

A Call for Reopening Of the Clemency Program

Washington

Charles E. Goodell, who headed the Presidential Clemency Board before it closed September 20, called on Congress yesterday to reopen the clemency program.

"I'm also asking the President to lend his support" to this effort, Goodell said.

He told a news conference that the program was only a partial success over-all because it "ended with so many not knowing they could apply."

The program was established in September, 1974, to rehabilitate Vietnam era draft evaders and military deserters. It applied to both those who had been convicted and punished for offenses between Aug. 4, 1964, and March 28, 1973, and those who had not yet been convicted and punished.

Goodell said only 21,500 applied, of whom 8000 were found ineligible. It had been estimated that about 100,000 were eligible.

Goodell said 27 per cent of those who applied to the board were Vietnam veterans, "many of whom volunteered for combat."

"Of this group, 103 individuals are veterans who served heroically in Vietnam," he said. "We have recommended to the President that he direct that they be given immediate upgraded discharges under honorable conditions, with full entitlement to veterans' benefits."

Another 150 were referred to military discharge review boards for special consideration for upgrade and full veterans' benefits, he said. "Another 400 cases involved individuals who were wounded and permanently disabled in Vietnam for whom the board has recommended medical benefits only."

Mr. Ford has acted upon 13,133 of the board's 14,500 recommendations, with about 1000 being reconsidered by the Justice Department pardon attorney. These 1000 had records of felonies other than desertion and draft evasion.

Forty-two per cent of the 13,133 were given immediate pardons and almost all the others will receive pardons after three to six months of alternate service.

Associated Press