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Letter of the Secretary of the Interior, addressed to the Chairman of the Committee on Finance, in relation to the reorganization of the clerical force of that department.

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LETTER
OF THE
SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR,

ADDRESSED TO

The chairman of the Committee on Finance, in relation to the reorganization of the clerical force of that department.

APRIL 24, 1866.—Submitted by Mr. SHERMAN to accompany bill S. 282.

MAY 25.—Ordered to be printed.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
March 15, 1866.

SIR: I have the honor to transmit for your consideration and for that of the Senate a draught of a bill for reorganizing the clerical force of this department, and for other purposes.

The increasing business of this department, and the importance of securing the services of experienced and competent clerks, have induced me to recommend a reorganization of the clerical force as authorized by existing laws. I consider that the efficient and prompt transaction of the business requires such reorganization, and the accompanying draught has been prepared after a conference with the heads of the several bureaus.

But three additions are asked for in the Secretary's office. In view of the amount of correspondence which has grown up in regard to the construction of the Pacific railroad and its branches, the land-grant railroads and wagon-roads, I have deemed it proper to open a new set of books appropriated to those interests. Gentlemen charged with these books, and the papers, maps and files appertaining thereto, have been designated, and the estimate submitted for their pay has been sanctioned by the House of Representatives in its action upon the pending deficiency bill. The clerks at the head of the several leading divisions of the service should receive additional compensation, and I am of the opinion that the disbursements of the department should be made by one disbursing clerk, instead of three, as now provided by law. By this bill such officer is made ex officio superintendent of this building, and his salary is fixed at \$2,500 per annum.

The changes in the Land, Pension, and Indian offices relate chiefly to the appointment and compensation of clerks acting as heads of divisions, and the proposed changes involve no additional expense in the aggregate.

The Commissioner of Patents considers that an addition of four primary and of four first and four second assistants is imperatively required, and expresses the opinion, in which I concur, that the compensation of the first assistants should be increased \$200 per annum. The salary of the librarian of the Patent Office is also increased, as he is made ex officio translator, and required to render his services in that capacity without the special compensation which has heretofore been awarded to him. Such services are constantly required, and cannot be well performed except by a person having a familiar acquaintance with modern languages. The changes in this bureau do not impose any charge

upon the Treasury, as the expense thereby occasioned is payable exclusively from the Patent Office fund.

The law should provide for a greater uniformity in the compensation of officers of the same grade.

The Commissioner of Patents now receives a compensation greater by fifty per cent. than that respectively paid to the heads of the other bureaus in this department. I do not intimate that it is exorbitant, but no greater responsibility or labor devolves upon him than upon them, nor is a higher order of ability required for the discharge of his official duties. It also exceeds that of the Assistant Secretary, whose duties and responsibilities are certainly equal to, if not greater than, those of the heads of bureaus, and who is, by express provision of law, charged, in the absence of the Secretary, with the supervision of the department as the acting head thereof.

This inequality of compensation cannot, in my opinion, be justified by any consideration of public policy or a due regard to the just claims of public officers. I therefore respectfully submit that the 4th section of the bill equalizing the compensation of these officers is obviously just and proper. I also recommend, as provided by the bill, that the salary of the chief clerk of the department be fixed at the sum now paid to the chief clerk of the Patent Office, and that the chief clerk of each of the bureaus shall severally receive \$2,250 per annum.

The bill fixes the compensation of messengers, watchmen, and laborers at the rate provided by the act of 1864.

The chief clerks of some of the bureaus are by law, in the absence of the Commissioner, made the heads thereof; but doubts have been entertained and conflicting opinions expressed as to the effect of the act, approved February 20, 1863, for supplying temporarily vacancies in the executive departments in certain cases. To remove doubts on the subject, this bill devolves upon the chief clerk the duties and authority of the head of the bureau in the absence of the latter officer, unless the President should otherwise direct.

Legislation in regard to the clerical force of this department and in the several bureaus will be found scattered in various laws passed from time to time; and it has been deemed expedient to embody in one act such provisions in this regard as the exigencies of the public service seem to require.

I enclose a paper showing the expenses of the clerical force employed or authorized by law in the Secretary's office and in the several bureaus of this department, (excluding the chief clerks,) and those of the force authorized under the proposed bill.

I am, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

JAMES HARLAN, *Secretary.*

Hon. W. P. FESSENDEN,

Chairman Committee on Finance, U. S. Senate.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,

March 16, 1866.

Comparative statement showing the number of clerks, exclusive of chief clerks, now authorized by law, or actually employed in the Department of the Interior, and the several bureaus thereof, and the number proposed by the bill for the reorganization of that department, and the aggregate compensation respectively.

In the department proper:	
Number actually employed, or authorized by law.....	17
Aggregate compensation.....	\$25,900
Number proposed.....	16
Aggregate compensation.....	\$27,900

In the General Land Office :

Number actually employed, or authorized by law.....	155
Aggregate compensation.....	\$208,600
Number proposed.....	140
Aggregate compensation.....	\$208,000

In the Indian Office :

Number actually employed, or authorized by law.....	33
Aggregate compensation.....	\$45,500
Number proposed.....	33
Aggregate compensation.....	\$51,600

In the Pension Office:

Number actually employed, or authorized by law.....	177
Aggregate compensation.....	\$242,000
Number proposed.....	147
Aggregate compensation.....	\$221,200

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,

March 16, 1866.

SIR: I herewith submit a memorial of the messengers, watchmen, &c., for a continuation of twenty per cent. on their pay, as provided in the act of June 25, 1864, (Laws, page 160,) for your consideration, and such relief as, in your judgment, these faithful employes of the government may be entitled to.

The regular pay of messenger is \$840 per annum, of assistant messenger \$700 per annum, and that of laborer and watchman is \$600 each per annum.

Very respectfully, yours, &c.,

JAS. HARLAN, *Secretary.*

Hon. W. P. FESSENDEN,

Chairman Committee on Finance, United States Senate.