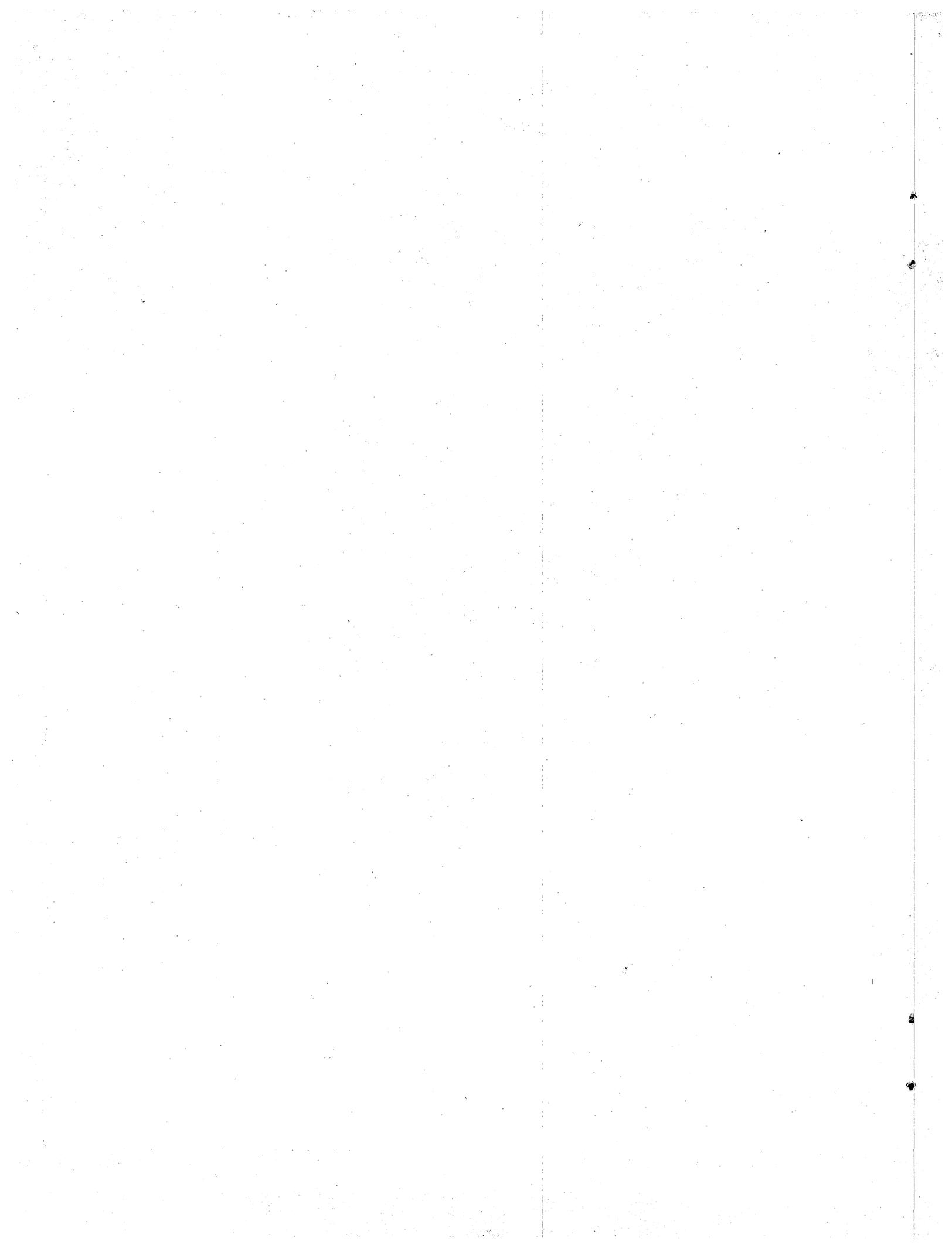
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I N D E X O F S P E A K E R S

<u>N A M E</u>	<u>P A G E</u>
DAVID MARTIN	6
FRANK RICKETTE	12
DR. MICHAEL PETRONKO	14
DR. ELI ALSON	19
BILL HILL	22
LEON WILSON	23
GEORGE GREENLEAF	27
GARY KIRKLAND	28
DAVID CLINE	31
RICHARD BERGEN	35
DENNIS REGYNYE	40
MICHAEL COLICCHIO	41
STEVE SHUEY - DENNIS KEELY	42
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ANNA CLINE	51
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ANDREW J. MAROTTA	73



1
2 MR. DUBYNA: I'd like to have
3 everyone rise for the pledge of allegiance and a
4 moment of silence for POWs and MIAs.

5 Thank you. Please, be seated.

6 Good evening. Welcome to the first
7 New Jersey public hearing held by the commission to
8 study post traumatic stress in Vietnam veterans. My
9 name is John Dubyna. I'm the vice-chairman of this
10 commission. I'm also a disabled Vietnam veteran. If
11 you hear me taking deep breaths, I am. Unfortunately,
12 Dr. Richard Reed, our chairman, has suffered a stroke
13 and is unable to attend tonight's hearing. Seated
14 with me are other members of the commission. To my
15 left is Steve Secare and to his left is David Welsh.
16 The PTSD Commission was created by an enactment of the
17 state legislature to study, analyze and review post
18 traumatic stress suffered by many Vietnam veterans.
19 The commission is obligated under the law to report
20 its findings with recommendations to the State
21 legislature and to the governor. All of us appointed
22 to this commission have served in Vietnam. Within
23 your ranks, we have combat veterans, some disabled, as
24 well as professionals who have direct knowledge of
25 post traumatic stress.

1
2 Since January of this year, with
3 cooperation of the New Jersey Department of Military
4 and Veterans Affairs, the commission has conducted
5 meetings, listened to medical experts, and analyzed
6 materials to better understand PTSD. PTSD is a
7 disorder that has effected thousands of Vietnam vets
8 and their families. And there is no doubt that it is
9 caused by combat and combat related stress.

10 Tonight we will hear testimony from
11 our brother veterans who served in Vietnam and those
12 with first-hand knowledge of the problems associated
13 with PTSD. We will be listening to your suggestions
14 and your recommendations on what you think should be
15 done for our brothers and sisters who suffered from
16 PTSD. The commission will then study and review all
17 testimony to better understand the needs of the New
18 Jersey Vietnam vet. And for that purpose, we have set
19 up several public hearings throughout the state, at
20 least three. An open public forum such as this one
21 will help the commission in assessing what the
22 vets--what we the vets and our families need. That is
23 why we need your help. Our next step is to bring our
24 recommendations to the legislature and the governor.
25 Our recommendations will be heard by all the

1
2 appropriate authorities.

3 Tonight I will be acting as moderator
4 and will ask that you kindly listen to whatever
5 questions or instructions are necessary. We ask each
6 speaker to come to the microphone, identify yourself
7 by name and address and speak on the issue of PTSD and
8 the needs of the Vietnam vets. Because of time
9 limitations and for the sake of order, speakers will
10 be limited to five minutes. For those who wish to
11 remain anonymous, you may do so. For those who do not
12 wish to speak but would like to submit a written
13 statement, please come up after the hearing and Debbie
14 Eger, our project coordinator, will provide a mailing
15 address for you. All information will be helpful to
16 us. And all written statements will be made part of
17 the public record. Once again, I welcome you and want
18 to personally thank each and every one of you for
19 coming tonight. I am sure this evening will be
20 beneficial to all of us. Thank you.

21 Is Mr. William Roberts present?

22 Mr. David Martin present?

23 The timing system is set up so that
24 four minutes into your time--you don't have to talk
25 for four or five minutes--but four minutes into your

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2 topic a little light at the end of the table will come
3 on. That means that you have one minute left. The
4 light will thereafter go out which signifies that you
5 have 15 seconds left. At that point, you should start
6 wrapping up your statement. With 15 seconds left, you
7 should be finished and saying good-bye.

8 If you find yourself running short on
9 time, you can, as John said, submit more testimony in
10 writing to the commission at that address.

11 MR. MARTIN: My name is Dave Martin
12 and I am the founder of Vietnam Combat Veterans
13 Coalition in Trenton. The PTSD Commission was
14 established to study and treat Vietnam veterans with
15 PTSD and we're here to make sure you get it right.
16 We're the only veterans organization in the state
17 composed entirely of PTSD patients. Vietnam Combat
18 Veterans Coalition has been advocating for the rights
19 of justice for veterans since July 1979. We are
20 composed of infantry, combat Vietnam veterans and a
21 few honorary members. We are the peons, troopies,
22 airborne, straightlegs and grunts who fought the damn
23 war. We fought while senators' sons dodged the
24 draft.

25 MR. DUBYNA: The court reporter is

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taking down everything that you say. If you're going to read it, could you go just take it a little bit slower for her benefit.

MR. MARTIN: That's the first I heard about this rule was right not. My time is going.

MR. DUBYNA: I'm only asking you as a matter of coutesy so she can take it down.

MR. MARTIN: We fought while senators' sons dodged the draft. We are the experts on Vietnam and PTSD in this country. We did the dirty work. We humped endless hot miles across mountains rice paddies, elephant grass, jungles, rivers, swamps, scum, mud, dust and slime. We endured months of cold monsoon rains far into the bush. We suffered the sad lonely days on operations. Night ambushes and listening posts tested our nerve. Human wave attacks, artillery barrages taught us terror. Death and mutilation brought us horror. Friendly fire killed our brothers. Twenty year old C-rations were our every meal besieged outposts in the boonies were as close to the rear as we came. Leeches, mosquitoes, scorpions, flies, fire ants, rats, hornets, unknown bugs and snakes were our constant companions. We had no women, movies, drugs or booze. Diarrhea, dysentery, heat

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2 stroke, heat exhaustion, lack of sleep and bone weary
3 fatigue wore us down. Death, fear, pain, sweat,
4 blood, filth, hate and loss of hope found a place in
5 our hearts and minds. We were sprayed and betrayed
6 with Agent Orange by our own government. The light at
7 the end of the tunnel was hard to see from where we
8 were. Dear John letters cruelly tore our hearts out.
9 Confusion often set in. Home was remote to our
10 tortured lives. But the fading thought of it kept us
11 going. No one knew of the horror we were going
12 through. In spite of it all we did our duty with the
13 special courage only a combat infantryman knows.
14 Vietnam combat infantry veterans proved to be the best
15 and toughest soldiers and Marines this country ever
16 had. We put one million enemy communist soldiers in
17 their graves in the name of the people of the United
18 States of America. What a shock this country had for
19 us; demonstrations, apathy, mockery, contempt,
20 unemployment and alienation were our rewards. They
21 called us baby killers, drug-crazed and losers. They
22 took the best of our generation and bled us dry. They
23 poisoned us. They raped our pride. They killed our
24 friends. They insulted our honor. They maimed our
25 bodies and our souls. They wasted our youth. They

1
2 made us scapegoats. We won every battle but they
3 pulled us out and let south Vietnam die. Now they want
4 us to forget.

5 We of the Vietnam Combat Veterans
6 Coalition will never forget. We will continue to
7 advocate for a cure or Agent Orange disease; for the
8 return of our POWs and MIAs; for help with PTSD; for
9 proper treatment at VA facilities; for justice,
10 compassion and understanding for Vietnam veterans; for
11 the truth to be told about the Vietnam War. We shall
12 never stop until we win. Our backs are to the wall.
13 We need help for the best our country had in time of
14 war. Don't turn your backs on us or give us lip
15 service when we need our country and our state to help
16 us.

17 Vietnam Combat Veterans Coalition
18 proposes the following to the PTSD Commission in order
19 to effectively help us;

- 20 1) Set up a veterans advisory committee
21 composed of combat Vietnam veterans to advise you.
22 2) Abide by the Open Public Meetings Act.
23 3) Give us all the minutes of each meeting
24 you've had the last two years you've been meeting in
25 secret.

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2 4) Give us a list of the military, educational
3 and PTSD experiences or training of each member.

4 5) Set up a data bank on PTSD and make it
5 available to us.

6 6) Compile data on the PTSD Counseling Program
7 of NJDMVA.

8 7) Monitor the VA's handling of PTSD claims.

9 8) Define and understand differences between
10 PTSD and readjustment disorder.

11 9) Understand that PTSD means Post--after the
12 fact, Traumatic--trauma, shock, battle shock,
13 Stress--strain shock reaction, Disorder--disease,
14 illness, affliction.

15 10) PTSD can be just as disabling as a missing
16 eye or amputated leg.

17 11) Get in tine with Black and Hispanic
18 Vietnam veterans to get their input.

19 12) Educate this state on how we were as
20 soldiers and Marines, the battles we fought, the times
21 we helped children of Vietnamese and how our corpsmen
22 and medics did much good, how Marines developed and
23 helped rice harvests for the South Vietnamese, how our
24 friends died defending South Vietnam's right to be
25 free and of how we won every major battle of that war.

1
2 13) Tell of how most of us try to work hard,
3 raise families and be good Americans. We don't burn
4 flags. We do our best in spite of our problems.

5 14) Be advocates for Vietnam veterans. Help
6 us. Be our affirmative action program.

7 15) Use National Guard doctors to treat us for
8 PTSD. What better training for combat stress for them
9 than to treat us.

10 16) Expand the PTSD Counseling Program of
11 NJDMVA into each county and give equal openings;
12 Mercer only has five to the dozens and dozens in other
13 counties. Are we not equal?

14 17) Train the State's Veterans Service
15 Officers on PTSD. They need a lot of help.

16 18) Involve the veteran organizations and get
17 their input and expertise, if any.

18 19) Provide transportation to Lyons VA
19 Hospital and other VA hospitals at night or during the
20 day so veterans can get the counseling that's
21 available but not accessible

22 20) Eliminate some or all of the dead wood on
23 the Commission that's getting in the way of progress.
24 We haven't seen you do anything yet and if you can't
25 or won't produce, leave.

1
2 In closing, I state that Vietnam
3 veterans, especially combat infantry veterans, are the
4 best soldiers and Marines America ever sent to war. I
5 am proud to know and work with many of these patriots.

6 They are my heroes. If you could have seen them
7 fight when the fighting was hot, or seen them care for
8 each other in their world of hate and death, they'd be
9 your heroes too.

10 I ask you to open your hearts to them
11 and their spouses and especially to their children by
12 helping Vietnam veterans, America's true heroes. You
13 can help undo the wrong of the past and make life
14 better for their children who are our future.

15 MR. DUBYNA: Is Mr. Frank Rickette
16 present?

17 MR. RICKETTE: Frank Rickette, vet
18 and member of the Veterans Coalition. Mr. Martin, who
19 is a co-founder and friend of mine just talked about
20 just about everything. I have a couple things to
21 say.

22 One of them is like this is really a
23 disgrace to have this meeting in this place. This
24 really sucks, really sucks. I mean like who is Debbie
25 Eger? I want to talk to her. This really stinks. If

1
2 you're the coordinator, you should be fired. I'm
3 serious. This is disgusting. This should never have
4 taken place in this place.

5 I have a couple things to say besides
6 that. I want to say that since 1987, you have had
7 this commission. Nobody knew about it. Nobody knew
8 where you met. It was all secret, the way that the
9 people were reporting was a secret. It's a disgrace.
10 The point that you are having a public meeting after
11 the fact, it's all bull. This is why--and you wonder
12 why people say we're angry and we're hostile. That's
13 why we're fucking hostile. That's why, we're sick of
14 your shit. We're sick of this shit that we have been
15 treated since we came back and you are just adding to
16 it instead of helping us. You are adding to our
17 stress. Well, you want to see stress, all of these
18 guys got stress. We all have stress.

19 If you want to help us, help us.
20 This is a fucking disgrace, this whole thing here.
21 And from the top guy who put this together to the
22 whoever had anything to do with it. Really, that's
23 how I feel.

24 And I just want to say that PTSD
25 takes on a lot of forms and I want to talk about him

1
2 other than to say that he mentioned in the newspaper
3 article that PTSD can take on many kinds of--he said
4 like you have a sleeping disorder. You can have PTSD
5 from being in a bad automobile accident. You can have
6 PTSD from the people that were in the earthquake in
7 Southern California. But that lasted a short time.
8 You're talking about guys here that fought their asses
9 off for a year over there and got nothing for it, just
10 slapped in the face. And we're sick and tired and
11 we're going to keep fighting. And if you guys here in
12 this commission want to help, then you can help us by
13 listening to what we have to say here tonight.

14 And this is a disgrace. I mean what
15 kind of place is this? You come in here--I got bad
16 asthma. They got problems. You got smoke and shit
17 and this is shit. I got asthma. I come into here and
18 I have put up with this shit. This is a fucking
19 disgrace. It really is. That's all I have to say.

20 MR. DUBYNA: Thank you, sir.

21 We do agree with the conditions,
22 they're terrible.

23 DR. PETRONKO: Dr. Michael Petronko.
24 I'm a director of Division of Psychological Services
25 which was one of the first nongovernment outpatient

1
2 clinics for PTSD in the state. I want to do three
3 things. I want to comment on how serious PTSD is. I
4 want to comment on how extensive PTSD is. I want to
5 comment on what's being done about it and give you
6 some suggestions as to what I think you should do.

7 First of all, let's just look at a
8 couple of things that compromise PTSD and this is from
9 the DSM-3 Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for the
10 American Psychiatric Association. The traumatic
11 emphasis and experience in at least one of the
12 following ways; recurring and intrusive distressing
13 recollections of the event, recurrent distressing
14 dreams of the event and/or feelings that the traumatic
15 event is reoccurring episodes, even though they
16 occurred upon waking hours and another experience that
17 causes the veteran to reexperience that event. For
18 instance, psychological distress and exposure event
19 that symbolize or resemble an aspect of the traumatic
20 event.

21 Let's go on. As indicated by three
22 of the following; efforts to avoid thoughts or
23 feelings associated the trauma, efforts to avoid
24 activity or a situation that will arouse recollections
25 of the trauma, etc. I think what we have to realize

1
2 here is that PTSD is a serious problem, a serious
3 problem, not something that goes away. There is a
4 myth that is perpetuated, I think, regarding PTSD and
5 how extensive it is.

6 I hold in front of me here a study
7 that was done at the Research Triangle at the
8 insistence of the Senator Cranston on PTSD. This
9 document, this study was quoted as being one of the
10 most significant comprehensive studies ever done of
11 its kind in this nation on any disease on any
12 epidemiological study. They interviewed more than
13 6,000 veterans, giving more than six hours of
14 individual interview to each of the veterans in 50
15 states with Puerto Rico. And the one of the reasons
16 why they did this study was to try to determine how
17 extensive this PTSD is. More than eight million men
18 and women in the military during the Vietnam era; of
19 that, a little bit more than three million saw service
20 in the country. Of that number, based on this study,
21 it was determined that 15.3 percent plus or minus 2.6
22 error rate of all male veterans experience PTSD.
23 That's 480,000 men in this country. Now, let me go
24 on. Of that number, it was determined that three to
25 five times that rate, that is 15 percent rate of

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2 Vietnam veterans that actually saw what they
3 considered to be serious combat, were more likely to
4 experience PTSD. So therefore, 38.7 percent of
5 veterans experience combat or stress on that level in
6 that country have PTSD. What is that number? That's
7 308,000. That's national. What does it mean to us?

8 When I first started the PTSD project
9 in Fairleigh Dickinson in 1983, it was estimated that
10 there was 240,000 veterans in North Jersey who were in
11 Vietnam. Using that 15 percent number, that would
12 mean that more than 36,000 veterans in North Jersey
13 have PTSD.

14 Now, if it were just the veteran
15 alone, it would be bad enough. Let's assume that each
16 of those veterans has been married more than once.
17 Those who experience severe levels of PTSD are
18 generally married more than once because the condition
19 involves not only them but their loved ones. If we
20 were to multiply two women, perhaps two children,
21 times that number, we have much more than 100,000
22 people in North Jersey alone that are affected by this
23 condition.

24 Within five minutes, I have been able
25 to demonstrate it's a serious condition, that it's

1
2 extensive. What have we done about it? When this no
3 hassles program to give counseling, readjustment
4 counseling, whatever they call it, to veterans in the
5 very beginning, when I was involved, my clinic saw 123
6 veterans. We provided approximately 2600 individual
7 hours of psychotherapy and about 500 hours of group
8 therapy to that group. That period was 4/1/83 to
9 essentially 3/31/87. Since that funding stopped, we
10 have provided the following--first, approximately a
11 year ago, and DBA Post 151, a contract with the State
12 to provided low cost services to veterans. In that
13 time--remember before 2600 sessions. Since 1/1/89 to
14 present, we've given 138 sessions to those veterans.
15 138 compared to 2500.

16 How come? Certainly the seriousness
17 of the condition hasn't changed. The extensiveness of
18 the situation hasn't changed. I think there is
19 inherent problems in the system. The problem in the
20 system is that PTSD is still in the closet. My
21 recommendations, I think we have to go back to a time
22 when the hassles in the system are taken out. We have
23 to come out of the closet and do a lot more education
24 and especially outreach, because this condition is the
25 fact that the vet doesn't want the authority. And yet

1
2 he's burdened by it. There is literally no outreach
3 done whatsoever. And I ask you and I ask you that
4 here. Thank you.

5 MR. DUBYNA: Dr. Eli Alson.

6 DR. ALSON: Eli Alson. I live in
7 Denville, New Jersey. My acquaintance with PTSD with
8 the combat veteran began before there was accepted
9 diagnostic classification and my commitment to
10 treatment in an organized program began before
11 classification was announced, I think in 1980. At
12 that time, I decided to initiate an outpatient program
13 at Lyons VA Medical Center and we presented a seminar
14 on treatment. We presented a seminar on our treatment
15 program at the first national conference on Post
16 Traumatic Stress Syndrome--that was before it was
17 called PTSD. There was no direct line because the VA
18 was just beginning to organize a response to the
19 belated recognition of the needs of these veterans.
20 Young men tormented by the experience is an
21 unpopularity that found themselves trying to catch up
22 to men and women their own age who stayed home, in
23 terms of personal development, families. Many have
24 insistent intrusive experiences stemming from
25 traumatic experiences not yet resolved. They may have

1
2 different ties in this relationships with others and
3 they that have not found the inner peace that they so
4 well deserve. The State of New Jersey began to
5 organize its response much later. When I retired from
6 the VA and I sought to continue service to the VA
7 programs and providing help in the veteran's
8 community, I see the needs for these services as
9 continuing. There are still troubled veterans now
10 gaining courage to come for help, if they know where
11 they can find it. And they come from all walks of
12 life and are often not aware of the nature of their
13 problems. Even when they begin to reach out for help,
14 unfortunately, not all of the mental health
15 professional community is alert to the condition.
16 Though they show their own emotional discomfort, they
17 are not prepared to listen and respond to the
18 horrendous experiences suffered by the veterans,
19 though the veteran desperately needs a listening ear.
20 The patient retreats and does not burden the therapist
21 and the opportunity for healing is aborted. Even more
22 likely the therapist may miss the significance of the
23 recurring nightmares and thoughts that attempted to
24 feel her as to whether it is safe or okay to begin to
25 talk about the trauma, things that he or she has been

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2 reluctant to share with the closest of family and
3 friends.

4

5 The program is fortunate to have
6 located counselors who can work effectively in this
7 difficult area. In my own experience, I have seen
8 veterans progress worrying about anger exploding in
9 violent ways to directing their dissatisfaction into
10 components, helping the cause as they feel relevant
11 becoming emotionally closer to the significant people
12 in their lives.

12

13 I see veterans regress from alcohol
14 and drugs being used as an inappropriate
15 self-medication. I have heard of them becoming
16 responsible for themselves and others. The well being
17 of his children, wives or husbands was also very much
18 affected. New lives have emerged as the veterans
19 succeed in treatment, but If eligibility under the VA
20 program has run out at a critical time and New Jersey
21 picks it up, the vital service has been performed.
22 New Jersey may be able to relate to veterans who is
23 not been able to relate to the VA.

23

24 The present program can be improved
25 by; one, additional committment to funds. Some
veterans applied for services have been given

1
2 indefinite or prolonged estimates of the time before
3 services can be supported.

4 Two, by reliable and rapid response
5 for the program day keepers, such as the DSO, when a
6 vet calls, they appear to be spread very thin. The
7 vet make take failure to return the phone call as
8 evidence of rejection.

9 Three, by preliminary screening
10 evaluations of services, some identification of HUD
11 situations could avoid tragic results.

12 Four, by training of the day keepers
13 to identify veterans with further evaluation for PTSD
14 and creating greater awareness and communicate keepers
15 of the nature of PTSD and of the services provided by
16 the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs.

17 Lastly, by adequately publicizing and
18 educating the public as to PTSD and as to the
19 availability of services to help alleviate them.
20 Thank you.

21 MR. DUBYNA: Is Mr. Bill Hill
22 present?

23 MR. HILL: Bill Hill. I'm going to
24 make this very brief. I'm going to make it very brief
25 in terms of what I would like to see in terms of

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2 recommendations to the New Jersey PTSD Commission in
3 terms of working closer, in terms of reaching out and
4 looking at the issues based on the fact of the new
5 study which was conducted by the Veterans
6 Administration that 479,000 veterans are suffering
7 from PTSD in terms of saying that in some sort of
8 network where we can work together. This is a most
9 highly populated area in terms of veterans.
10 Therefore, one of my recommendations would be just to
11 expand our network and services in terms of mutually
12 bridging the gap with the VA, in terms of other
13 agencies, community mental health, whereby we can
14 service more veterans. I want to thank you.

15 MR. DUBYNA: Leon Wilson.

16 MR. WILSON: Mr. Chairman, ladies and
17 gentlemen, fellow veterans; my name is Leon Wilson. I
18 don't have post traumatic stress. I have been talking
19 about my veteran experiences for the past 20 years.
20 And as a result of my talking about it, I have been
21 able to cope with it each and every day. That has not
22 been the case with a number of people that I counsel.
23 I am a readjustment counselor at the Newark vet
24 center. The uniqueness of our vet center is that we
25 use a combination to veterans and make them feel

1
2 important. One of the most difficult situations for
3 me when I had returned from Vietnam was--see, I'm a
4 proud Vietnam veteran. And I have lived with that
5 experience even when it wasn't so popular. I remember
6 when PTSD was first talked about, it was given a lot
7 of negative press, negative connotations that there
8 was something wrong with you if you had PTSD. Well,
9 war is a very chaotic experience. It's a madness and
10 that madness has an effect on the normal human being.
11 It changes you. And as a result of that change, you
12 see life from a different perspective and there are a
13 number of veterans who have been coping with their
14 Vietnam experience silently. They have been stuffing
15 it and stuffing it and stuffing it. And eventually,
16 you implode rather than explode. Maybe when you start
17 to reach your 40's, 40, 42, 43, all of the sudden, you
18 start to go back 20 years to where you were. And
19 that's when PTSD comes out. You start to think about
20 the friends that you had at that time in your life.
21 Unresolved issues start to come back and memories
22 start to come back. And some of those memories come
23 back and hit you very hard. That's what they call
24 flashbacks. Well, flashbacks are very difficult to
25 cope with because flashbacks can leave you emotionally

1
2 drained and emotionally bleeding. And it's my job and
3 my team at the Newark Vet Center and the same in
4 Jersey City is to put a Band-Aid on veterans who
5 finally start to recognize that they might possibly
6 have PTSD.

7 Now, PTSD has something like eight to
8 ten symptoms to have full blown PTSD. But there is
9 some veterans who only have one or two symptoms who
10 have been coping ever since they returned from
11 Vietnam. They have come back, started families,
12 started businesses, returned to school, got degrees
13 and all of the sudden, get into their 40's and
14 everything seems to be coming apart. And the wives of
15 the Vietnam veterans can tell you what the effect of
16 PTSD is on them because they're seeing the symptoms.
17 We vets deserve all of the assistance possible to deal
18 with our readjustment from Vietnam. Not just when we
19 came back home but for the rest of our life. That's
20 the debt that is owed to us. And with that debt comes
21 first understanding, understanding that we didn't ask
22 for post traumatic stress. But that's what happens
23 when you go through a traumatic situation. The same
24 thing that happened to the folks that went through
25 Hurricane Hugo when it brought its force onto the

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2 continent of the United States. Those people had post
3 traumatic stress. When Mount St. Helen's blew her
4 top, that caused PTSD, traumatic situation. PTSD has
5 been also diagnosed and used for other situations that
6 were traumatic.

7 Even though I know we're only talking
8 about it, people need to recognize post traumatic
9 stress as being legitimate and also something not to
10 be ashamed of. Maybe that way we'll start to get some
11 treatment and some treatment for the rest of their
12 life. Because if you have PTSD, it's treatable. But
13 you are going to have it for the rest of your life.
14 And it's going to effect you, your family, your
15 friends and anybody that comes in contact with you.
16 They have to kind of understand and the legacy of
17 Vietnam. How far will this experience go into the
18 next generation and the next generation? Unless we
19 treat it now, ten years from now when myself and a
20 number of these veterans are in our 60's, there will
21 be individuals--as a matter of fact, the population of
22 New Jersey will be nothing but veterans, first-hand
23 veterans. Meaning you can reach out and touch your
24 father, your uncle, your sister or your aunt who was a
25 veteran. And who may at that particular time may have

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2 had some readjustment problems. I deal with the
3 individuals who self-medicate, some with alcohol, some
4 with drugs and some with both. And I have to sit down
5 and tell them that it's treatable and they can forget
6 those other dependencies and deal with this
7 situation.

8 My recommendations to you that PTSD
9 be given the same kind of consideration that we do
10 when we fight a war because wars don't just stop when
11 we declare them to be over. Wars go on for
12 generations. And the legacy of Vietnam is that PTSD
13 is real and it's going to continue to be real. And
14 unless individuals start treating the veterans, it's
15 going to go into the next generation by assimilation.
16 And then we'll have another generation that will have
17 to cope. I thank you.

18 MR. DUBYNA: George Greenleaf.

19 MR. GREENLEAF: Ladies and gentlemen,
20 my name is George Greenleaf. I suffer from delayed
21 PTSD. I went to a Vietnam in 1967. My experience in
22 Vietnam was to go to the field for 30 days and come
23 back to base camp for two days. Then go to the field
24 for 30 days and search and destroy and come back to
25 base camp for two days. This continued for a period

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2 of eight months. I was sent over there again and
3 those are the last remaining eight months of military
4 service which was three years. During my tour, I
5 never received any wounds in the physical sense;
6 however, psychologically I was wounded 24 times. In
7 fact, my first experience was my third day in the
8 country and I was on patrol and the person in front of
9 me, his foot hit a booby trap. His head went south
10 and his body continued to walk north. I still carry
11 that psychological wound with me today.

12 Upon my return from Vietnam in 1967,
13 I tried to find some type of aid. At that period,
14 according to the VA, there was no such thing as
15 delayed PTSD. When I did find out that people were
16 being treated, it was 1981. And there was a waiting
17 list. Here it is now 1989 and I'm still waiting for
18 that help. The Newark Vet Center is my crutch, but
19 for Newark to be a heavily densely populated area, we
20 only have one veteran center and they're
21 understaffed. So my proposal to you is when do the
22 walking wounded receive aid? Thank you.

23 MR. DUBYNA: Gary Kirkland.

24 MR. KIRKLAND: First of all, I'd like
25 to greet all the brothers and say to those who haven't

1
2 been welcomed back, welcome back. I myself am I
3 Vietnam vet and for the last ten years I have worked
4 as what is known as a disabled veteran outreach
5 program specialist. So therefore as far as PTSD, I
6 have first-hand experience with the present
7 situation. And with my job a lot of times before we
8 can refer men out on the job, we have to assess if
9 they're job ready. And I find that a lot of veterans
10 that come to the office because they're suffering from
11 PTSD are not job ready. So what my position is to
12 refer them to a vet center, which for the last ten
13 years has been very successful in dealing with a lot
14 of veterans that had post traumatic stress. With my
15 job, guys would come into my office for no reason and
16 breakdown crying. There were times when I would have
17 to leave the office to go get a veteran and bring him
18 to the vet center, or even bring him to the VA
19 Hospital from post traumatic stress. I see there are
20 a lot of Vietnam veterans trying to forget the war
21 through using drugs and alcohol. Recently, I just
22 took a vet from the bay on New Jersey to dry out in
23 the ARU unit. Now, his situation is different because
24 he doesn't want to face--he was--his situation is
25 different because he doesn't want to face the reality

1
2 that he suffered with a problem. And I said listen,
3 you have to talk to your mother and father. Can I
4 talk to your mother and father about it? He says no,
5 man. I don't want you to bring that post traumatic
6 stress stuff to my mother and father. I don't want to
7 hear nothing about that. So some guys are trying to
8 still hide behind closed doors and they're not aware
9 of the situation and are not aware that post traumatic
10 stress is something. As far as the job market is
11 concerned, what happens with the veterans with post
12 traumatic stress? He never holds down a job. He goes
13 from job to job to job to job for the past ten years.
14 There are guys that I'm still trying to help who have
15 post traumatic stress. Some guys that have
16 acknowledged that they had a problem and sit down with
17 a counselor and maybe groups or have become successful
18 because they're dealing with that situation.

19 I myself as a Vietnam vet, deal with
20 my own mental problems. I believe I can account for
21 my own internal success because I have a personal
22 trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. But other veterans,
23 because they lack faith and lack confidence and
24 backup, are going around in circles so to speak
25 wondering in the wilderness. And it's time for us to

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2 wake up and make a stand and acknowledge the situation
3 and grab them brothers by the arms and by the
4 shoulders and bring them in and see what we can do for
5 them and see if we can so to speak lay down our life
6 for our brother. Thank you.

7 MR. DUBYNA: David Cline.

8 MR. CLINE: I live in Jersey City. I
9 served in Vietnam 1967 with a 25th Infantry Division.
10 From the time I was there, I received two gun shot
11 wounds and one shrapnel wound, a 40 percent disability
12 from those wounds. When I came back from the war, I
13 really didn't know so much with post traumatic
14 stress--back in those days we called it PV Syndrome,
15 Post Vietnam Syndrome. As you talk to this, when did
16 you go violent? PVS attack and I didn't understand
17 like how that impact of the war--how the war had
18 impacted on me personally. And I can remember all the
19 time we in the military was going unsighted. There
20 were going to make men out of us. We were just boys
21 when we went over there. They went out and then they
22 taught us things. They taught us how not to feel when
23 we saw our friends get killed. They taught us to just
24 keep going. How that is making a man or a human being
25 out of you, but that's what they taught me. And I

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2 have had a lot of problems since that in terms of my
3 relationships with my wife, my family. People talk
4 about Medicaid--self-medicating, drinking and
5 drugging. I found after the war I found myself a lot
6 of times getting drunk wanting to forget about stuff,
7 being depressed, being unhappy and just feeling
8 generally lousy about myself. After a while, I
9 started--I went down to the vet center in Jersey City
10 and became involved with their rap groups. They began
11 dealing with that and dealing with some of the
12 feelings I had with Vietnam and working to try and see
13 that this country doesn't repeat that with the next
14 generation. And I spent quite a bit of time in rap
15 groups. There is several people here that I saw in
16 that group. One of the outcomes of that was I was
17 granted a disability by the VA for post traumatic
18 stress as well.

19 After two years of that, they cut my
20 disability of post traumatic stress back from 30
21 percent to ten percent. And I still don't understand
22 how they can say to cut your disability the VA gave
23 you that and after all these years we don't have to
24 compensate you to deal with the fact that you spent
25 the last 20 years of your life being unhappy. And we

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can just deal with the fact that we gave you a few bucks and we're going to let it go. It just doesn't make sense to me. It doesn't make sense to me that we have so few vet centers throughout New Jersey, so few outreach programs in the whole State of New Jersey. There is four vet centers in New York City. We got the whole state of New Jersey. It doesn't make sense to me that there is not job programs going.

One thing in particular that doesn't make sense to me is that we don't have anything to deal with the homeless vet situation in this state. In New York City they have special facilities out Borden Avenue in Queens, veterans residences which is specifically set up for homeless veterans. Not because homeless veterans are better than anyone else. Every American has a right to a home. Everyone has a right to housing. But because of this issue of post traumatic stress, many vets have problems that are different than other homeless people. In the State of New Jersey, we have no homeless shelters. I was at Jersey City the other night, shelters in Jersey City, in Union City and this whole area are run by churches. There is no government funding. There is no government contracts to maintain these shelters.

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2 And there is no veterans residences set up to help
3 veterans who are homeless and need counseling. I
4 think that today in the New York election if Dinkins
5 became elected mayor a part of his thing is to build
6 more veteran homes. We should have that with Florio
7 if he was elected governor. I hope we see some
8 changes on this side of the river with him.

9 People talk about how many veterans
10 are in this area? What, do we drive all of our
11 homeless across to New York because we don't deal with
12 them?

13 The last thing I want to say is that
14 it is good these hearings are being held. I'm not
15 familiar with all the ins and outs of secret meetings
16 and all that, but I'm glad there are public hearings.
17 One thing we don't need is we don't need another
18 commission to issue reports. We do need reports, but
19 what we need are programs and social action. Reports
20 are fine and politicians have to make a living issuing
21 reports and shuffling paper while we pay their tax
22 dollar. We put our lives on the line. Now we expect
23 something in return and we hope that this commission
24 leads us to get programs, and particularly a home for
25 homeless veterans. Thank you.

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MR. DUBYNA: Richard Bergen.

MR. BERGEN: Richard Bergen. I'm a combat vet of the Vietnam War. I received 40 percent disability for post traumatic stress. I got a lot to say, but I only got a little bit of time.

As I see it, we got basically four kinds of veterans. You have the ones that are locked up in hospitals, the ones that are locked up in prisons, the ones that are on the streets and you have got the ones that are sleeping on their mother's couch. I have been all four. Today I'm trying to be a productive member of society. And I couldn't do that without a lot of help.

Two and half years ago I went through a post traumatic stress unit at Lyons VA Hospital and I told the people there that they work for the VA and I didn't trust them. And the lady down there told me that she didn't work for the VA. She worked at the VA and she worked or Vietnam veterans and that she was a veteran and that the people in that unit helped me a great deal. I'm also a member of the Narcotics Anonymous Fellowship. Because since 1970 when I was in Vietnam until 1987 I was a heroin addict and cocaine addict and any other addict you want me to

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2 be. I took whatever I could get so I wouldn't have to
3 deal with me. I have had about 75 different jobs and
4 I still can't hold a job.

5 But today I worked for myself. I
6 just started a business about a month ago with a
7 friend of mine and I'm working for myself today. I
8 don't have to put up with nobody's shit. The only way
9 that I can help myself is with the help of other
10 people. I have gotten very little help from the VA,
11 the State of New Jersey. A man by the name of Fred
12 Generaldi from the rehab office got me started in
13 college two years ago. After my first semester, I had
14 to get me to the VA rehab and I have been attending
15 college for the last two years. With the help of the
16 people in narcotics, I have managed to stay clean for
17 two and a half years. And because I stayed clean and
18 because I worked damn hard every day to get my ass out
19 of bed and go out and try and be a productive member
20 of society, my life is better today. I worked hard
21 today at just being a human being. It's very hard. I
22 lived in the woods. I lived in the street for 17
23 years.

24 MR. DUBYNA: Would you attribute this
25 to the Narcotics Anonymous, your feelings about going

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2 back into society and working for yourself?

3

4 MR. BERGEN: The people in Narcotics
5 Anonymous, the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous has
6 helped me to stay sober one day at a time.

6

7 I don't want to be a productive
8 member of society. To be very frank with you, this
9 fucking country and this government can go to fucking
10 hell. That's how I feel about it. That's how much
11 anger I have inside of me for my country for what they
12 did to me and my brothers. They sent me to the other
13 side of the world to some dinky little country who
14 couldn't hurt nobody and had us kill everybody we
15 could.

15

16 I have told I don't know how many
17 doctors that I have homicidal tendencies. I think
18 about hurting people. And I have hurt people. I have
19 been in jail for it. Today I try to control those
20 tendencies. Today I see a guy--I don't know see
21 him--Dr. Alson, the state pays for me to see Dr.
22 Alson. The federal government paid for one year.
23 Today the state pays for it. The State of New Jersey
24 is doing a lot to help veterans. I never heard of
25 this going on anywhere. But the state thing for post
traumatic stress, I think this is wonderful. I think

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2 a lot more needs to be done. Not only help from a
3 professional from the State, but by Vietnam veterans.

4 I have a brother who has post
5 traumatic stress. He takes three or four different
6 psychotropic drugs and he stays on my mother's couch
7 all day long. He's on Mellaril and he don't do
8 nothing. That's his life, to lay on my mother's couch
9 because he don't want to do nothing. You know. I
10 don't want to do that. I want to be a human being. I
11 have a beautiful girlfriend that wants to marry me. I
12 don't know why she wants to marry me, but she wants to
13 marry me. I want to have a life. And I'm willing to
14 do whatever I have to do to have that life. You can't
15 just say help us. We got to help ourselves too. Guys
16 like Dennis are helping and Joyce Cohen. We got to do
17 it too. We can hold out our hand, but if you don't
18 get up on your feet and walk, we can't just cry all
19 day. We have to get together and we have to help
20 ourselves. You know. The only way I can help myself
21 today is if I stay sober today. If I go out and get
22 drunk, I'm back in the street. I'm back with the gun
23 in my hand taking somebody's money and then I'm back
24 in prison.

25 So there is a lot of guys in prison.

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2 I was reading about a guy the other day in the paper.
3 He murdered a lady that owned a bar over here. She's
4 a Vietnam vet and he shot her for nothing. I
5 understand him. I know why he shot her for nothing
6 because he don't care about her. And he probably
7 thinks he's better off locked up in a prison
8 somewhere. I always thought that I was better off
9 when they locked me up because I felt like an animal.
10 I felt unwanted in my own country, you know. I had to
11 seek out the help and I had to really want it. You
12 really got to want it.

13 And I see black men here. He knows
14 what I mean when I say I had to work twice as hard at
15 something to get where I am because the black people
16 in this county have to work twice as hard as the guy
17 next to them to get where they are today. I go down
18 to the VA to give them to rehab and they still tell me
19 I have to maintain a B average to go to college.
20 Everybody else has to have a B. I have to have a B.
21 But that's what I have to do. That's what I got to
22 do. I do whatever I have to do today to make my life
23 better today.

24 There is a lot of people walking
25 around with post traumatic stress. There are women

1
2 whose father's raped them for ten years when they were
3 children. There is guys that have all kinds of
4 situations. Post traumatic stress is not owned by
5 Vietnam veterans. There are a lot of them with it and
6 we need help. We need help in how to learn to live
7 again in the world, in the world and in the country
8 that I have a great deal of anger for. I have a great
9 deal of anger for my country and I really don't want
10 to be no part of it, but what's my choice to go backup
11 back up in the woods and get drunk and be a bum in the
12 streets and to go to prison? I have done all of those
13 things in the last 17 years. I have no choice. I got
14 to do something for me.

15 I only know I got to tell you guys I
16 stay sober today and I have two and a half years clean
17 today and I am proud of that and that's the only thing
18 that keeps me going.

19 MR. DYBYNA: Dennis Regynye.

20 MR. REGYNYE: Dennis Regynye. I'm
21 associated with Chapter 151, Vietnam Veterans of
22 America. Until December 30, 1988, I was programmed
23 coordinator for post traumatic stress counseling
24 through the state through the Department of Military
25 and Veterans Affairs. In my time as program

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2 coordinator, I have found that one of the major
3 problems in the state is the referral system, meaning
4 state and county VSO. I feel that the commission
5 should get in tune to the Department of Military and
6 Veterans Affairs and get together with their VSO and
7 train them in handling the problem. Since the state
8 took the program away from Chapter 151, I have done
9 some surveying with the clinics that we contracted.
10 Within a year that the department took the contract
11 from us, there were only two referrals within a year.
12 We're looking into with problem. The VSO is not doing
13 their jobs. They're not helping out the veterans.
14 Most of the veterans don't even know what post
15 traumatic stress is--what it is until they stumble on
16 somebody who has it. I had a lot of other things to
17 add, but everybody just about covered what I was going
18 to say.

19 MR. DUBYNA: Michael Colicchio.

20 MR. COLICCHIO: Michael Colicchio at
21 Chapter 151. I didn't plan on speaking tonight, but
22 you have heard a number of people up here expressing
23 themselves regarding post traumatic stress, some quite
24 eloquently, others vocally and angrily. Everybody is
25 communicating here. They are vital parts of society.

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2 They're keeping with their experiences, when they have
3 to, when they can. What I'm concerned about is when
4 they can't cope.

5 I also served with Dennis on the PTSD
6 Agency from 151 and I share some of his concerns about
7 service offices. When these people cannot cope, they
8 need help. I would hope that the commission would
9 consider returning the agency situation back to the
10 local chapters. We had quite a number of people
11 involved and we saw amazing success coming from it. I
12 feel they just don't trust the establishment type of
13 treatment they received from the service offices and I
14 would hope that simply they would be willing to
15 reconsider this option in running the program. Thank
16 you.

17 MR. DUBYNA: Steve Shuey.

18 MR. SHUEY: I'm representing CWA
19 Working Committee on Veterans. Since I have five
20 minutes, I'd like to submit my first few to Dennis,
21 team leader, who is presently a contractor with the VA
22 on counseling Vietnam veterans and is himself a
23 disabled Vietnam vet.

24 MR. KEELY: Steve said I'm 100
25 percent disabled Vietnam combat veteran. I know what

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2 one of the people on the committee tonight introduced
3 himself as a combat veteran and what I'm saying to the
4 commission is, that doesn't qualify somebody to sit on
5 a Post Traumatic Stress Commission like that. I'm
6 also a therapist and I have been working with Vietnam
7 veterans for a number of years. And I think that that
8 qualifies somebody like me or somebody like Dr.
9 Petronko or Dr. Reilly here, to sit where you are
10 sitting tonight. My question is, what are your
11 credentials other than the fact that you are a Vietnam
12 combat veteran?

13 I'd also like to comment on the fact
14 like Frank Rickette said earlier that this commission,
15 up until very recently, has been held in secret. And
16 I don't understand why that's been so. I also don't
17 understand why at this late date the state allocates a
18 million and a half dollars--I think that's the correct
19 figure--to fund the commission to find out what the
20 needs of the Vietnam combat veterans are. There is a
21 body of research available which has been available
22 since the early 1970's. Since that time, which is
23 over 15 years ago, there is a tremendous body of
24 research made available. Out of some of the research
25 done with Vietnam veterans, came the Society for

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2 Traumatic Studies which is made of the researchers,
3 many of whom are Vietnam veterans.

4 So to sum it up, I'm asking you
5 people, what the heck are you doing with a million and
6 a half dollars? A million and a half dollars can buy
7 a lot of services. If you want to know what the needs
8 are of Vietnam veterans, why don't you ask some of the
9 distinguished people you have here in your audience.

10 MR. SHUEY: Steve Shuey. I was an
11 officer for the state. I have also been involved in
12 PDR way back when before it was popular. I also have
13 post traumatic stress. I was hired in 1984. And just
14 briefly to give you an idea of the kind of people that
15 are representing themselves now--there is a bit of
16 theater here. This is timeliness in terms of the
17 governor's election and it's attempt to promote some
18 jobs for people who basically the only thing that
19 qualifies them is that you are veterans and that's
20 it.

21 This letter is a quote it's an
22 affidavit that's going into my case. There has just
23 been a settlement after three and half years of
24 harassment as service officer in my attempt to get
25 help for veterans and their families.

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2 (At this time, a letter is read into
3 the record by Mr. Shuey.)

4 There is a number of affidavits that
5 I have in the way they treat disabled veterans. As I
6 have already stated, you have had enough time to get
7 this together. I don't want to see this commission do
8 more work in an attempt by some officials in this room
9 to assure the public and these people they're going to
10 do something about post traumatic stress. The key is
11 hiring caring Vietnam veterans, hiring disabled
12 veterans.

13 Now, I can go on and on and on, but I
14 wanted, for the sake of the record, to give some sort
15 of inkling. If you don't have caring people in there
16 giving services, you just have veterans who will be
17 cynical, self-serving political junk, then we're going
18 to continue for another 20 years losing veterans and
19 having veterans of broken families and disruptive
20 lives. Thank you.

21 MR. DUBYNA: Gregory Payton.

22 MR. PAYTON: Gregory Payton. I'm a
23 member of the VVAW. I'm a Vietnam veteran from 1967
24 to 1968. I just found it hard to believe that after
25 20 years of suffering that the state is just decided

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2 that they're going to form a commission to do
3 something about veterans' situations. It seems to me
4 that it doesn't take any mind for anyone to just
5 recommend. We're suffering and dying in the streets
6 on a daily basis. And if you just go to the VA
7 Hospital and sit in one of them chairs for about four
8 hours to see a doctor, for him to tell you to come
9 back two more weeks later and tell you the same whole
10 run around, then you don't understand some of the
11 major problems that we have. Especially here in the
12 State of New Jersey where we can run campaigns and
13 spend millions of dollars. The question is a million
14 and half dollars were allocated to this commission to
15 set a budget is like what is actually going to take
16 place as a result of these hearings.

17 I think that anybody that went to
18 Vietnam suffers from post traumatic stress. Leaving
19 your home and going 5,000 miles away and being
20 involved in a war and then being released and put back
21 out on the street needs counseling, any kind of
22 reintroduction to society is a travesty in itself.
23 But I want to point out that here in New Jersey, we
24 have a situation where in the whole State of New
25 Jersey have only 15 percent for post traumatic

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2 stress. That's located in Lyons Hospital. 15 percent
3 in the whole State of New Jersey. There are only 14
4 beds in the whole State of New Jersey for drug
5 addiction. We know that 80 percent of the veterans
6 suffer from some kind of substance abuse problem here
7 in America. We don't need reports to remind us. We
8 know that 30 percent of the prison population are
9 veterans. But yet we're going to have a meeting to
10 sit down and find out the problems that's going on
11 with the veterans. Some of us that want substance
12 abuse help, we want to improve our lives. We cannot
13 do it because some bureaucracy, some old BS.

14 And I'm hoping, I would like to be
15 optimistic, but the state hasn't showed me anything,
16 this country hasn't showed me anything. I think,
17 number one, that we're going to have to begin to have
18 more outreach to veterans. I think that we're going
19 to have to go in and start braking this down into
20 communities and going in to talk to some people that
21 couldn't be here today, that couldn't talk for
22 themselves. I think that we certainly need for
23 substance abuse treatment centers, treatment
24 facilities. This is only 65 beds for alcoholism in
25 the whole State of New Jersey sponsored by the VA.

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2 There are so many different things that we need, that
3 I'm hoping, and I really would like to be optimistic
4 that this commission would begin to start addressing
5 these problems. We have been talking about that for
6 20 years.

7 I think everybody up there that is a
8 veteran up there understands the problems that we go
9 through. I want to say in closing that as go to
10 veterans so go the country. Thank you.

11 MR. DUBYNA: I'd like to make a
12 correction to some statements. PTSD has no budget to
13 speak of. We do not have a million and a half
14 dollars. We have zero budget in which to work with.
15 The secret meetings that they referred to, I'd like to
16 know more about that. Our first meeting began in
17 January of this year.

18 MR. PAYTON: Nobody else knew about
19 them. It was kept quiet. I asked for the minutes of
20 your last meeting. They told me it was illegal.

21 MR. DUBYNA: You sat at one of our
22 meetings; am I correct?

23 MR. PAYTON: It was March.

24 MR. DUBYNA: January.

25 MR. PAYTON: Meetings over at Passaic

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2 County and I asked for \$1700 to get Peter to put up
3 and at sometime told you you had to get taught because
4 you had a million and a half dollars. There are men
5 here who were there. You said it. As for money, you
6 said you had the money but you wanted \$1700 for our
7 veterans group.

8 MR. DUBYNA: I understand that there
9 was a million dollars. I'm starting to get worried
10 about this. We could not have this money at that time
11 I thought that we did have it.

12 We have more speakers.

13 MR. DUBYNA: Florencio Lebron.

14 MR. LEBRON: For a long period of
15 time I have been trying to find out what is the origin
16 of this commission. I have even asked elected
17 officials to try and find it as a personal favor.
18 Until I came across a small town newspaper article
19 about this commission, I never would have known it had
20 existed.

21 At the time we had a veteran who was
22 unemployed because every time he got up on heights, he
23 was having trouble with flashbacks. We couldn't get
24 him a job. We couldn't get him in vocational training
25 and the guy has been in the bottle and all kinds of

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2 become rhetorical garbage to be used by politicians to
3 enable them to climb across parties.

4 I still have nightmares about people
5 I don't know, about guys that I met in the country who
6 told me about what they did on patrol. I was
7 debriefed, in essence. I was also a guy who sent out
8 other guys who never came back. As a clinician, I'm
9 finding out that most of the rage that I had in the
10 past may have been related to war, may have been
11 related to my own personality deficits.

12 But I still have a question. I will
13 not climb to any victory, to any gain, on someone
14 else's dead body. So I ask before I recognize this
15 commission, you show me your credentials and I will
16 help you.

17 MRS. CLINE: I'm Anna Cline. I'm a
18 wife of a Vietnam vet. And I was very glad to hear
19 people talk about the families of veterans needing
20 support. I'm speaking for the families. I don't
21 think there is enough support for the family system.
22 Veterans depend a lot on their families because there
23 hasn't been such support for them in the society.
24 That puts a lot of strain on the family. And when we
25 go to get help, sometimes a lot of times there is not

1
2 enough support for children and wives in vet centers.
3 They cut my husband's PTSD disability, without even
4 interviewing him, much less interviewing me. I don't
5 understand on what they could base that when they
6 didn't know what the situation was. It's incredible
7 to me that they have the power to do that. I feel
8 that a lot of the solution to solving the veterans
9 feelings, bad feelings, about himself is not simply a
10 pseudopatriotic pat on the back. The veterans guilts
11 and rage or just ambivalent feelings about their
12 participation in the Vietnam war which was a war on a
13 civilian population; that these feelings are not
14 treated with respect; that these feelings are not
15 validated by the society or the country yet as real
16 problems. And in fact, the VA does not even recognize
17 this as a legitimate area, these morale issues. But
18 the vet as a person has to deal with these issues.
19 Vets did the job of carrying out our government's
20 policy and they learned the morale issues of the war
21 first-hand in their experience. There is no question
22 that morale sense is part of your self-esteem. Most
23 Americans are raised to prize the values of fair play,
24 honesty, protection of the weak, especially children,
25 and also to love and respect the land. These are

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2 values we are raised with and that the war in Vietnam
3 obviously violated on a massive scale every single one
4 of these ethics. I was in a wives' group. And every
5 time I tried to raise a morale question or anybody did
6 as a possible reason for the veterans withdrawal and
7 lack of communication, this issue was called
8 political. That was a way to pigeon hole this
9 problem. I don't think this is simply a political
10 issue. If your husband feels he participated in
11 something wrong, that was really--I'm not talking
12 about the demonstrations here raised. I'm talking
13 about the veterans' own experience. Trying to limit
14 the morale sense of it, that that only counts, what
15 you do in this country. It only counts what you do
16 with your family. It only counts what you do from now
17 on. That kind of thinking cuts a vet in half. It
18 just leaves half of him over there and the other half
19 over here. And a person can't be a whole person with
20 his family like that. And that's what happens. I saw
21 that happen. It happens to veterans even when they
22 take an active position against things that they
23 participated in that they think were wrong. It's an
24 unavoidable problem.

25 The only thing I think will help it

1
2 is more community involvement and recognition of the
3 problem. I would like to see more state support for
4 the vet and especially for the family of the vet.
5 That kind of cutting a person in half does not open
6 channels for communication. Certainly, it reflects
7 how the vet feels with his family because it affects
8 his self-esteem, his ability to cope with his place in
9 the home. So I made a mistake I was wrong. The
10 coping ability of dealing with demands by children,
11 anger and frustration by spouse, the vet sees it often
12 as he's being attacked and instead of that he's being
13 reached for. All of these kinds of things need a lot
14 more understanding and work, people who care.

15 I just want to raise one more thing.
16 There isn't enough support for veterans who are
17 struggling to deal with substance abuse. Often times
18 veterans when they do stop with help using substances
19 and stop medicating themselves, go through more severe
20 withdrawal in a sense or the withdrawal takes a new
21 form. And it's very tough on the family and it's very
22 confusing to the vet and sometimes the vet finds it
23 hard to get support from traditional groups like AA
24 and NA because he looks at these people and he says
25 they're not veterans and they talk about stuff like

1

2 what the vets often called bull shit, little stuff and
3 they have trouble relating sometimes. I think there
4 should be more vet groups dealing with the issues of
5 substance abuse. They do get more support from each
6 other. I also think there is a lack of understanding
7 of this because I went through this experience to some
8 extent myself.

9

MR. DUBYNA: Your time is up. If you
10 could wrap it up.

11

MRS. CLINE: I have pretty much said
12 what I had to say. Thank you.

13

MR. DUBYNA: Thank you.

14

John Loughlin.

15

MR. LOUGHLIN: John Loughlin. You
16 may be wondering, we received an invitation by the
17 way--I'm representing the State of New Jersey American
18 X-prisoners of War. I'm Chapter Commander. And I
19 sympathize with the people who are here to speak as
20 well as those of you who are seated. I think that I
21 could probably in all humility helped to at least a
22 small extent. We prisoners of war--and they include,
23 by the way, World War II, we have I think not in our
24 group, but throughout the country--we do have a think
25 a few POWs here in Vietnam. We didn't get started,

1

2 believe it or not, we're in the worse position than
3 you Vietnam veterans. Our group and all the POW
4 groups, we had a reunion. We started the Vietnam
5 veterans. Don't let anyone ever tell you you were
6 forgotten. We supported you to the hilt. We didn't
7 get much help from the VA. It wasn't until the
8 Iranian hostages came home, we realized the
9 decorations they got and we had forgotten.

10

Let me give you some advice. Get
11 after your politicians. We had talked to George
12 Bush. As you know, he's a combat veteran. We had--of
13 course you know our new governor, but he's a veteran.
14 Get after your politicians. What we did was we got
15 together. We now have six chapters of POWs throughout
16 New Jersey representing close to 800 men. We went
17 through the same things you went through.

18

When I was discharged, I went to
19 drinking a bit and took me a few months to get back
20 into college. For me, it wasn't the drugs. It wasn't
21 the drinking. It was hard work. I went back to
22 college. I got married. I worked day and night. And
23 that sort of took care of me. And it wasn't until
24 about ten years ago when we got together where we had
25 post traumatic stress. We can tell you a hell of a

1
2 lot about post traumatic stress. We advised some of
3 the doctors of our problems. We helped them. Mrs.
4 Cline was up here a little while ago talking about the
5 family. I was at the VA a few years ago. And some of
6 you know who he was--very heck of a nice person and we
7 had a POW that she wasn't aware of and he was
8 suicidal. He attempted suicide a few times. His
9 family had nothing to do with him. The guy was
10 suffering from post traumatic stress and nobody knew
11 about it. We got him up to our group, our rap group
12 up in Lyons and he's a changed person. We comparing
13 notes realized that the wives and the children are
14 suffering part of your post traumatic stress. I have
15 had post traumatic stress. We have had cases, for
16 example, a pilot who had his children kneel down
17 before they had meals to pray. And because he was
18 trying to put on his family what he suffered through
19 in a prison camp, he would have post traumatic
20 stress. We have a few people in and out of the
21 psychiatric center because of suicidal tendencies and
22 get together at a group and go through the rap. Wives
23 get together. We have speakers. We ourselves
24 have--if any of you are interested, we have a fellow
25 who is an advisor to the directors of the Bridge Over

1
2 the River Kwai. You probably have seen that film. We
3 have very good speakers. If you at any time need such
4 help, please let us know.

5 I would just like to say this. We
6 had here a while ago Leon Wilson. He was saving me
7 the trouble of mentioning it. Leon has been featured,
8 running a series of articles about Vietnam. I'll pass
9 it around. There is an article about Leon Wilson.
10 When I was up at a convention in Canada. I happen to
11 take this. I'll read it to you. "POW Today. This
12 applies to you. I'm mean Vietnam veterans also.
13 Symptoms, physical and/or mental, can appear during an
14 experience and remain for a month or long periods and
15 reappearing. You can have it for years and then it
16 will reappear as post traumatic stress syndrome. It
17 can't be changed. It's irreversible physical and
18 mental damage. Perhaps the most common physical
19 symptom is premature aging. And if we believe this
20 condition is our own fault, psychological symptoms may
21 develop. They blamed it on themselves and we have had
22 psychological damages, people who have attempted
23 suicide. I know the people.

24 MR. DUBYNA: Please wrap it up, your
25 time is up.

1
2 THE AUDIENCE: Thank you. Let me
3 just say that we have had--I have seen people say I'm
4 proud of being an American. I went to the program
5 today in Orange where the Air Force has adopted a
6 program and they are really giving thanks to
7 veterans.

8 Let me tell you about our group. We
9 do have a big group. We have had to separate buddies
10 cursing because they were going through this post
11 traumatic stress. I could talk much, much longer
12 but. I have quite a bit of information on this. And
13 you can get help from they lawyers, for example, in
14 New York, to make sure that the State of New Jersey
15 would be the second state which means that all
16 veterans including the Vietnam veterans will get a job
17 if it's available over any and all civilians. I think
18 it's coming to you. Thank you very much.

19 MR. DUBYNA: Thank you, sir.

20 Bill Nabinger.

21 MR. NABINGER: I am with Vietnam
22 Veterans United in Trenton. I don't speak for Mr.
23 Hillman, I speak for myself.

24 First of all, I'd like to tell you
25 people that this is from the state laws. Meetings

1
2 open to the public, exclusive of public subject matter
3 discussions, except as provided by Section B, that all
4 meetings of public bodies shall be open to the public
5 at all times. Nothing in this act shall be construed
6 or limited. What I am trying to say here is I was
7 told by your coordinator that I couldn't speak tonight
8 because I live in Trenton. But we'll be down there in
9 March. I don't know if I can make it in March. So to
10 me that tells me right away that people who care and
11 want to do something for veterans should be open to
12 all veterans to speak whenever they want. These
13 people earned it. He didn't sign a list or whatever
14 so they should be allowed to talk. And you want to
15 know whether your government has done shit for us.
16 Now we're looking to see what you are going to do for
17 us. One doctor says how extensive the study and how
18 extensive post traumatic stress is. Well, it's
19 extensive to me if one Vietnam vet has post traumatic
20 stress because I care. Because I care. And that's
21 the difference. We need people that care. Not
22 committees put together for political reasons and that
23 bull shit. And one thing you can do if you are going
24 to stay in existence. If you are going it try and do
25 something you can be accountable for what you do. You

1
2 went dressed up in a suit. I don't understand that.
3 I don't understand. We're shitting on each other even
4 in groups like this. The bottom line is this is
5 America. This is something that--this is all for us.
6 We talk about the Veterans Administration. I have got
7 an old copy of a veterans newsletter, special issue,
8 veterans issue. It's all been here before, said and
9 done before. I'm on the edge all the time. I have an
10 article here in the Village Voice, the police
11 department compliance. I have been in jail. I have
12 had two marriages. I have been on dope. And
13 something is still inside of me. We drive ourselves
14 to success for whatever intrinsic reward we get. But
15 I don't want to be part of it half the time and part
16 of it. I want to get in there and go for that job and
17 be a veteran's counselor. We're doing the same thing
18 here in a different way to each other. He's accusing
19 you and you're accusing him.

20 The bottom line is I learned one
21 simple fact and we're human and we're very fragile
22 individuals. We have to love each other. We have
23 to. If we don't, this country is going to go down the
24 tubes like shit.

25 I have a scrap book of things that I

1
2 have literally copies. I have silent gunman kills
3 four. Agent Orange in New Jersey. What does New
4 Jersey do for veterans?

5 Thank you.

6 MR. DUBYNA: I'd like to thank
7 everyone for participating in this hearing. We have
8 several more to look forward to. I'd like to say that
9 certainly as a veteran, I am on your side. I'm
10 volunteering. I want this commission to get something
11 done. If I can have anything to say about it, it will
12 be done.

13 MR. MILLER: This is more post
14 traumatic stress. We have been hearing this bull
15 shit.

16 Edward Miller. I went in '64 when
17 the shit first hit the fan. When we came back from
18 home, we got shit on from our government. You form
19 the commissions, agent Orange, post traumatic stress,
20 this, that and the other thing. It is all a crock of
21 shit. We're going back to World War I. After World
22 War I they called it shell shock. After World War II,
23 they called it something else. It always boils down
24 to the same stuff. We are human beings. We have
25 suffered the pain of war, the anguish. I have lost a

1
2 family. I still wake up in the middle of the night.
3 I'm shaking right now just thinking about it. I have
4 seen other guys talk tonight. You say you want to do
5 something about it. You got a commission here. You
6 have guest speakers lined up for tonight, people that
7 were supposed to talk that didn't talk. What happened
8 to their time? What happened to the time that was
9 allotted for them at this meeting? They were already
10 on the paper. They didn't speak. This is an open
11 forum.

12 THE AUDIENCE: I had to argue over
13 the phone to testify out here. The outreach
14 coordinator gave other veterans crap.

15 They tried to talk us out of coming
16 here. Tried to control what was going to be said
17 here. That's the problem. And that's been the
18 problem.

19 MR. MILLER: They tell to you go to
20 the VA outreach center. I want you to know as God as
21 my witness, I went through--back in '86, I went to
22 Newark to the Veterans Administration Building down
23 there where they held hearings on this, where we sat
24 and we gave depositions upon depositions upon
25 depositions. We heard no outcome of it. I got a

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letter stating that I was eligible for PTSD. They didn't want to bother with it. Now they're bringing up another commission to study it further.

Again, it goes right back to the same stuff. It was shell shock in World War I. What's any different today? We're still shell shock. We still have post traumatic stress. We're still going through the pier pressure from you people, but we're living with it on a daily basis. It's about time and I hope you guys do something about it. Thank you.

THE AUDIENCE: May I use his time, please?

MR. DUBYNA: Yes, you may.

THE AUDIENCE: I'm a Newark Police Sergeant. I just got out of the PTSD unit in Lyons. I have it. I went through a family. I have daughter who doesn't want to see me, an ex-wife who fled to Oregon. I don't know where she lives. I have no communication with my too little ones. The depression and the hurt and the anger--I'm not homicidal, but the hurt and the anger and feelings. What this country did to us as a group is overwhelming. The State of New Jersey I hope does better by us with the PTSD than it did by the World War II veterans when they raised

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2 the cigarette tax to give them a bonus. They're still
3 waiting for all of them to die off. You have got
4 people here with disabilities, some 100 percent
5 disabled from gun shot wounds or shrapnel.

6 I mean Newark itself has got enough
7 locations like colleges, churches, courtrooms,
8 municipal buildings. You could use Penn Station, it
9 would be better. And I wonder then what this
10 commission. What are you charged with? What are you
11 studying that post traumatic stress exists? It does.
12 It's a known fact. Reams of material have been
13 written. Where do you go with this? What are you
14 charged with? Who do you return this to? Could we
15 have a commission studying post traumatic stress and
16 your charges with what? Are you going to get back to
17 someone and then put something into motion to direct
18 monies? Money isn't the answer. I took a job in
19 Hillside Police Department and the first question I
20 got asked in 1971 was by the police chief after I
21 spent almost four years in that damnable country, you
22 were in Vietnam. I responded yes, sir. How many
23 times did you use drugs? I never did. I came home in
24 1968 and the guy beat me home. He was supposed to
25 come home three days later, but he was home in a box.

1

2 The peanut farmer welcomed everybody back to Canada
3 and we get shit on. That's all I have to say. Thank
4 you.

5

THE AUDIENCE: The whole God damn
6 department needs to be cleaned out. Thank you.

7

MR. DUBYNA: Thank you.

8

MR. BENEDETO: Tony Benedeto. I have
9 been in law enforcement for 11 years. And I have seen
10 the hurt and the broken families and the hurt that
11 when I have to put on handcuffs that hurt me. But I
12 cope with it. Thank God I have a family that helps
13 me. I have friends that help me. Vietnam is a long
14 time ago, but it still hurts. I formed an
15 organization with police officers, sheriff's officers
16 and correction officers and we get together and we
17 talk about our--we're all veterans. I seen the hurt
18 and I know what these guys go through. I hurt. I
19 cry. There is a lot of pain. I'm asking you to go
20 out and get guys that are like this. Go out and talk
21 to them. Go into the jails, maybe help these guys
22 back.

23

There was a gentlemen who is sitting
24 out in the audience because he is a hell of a guy, but
25 he found a veteran who was homeless and kept him and

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2 we talk about the homeless dead. He went to great
3 extremes to find this persons family and I think he
4 deserves a lot of credit. There are a lot of things
5 that the wives of veterans have to deal with. They
6 need the help. They need help. And I'd like to
7 salute them too. They fighting their own personal war
8 keeping us together. I know my wife keeps me
9 together.

10 Paperwork is great. Money is money.
11 But just sit down and maybe talk and see what we can
12 put this money that we're supposed to have and how to
13 help the beds, more beds, more hospitals. For all
14 vets, alcohol, I seen alcohol. I seen it ever day in
15 my job. I see alcohol. I was a correction officer
16 for seven years. Now I'm a sheriff's officer. I know
17 I had to go into cells and guys that suffered from
18 this disease that the gentlemen out here are suffering
19 from. I had to go in there and restrain that person
20 and it hurt. I had to go into my car at night and sit
21 and just sit for a few minutes and cry because that
22 hurts.

23 If you're going to be a commission,
24 help us. Thank you.

25 MR. McCALLEY: George McCalley. I

1
2 spent three years at Vietnam and came back with a lot
3 of problems, drugs, heroin, cocaine, ex-wife. I got
4 post traumatic stress. A lot of people talk about
5 PTSD. Four years I went to the vet center where Angel
6 is at. June I graduate and become a doctor and these
7 people over here helped me. There is a chance out
8 there to make something of your self. Maybe I'm one
9 of the lucky ones. I got a wife. I am going to come
10 back and help the people that helped me. I hope you
11 guys can do the same. Thank you.

12 MR. DUBYNA: Thank you everyone and
13 good night.

14 (Additional testimony received by
15 mail.)

16 November 11, 1989

17 Dear Mr. Dubyna:

18 I am the chairman of the Board of
19 Directors of the Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter
20 200 and was unable to attend the recent open hearing
21 of the PTSD Commission. As such, I am writing to
22 request that my statements be entered into the record
23 for that hearing.

24 Since late 1987, VVA Chapter 22, has
25 been directly involved in the analysis and assistance

1
2 of vets suffering from the symptoms of PTSD. Our
3 expertise comes from first hand contact among our own
4 who are seeking a way to deal with the horrors of the
5 Vietnam War. I am sure the commission fully
6 understands the concept that PTSD is not an illness
7 that responds to short term treatment, but that there
8 is a necessity to encourage the development of long
9 term programs. These programs must, by necessity,
10 include not only the veterans but also the veterans'
11 family. Our experience has also indicated that there
12 are other groups, such as employers, teachers,
13 physicians and the population that interacts with the
14 veterans who must be educated as to the effects of
15 PTSD.

16 Our primary concern of course is the
17 immediate education of the commission so that the
18 members can effectively report and recommend to the
19 governor and the legislature on the necessity for
20 programs that will solve the problems that PTSD
21 created. The reality is that state funding will have
22 to be justified in order to enact these programs.
23 Justification will depend solely on the ability of the
24 commission to accurately define the needs and provide
25 the answers. The commission must make itself

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2 available to the veterans community and must be the
3 veterans advocate to the state. This means more than
4 statistical analysis and broad brush overviews. We
5 feel that there must be an intense effort on the part
6 of all the members of the commission.

7 For our part, we are willing to
8 cooperate in any way possible to insure that the above
9 stated goals and objectives are met. There is no room
10 for political or bureaucratic prejudice or partisan
11 statements. The significant veterans population in
12 our state who served during the Vietnam War are
13 looking to the PTSD commission for answers. We want
14 to assist the commission in providing those answers.

15 When we ran the state funded PTSD
16 program, we reached out to a large number of Vietnam
17 vets who were searching for a way to handle their
18 problem. They may have not known that they had PTSD
19 or that their problems were a direct result of the
20 trauma of the war. They did know that their brothers
21 were there, and are still there, to offer them
22 whatever help they can. Since the state has taken
23 over the direct administration of the program we are
24 now actively pursuing other means of providing help to
25 our brothers. One of these is to insure that the PTSD

1
2 commission is effective. There is no room for a "No
3 Show" Commission. There is no room for a commission
4 that "Kowtows" to the bureaucracy or becomes part of
5 the system that gives lip service to the veteran.

6 The initiative that the commission
7 has shown to date in conducting the open hearings must
8 continue.

9 I would appreciate it if you would
10 please confirm receipt of these statements and their
11 inclusion in the record of the hearing. I would also
12 appreciate receiving a copy of the record of the
13 hearing.

14
15 Sincerely yours,

16
17 Andrew J. Marotta
18 Chairman of the Board
19 Vietnam Veterans of America
20 Chapter 200

21 (Whereupon this proceeding was
22 adjourned at 9:15 p.m.)
23
24
25

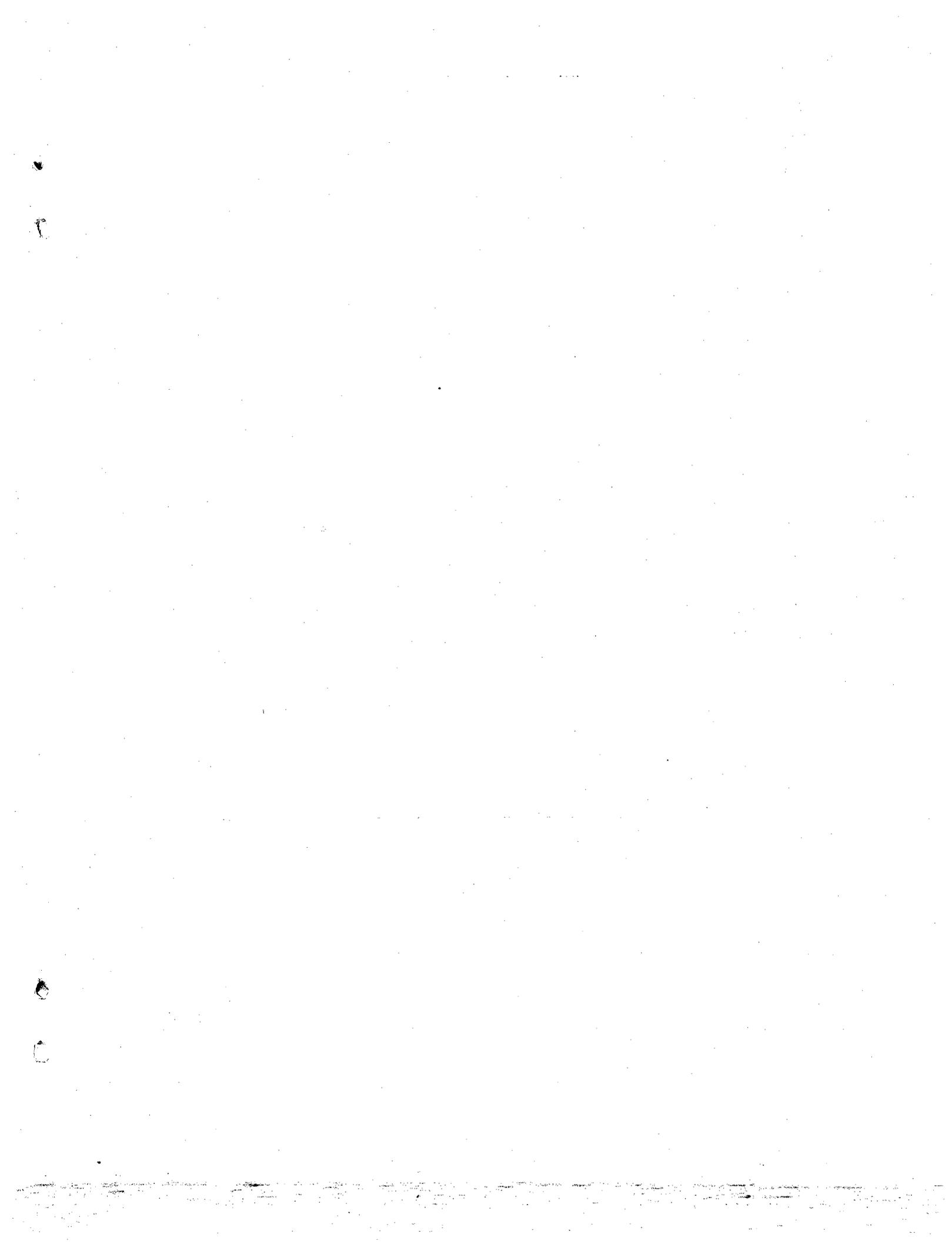
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C E R T I F I C A T E

I, BRENDA J. RISSMEYER, a Certified Shorthand Reporter and a Notary Public of the State of New Jersey, do hereby certify the foregoing to be a true and accurate transcript of my original stenographic notes taken at the time and place hereinbefore set forth.

Brenda J. Rissmeyer
BRENDA J. RISSMEYER, CSR

Dated: December 11, 1989

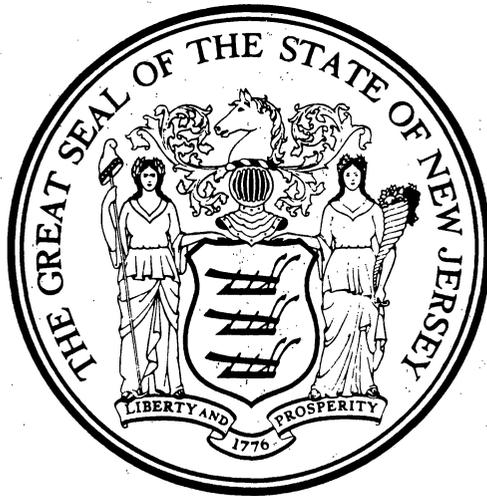


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New Jersey Department
of
Military & Veterans' Affairs