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Homesteads on Public Lands

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S. Rep. No. 750, 45th Cong., 3rd Sess. (1879)

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

FEBRUARY 12, 1879.—Ordered to be printed.

Mr. OGLESBY, from the Committee on Public Lands, submitted the following

REPORT:

[To accompany bill S. 1778.]

The Committee on Public Lands, to whom was referred the bill (S. 1778) for the relief of certain persons locating homesteads upon the public lands, respectfully report:

The Chicago Soldiers and Citizens' Colony is an association of persons desirous of locating as a colony upon the public lands, and thus securing to themselves the benefits of the pre-emption and homestead laws. The association now numbers over three hundred members, and its membership is expected to be largely increased. To find a body of public land sufficiently large to meet the wants of so extensive a colony, and at the same time to secure proximity to some line of railroad deemed essential to the success of the undertaking, it has been found necessary to go far beyond the present limits of settlements. A location for the colony has therefore been selected in the extreme northwestern part of the State of Kansas, in a portion of country heretofore considered as beyond the "rain-belt," and where successful cultivation of the soil has heretofore been thought impracticable. This location is understood to be satisfactory to the members of the association.

Already a number of homesteads have been selected by members of the colony and declaratory statements filed in the proper district land-office, under the provisions of existing homestead and pre-emption laws, and some of the claimants have actually taken up their residences upon their claims. But a majority of the members of the colony, and of those who desire to become such, being mainly people of small means, or being engaged in business enterprises which they cannot immediately close up without material sacrifices, find it impossible to make their final entries and take up their actual residences upon the claims selected for them within the time required by the law. They, therefore, ask simply that this time be extended in their cases to two years from the date of filing their declaratory statements in the district land-office, proposing in the mean time to make or cause to be made a certain amount of improvements and cultivation upon their respective claims each year as an earnest of their good faith as set forth in the bill.

Your committee is inclined to look favorably upon this undertaking. The establishment of this colony at the point designated in the bill, if successful, will demonstrate the practicability of successfully cultivating a portion of the public lands heretofore considered of little or no value

