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3-25-1880

**Letter from the Secretary of War, transmitting a communication presenting the importance of geographical and topographical surveys of the territory of the United States west of the Mississippi River, together with an estimate of an appropriation therefor.**

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### Recommended Citation

S. Exec. Doc. No. 118, 46th Cong., 2nd Sess. (1880)

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LETTER

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF WAR,

TRANSMITTING

A communication presenting the importance of geographical and topographical surveys of the territory of the United States west of the Mississippi River, together with an estimate of an appropriation therefor.

MARCH 25, 1880.—Referred to the Committee on Appropriations and ordered to be printed.

WAR DEPARTMENT,  
Washington City, March 23, 1880.

The Secretary of War has the honor to transmit to the United States Senate, for the consideration of the Committee on Military Affairs, in connection with the appropriations for the Army, a communication from the Chief of Engineers, United States Army, dated the 18th instant, presenting the importance of geographical and topographical surveys of the territory of the United States west of the Mississippi River, together with an estimate of an appropriation of \$75,000 to defray the expenses of said surveys for the year 1880-'81, which appropriation it is desirable should be made immediately available.

Concurring with the Chief of Engineers in his views as to the importance of the surveys referred to, the subject is respectfully recommended to the favorable consideration of Congress.

ALEX. RAMSEY,  
Secretary of War.

The PRESIDENT  
of the United States Senate.

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF ENGINEERS,  
UNITED STATES ARMY,  
Washington, D. C., March 18, 1880.

SIR: In the sundry civil bill approved by the President March 3, 1879, Congress enacted, under the head of "Geological Survey," that the surveys known as the geographical surveys west of the 100th meridian, under the War Department, should be discontinued. The above-named bill provides for a geological survey under the Department of the Interior, but no provision was made for the geographical and topographical survey upon which the geological survey must be based, and no provision was made for the topographical surveys heretofore prosecuted under the direction of the War Department for military purposes. The value of the War Department survey, which has been continued for so many years, is shown by the great demand for maps of the terri-

tory west of the Mississippi River. Most of the geographical and topographical knowledge of that territory has been obtained through the surveys and explorations of officers under the War Department, and the only available maps of that extended area are largely based on knowledge thus secured.

Reliable topographical maps are absolutely required by the War Department, being indispensable in the movement of troops, the establishment of posts for controlling the Indian tribes and protecting settlers.

Surveys for such maps have been made under the direction of the War Department since the time of the earliest explorations west of the Mississippi River, and have been executed in so satisfactory a manner and with such marked economy that it seems unwise to make any change in the general plans and methods hitherto adopted or in the department by which they have been controlled. The service of young officers of the Army, in connection with topographical surveys, is of primary importance in fitting them for the duties of Army engineers in military operations, and it is for this reason, amongst others, that topographical surveys in England, France, Spain, Prussia, Austria, Russia, Italy, and Switzerland have been confided to the War Department, or have been executed by military engineers.

Referring to the debate in the last House, February, 1879, on the legislative, executive, and judicial bill, from which the item authorizing the appointment of a geological director was transferred in the committee of conference to the sundry civil bill, it will be observed that the word "geographical" was stricken out, leaving the survey provided for purely a geological survey, so that geographical and topographical surveys and the resulting maps, upon which the colors and signs representing the results of geological surveys and examinations must be placed, are not now provided by law.

If authority be given for the continuation of the geographical and topographical surveys under the War Department, as is hoped, the maps thereof may be constructed on such a scale as to meet all the wants of the "geological survey" in its examination of the geological structure, mineral resources, and products of the national domain, and the classification of the public lands, and in plotting the results of such examinations and classifications, thus avoiding the necessity for any further survey of a geographical and topographical character for such purposes.

The following estimate for year 1880-'81 is submitted to meet the above requirements:

For geographical and topographical surveys of the territory of the United States west of the Mississippi River, to be executed under the Secretary of War, the supply branches of the War Department aiding as heretofore, and to be immediately available, \$75,000; provided that maps of the surveys be furnished upon requisition to the Director of the Geological Survey of the Department of the Interior, and that geographical points be established for connection with the surveys for subdivision of the public lands.

Should this estimate meet your approval, I have the honor to suggest that it be presented to Congress with your favorable recommendation, with a view to an appropriation at the present session.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

H. G. WRIGHT,

*Chief of Engineers, Brig. and Bvt. Maj. General.*

Hon. ALEXANDER RAMSEY,

*Secretary of War.*