

2-6-1885

Report : Petition of F. Thomas

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Recommended Citation

S. Rep. No. 1169, 48th Cong., 2nd Sess. (1885)

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

FEBRUARY 6, 1885.—Ordered to be printed.

Mr. CULLOM, from the Committee on Pensions, submitted the following

REPORT:

[To accompany bill S. 2547.]

The Committee on Pensions, to whom was referred the bill (S. 2547) granting an increase of pension to Mrs. Frances L. Thomas, widow of Maj. Gen. George H. Thomas, have examined the same, and report as follows:

The brilliant military record and distinguished public services of the late Maj. Gen. George H. Thomas are well known to the country which he served so long and so devotedly. The people regarded him as one of the best and purest public men the nation has produced, as well as one of the greatest generals engaged in the late war.

When General Thomas died, on March 28, 1870, memorial meetings were held throughout the country, and the Congress of the United States, State legislatures, governors of States, civic corporations, and associations of soldiers and citizens gave public expression of the nation's grief and of the people's appreciation of his character and services.

In the joint resolutions passed at that time Congress fittingly recognized the value of General Thomas's public services and the worth of his character, as the following paragraphs show:

That the Senate and House of Representatives have heard with deep regret of the sudden decease of Maj.-Gen. George H. Thomas, endeared to the country by a series of unbroken, patriotic services during a period of thirty years.

That his distinguished career in the defense of his country—against foreign and domestic enemies, his never-faltering faith and zeal in the maintenance of the Union and the integrity of the Government, and his stern execution of every trust confided to him, constitute a record in life made memorable in death.

The following extract from the general order announcing his death, issued by General W. T. Sherman, briefly summarizes General Thomas's distinguished military career:

There is no need to turn to the archives to search for his history, for it is recorded in almost every page during the past ten years; but his classmate and comrade owes him a personal tribute, in which he knows every member of the Army shares. General Thomas entered the Military Academy in the class of 1836; graduated in 1840, and was commissioned as a second lieutenant, Third Artillery, and sent to Florida. He served with his regiment continuously until December 24, 1853, when he became a captain, having been particularly distinguished at Monterey and Buena Vista, Mexico. On the 12th of May, 1855, he was appointed to the Second Cavalry as major, and served with that regiment continuously until he became its colonel, on the 3d of May, 1861. The great civil war found him at his post, true and firm, amidst the terrible pressure he had encountered by reason of his birth place, Virginia; and President Lincoln commissioned him as a brigadier general of volunteers, and sent him to Kentucky. There, too, his services were constant and eminent in the highest degree. He won the first battle in the West, at Mill Spring, Ky., and, from first to last, without a day's

or an hour's intermission, he was at his post of duty, rising steadily and irresistibly through all the grades to the one he held as major-general of the Regular Army at the time of his death. At Shiloh, Corinth, Perryville, Stone River, Chickamauga, Chattanooga, Atlanta, and Nashville he fulfilled the proudest hopes of his ardent friends, and at the close of the war General George H. Thomas stood in the very front rank of our war generals.

The General has known General Thomas intimately since they sat as boys on the same bench, and the quality in him which he holds up for the admiration and example of the young is his complete and entire devotion to duty. Though sent to Florida, to Mexico, to Texas, to Arizona, when duty there was absolute banishment, he went cheerfully, and never asked a personal favor, exemption, or leave of absence. In battle he never wavered. Firm and full of faith in his cause, he knew it would prevail; and he never sought advancement of rank or honor at the expense of any one. Whatever he earned of these were his own, and no one disputes his fame. The very impersonation of honesty, integrity, and honor, he will stand to us as the *beau ideal* of the soldier and gentleman.

Though he leaves no child to bear his name, the old Army of the Cumberland, numbered by tens of thousands, called him father, and will weep for him in tears of manly grief.

His wife, who cheered him with her messages of love in the darkest hours of war, will mourn him now in sadness, chastened by the sympathy of a whole country.

The records of the War Department show that General Thomas was in constant service for thirty years, and in that time took but one leave of absence. This was asked to enable him to come East to recover from a wound received in an Indian skirmish, and was relinquished the day the flag went down at Sumter, and less than forty-eight hours after the first shot was fired.

General Thomas never sought promotion, and there are many who believe that, had his services been suitably recognized during the early part of the war, opportunities would have been presented to him of rendering his country still greater service and of adding to his own fame. The people of this country understand that it was solely by reason of his remarkable abilities, without the influence of powerful friends, that General Thomas attained a position second to that of no officer of the Army as a military leader and as a man. His character and his career will stand in history as representing all that is noblest and best in the life of this great nation.

Mrs. Thomas is now drawing a pension of \$30 per month, which is inadequate to her support, and the bill proposes to increase this to \$2,000 per annum. Although a pension of this amount has only been granted by Congress in one instance, in the case of the widow of Admiral Farragut, excepting the larger pensions to the widows of deceased Presidents, the committee believe that the widow of George H. Thomas should receive the greatest possible consideration at the hands of Congress, and that the unusual and exceptional allowance proposed in her case is a fitting and very appropriate recognition of the nation's indebtedness to her most distinguished husband. As the late President Garfield said, "There was but one George H. Thomas in all the world."

Considering this an exceptional case, which stands wholly by itself, your committee recommend the passage of the bill, with an amendment reducing the amount to the sum of \$100 per month.