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Increase of minimum pensions.

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INCREASE OF MINIMUM PENSIONS.

JANUARY 31, 1898.—Ordered to be printed.

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

ADVERSE REPORT.

[To accompany S. 3385.]

The Committee on Pensions, to whom was referred the bill (S. 3385) to increase minimum pensions, and for other purposes, have examined the same, and report:

The bill submitted to your committee on the 24th instant is as follows:

Be it enacted, etc., That all pensions now allowed at a lower rate than ten dollars per month are hereby raised to said sum, and shall be increased to a larger amount per month whenever the evidence submitted shall warrant such increase: *Provided,* That hereafter, whenever it may be shown or made to appear that an applicant for a pension was accepted by competent military authority and served as a soldier or sailor, the United States shall be held estopped and concluded to deny his soundness at the date he was mustered or accepted into the Army or Navy, and no proof of the soundness of the applicant at or prior to that time shall be required.

The Commissioner of Pensions was promptly called upon for an estimate as to the amount of money that would be required to meet the increased expenditure provided for in this bill, and in response thereto the committee received the following communication:

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BUREAU OF PENSIONS,
Washington, D. C., January 28, 1898.

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your communication of the 26th instant, asking for an estimate of the increased cost to the pension roll should the bill (S. 3385) offered by Senator Allen be enacted into law.

Senator Allen proposes to increase the pensions to \$10 per month of all persons now on the pension rolls who are receiving pensions at rates less than \$10.

In response I have to state that on the 30th day of June, 1897, there were on the rolls a total of 130,079 persons who were in receipt of pensions at rates less than \$10 per month under the general law. I have made a computation, based upon the difference between the rates which they are now receiving and \$10 per month, in each case, and I find that to increase all of these pensions to said rate would require an additional monthly expenditure of \$405,414.20, or an additional annual expenditure of \$4,864,970.40.

Under the act of June 27, 1890, 317,051 persons will be favorably affected, at an additional monthly cost of \$826,012, or an additional annual cost of \$9,912,144.

Under "War of 1812," "Mexican war," and "Indian wars" (1832-1842), the pensioners affected number 21,233, and the additional monthly cost on their account will be \$42,466, or an additional annual cost of \$509,592.

RECAPITULATION.

	Number of pensioners.	Additional annual cost.
General law.....	130, 079	\$4, 864, 970. 40
Act June 27, 1890.....	317, 051	9, 912, 144. 00
Old wars.....	21, 233	509, 592. 00
Total.....	468, 363	15, 286, 706. 40

Very respectfully,

H. CLAY EVANS,
Commissioner of Pensions.

Hon. J. H. GALLINGER,
Chairman Committee on Pensions, United States Senate.

It will thus be seen that the enactment into law of the bill submitted to your committee will at once increase the pension expenditures of the Government over \$15,000,000. With a present annual pension appropriation of \$141,000,000, and an almost certain deficit at the end of the fiscal year 1899, it seems to your committee that this is an inopportune time to add so large an increase to this item of annual appropriation. While all sympathize with the needy and deserving soldier who is receiving a small pension, wise and conservative men will not, in appropriating public money, lose sight of the condition of the Treasury or lightly involve the Government in expenditures that can only be met by increased taxation in some form.

It should be noted that the bill materially amends almost every pension law on the statute books, some of which are service-pension laws pure and simple, and your committee fail to discover any valid or urgent reason for legislation in amendment of those statutes.

Regarding the second clause of the bill, which proposes to do away with the doctrine of "prior unsoundness," it is sufficient for your committee to say that on the 22d day of the present month the Senate passed a bill (S. 488), introduced by the chairman of this committee, which specifically accomplishes that purpose, and hence its reenactment is a superfluity.

For the reasons above set forth, your committee report the bill back adversely, with a recommendation that it be indefinitely postponed.