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Amending chapter 67, volume 23, Statutes at Large.

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AMENDING CHAPTER 67, VOLUME 23, STATUTES AT
LARGE.

FEBRUARY 19, 1896.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union and ordered to be printed.

Mr. FENTON, from the Committee on Military Affairs, submitted the following

REPORT:

[To accompany H. R. 4575.]

The Committee on Military Affairs, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 4575) to amend chapter 67, volume 23, of the Statutes at Large of the United States, having considered the same, report the bill back to the House with a recommendation that it do pass.

The primary object and aim of all legislation should be toward exact and impartial justice, at least so far as statutory enactments can effect such results. House bill No. 4575 is a step in that direction.

A period of thirty years almost equals the average life of a generation, and few are able to fully round out such a period in any service. Such as have been thus faithful in any line of service are justly entitled to the honorable meed of praise, but when they have served their country in either the Army or Navy for a period of thirty consecutive years, and have been honorably retired from such service, the remainder of their lives should be surrounded by as many of the comforts of life as may be reasonably possible.

The purpose of the law of 1835, and the amendment thereto of 1890, was to secure these results, but by the passage of this bill all ambiguity of prior legislation toward this end will be removed.

Under existing law the class designed to be benefited by this bill are clearly entitled to something which is not so clearly defined as would seem necessary, and the passage of this bill is therefore required in order that this class may obtain what previous legislation intended them to receive.

Many of these men not only served through the war of the rebellion, but after that followed Custer, Crook, Miles, and others in the Indian campaigns on the frontier. This latter service was equally as hazardous as the war of the rebellion, and has left most of these gallant soldiers mere physical wrecks, unfitted for duty in any line of service, who must depend upon the Government for support.

The Government Departments are closed against them, for the most part, especially on the ground of their lack of a bona fide citizenship; but how could this be otherwise when their country calls them to all parts of its wide domain.

They can not all go to the Soldiers' Home, nor is it desirable that they should, for they have earned the right to have a comfortable home, by long and arduous service, among their friends and kindred, if they shall so desire.

Officers of the various grades, upon retirement, have ample allowances for their support, and no one will question that this is rightfully bestowed, for they are clearly entitled to what they receive, and so the enlisted men ought to be provided for after thirty years of continuous service, which House bill 4575 aims modestly to do. The bill gives him, upon retirement, 75 per cent of his pay and allowances while in active service, and \$7.50 per month as commutation of quarters. Certainly this is a small sum to ask for at the hands of a great government, but it means much to the infirm and in many cases battle-scarred private soldier, who has followed the flag in the line of duty for thirty consecutive years, until he has indeed become "weary and old with service," and has earned the right of rest and a modest home.

The beneficiaries of this bill can not be pensioned, nor are they eligible to admission into the Soldiers' Home.

For the reasons herein assigned, the committee are unanimous in the opinion that this bill should pass.

