

TRAVEL EXPENSES FOR VETERANS' ADMINISTRATION BENEFICIARIES

JULY 25, 1939.—Ordered to be printed

Mr. GEORGE, from the Committee on Finance, submitted the following

REPORT

[To accompany S. 2866]

The Committee on Finance, to whom was referred the bill (S. 2866) to provide for allowance of expenses incurred by Veterans' Administration beneficiaries and their attendants in authorized travel for examination and treatment, having considered the same, report favorably thereon without amendment and recommend that the bill do pass.

The purpose of the proposed legislation is fully explained in the attached letter addressed to the President of the Senate by the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs. There is also attached as a part of this report a communication from the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs, advising that enactment of this bill would not result in any additional cost for travel allowance on the part of beneficiaries of the Veterans' Administration but would result in an administrative saving.

VETERANS' ADMINISTRATION,
Washington, June 13, 1939.

The PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE,
The Capitol, Washington, D. C.

SIR: There is transmitted herewith a draft of a bill to provide for allowance of expenses incurred by Veterans' Administration beneficiaries and their attendants in authorized travel for examination and treatment, with the request that it be referred to the appropriate committee of the United States Senate in order that it may be introduced and pressed for passage at an early date.

Information has been received from the Director, Bureau of the Budget, that there would be no objection by that office to the presentation to the Congress of the proposed bill as drafted.

Under date of October 3, 1938, it was pointed out to the Comptroller General of the United States that in many instances travel was not performed by a common carrier and that if it were possible to authorize allowance on a mileage basis for the distance to be traveled from the home of the traveler to the facility or place of examination or treatment and return to home, it would be possible to certify and pay claims with a minimum of time and effort, thereby eliminating the bulk of correspondence required at the present time to secure receipts and

2 EXPENSES FOR VETERANS' ADMINISTRATION BENEFICIARIES

other evidence necessary to permit payment of expenses of travel, meals, and lodging on a cost basis.

In a decision dated October 11, 1938, class A, A-98336, the Comptroller General stated that a commutation of actual expenses is never allowable except when authorized by statute.

Under date of February 2, 1939, A-28105, A-51607, in referring to requests from certain States for cooperation in effecting a more satisfactory procedure for making refunds of State taxes paid on gasoline by beneficiaries of the Veterans' Administration when reporting for and returning from medical examinations, treatment or hospitalization, the Comptroller General suggested:

"In view of the nonfeasibility of issuing standard Forms 1094 to such beneficiaries, the comparatively small amount of tax that is involved, the difficulty in securing suitable receipts for both gas and taxes in connection with such travel, the expense to the United States in handling the small claims for refund of such taxes, and the further difficulty in determining the amount of gas consumed en route, it is requested that consideration be given to the procedure of allowing reimbursement on a mileage basis at a reasonable rate for which provision is made in paragraph 12a of Standardized Government Travel Regulations."

While in approximately 80 percent of the cases travel is performed in the manner authorized and there are no reimbursement or other expense vouchers submitted by travelers, in the remaining 20 percent of the cases, travel is not performed in the manner authorized and reimbursement of travel and other expenses can be made only upon submission of evidence showing actual expenditures.

The time and personnel required in the settlement of claims for reimbursement of expenses of travel, meals and lodging, and the securing of refunds of amounts paid as State taxes requires a greater expenditure and more difficulty than is warranted by the amount involved. The authorization of travel including expenses of meals and lodging on a mileage basis would be definitely to the advantage of both the Government and the beneficiaries and attendants and would materially lessen the difficulties now existing as well as much of the administrative expense of the Veterans' Administration.

The enclosed draft of the bill has been prepared with a view of securing authorization to provide by regulation for an allowance on a mileage basis in lieu of expense of such travel including necessary expense for means and lodging.

Respectfully,

FRANK T. HINES, *Administrator.*

VETERANS' ADMINISTRATION,
Washington, June 28, 1939.

HON. PAT HARRISON,
*Chairman, Committee on Finance,
United States Senate, Washington, D. C.*

MY DEAR SENATOR HARRISON: This is in response to your inquiry transmitted through the clerk, Senate Finance Committee, as to whether any additional cost would be involved in the event of enactment of a draft of a proposed bill to provide for allowance of expenses incurred by Veterans' Administration beneficiaries and their attendants in authorized travel for examination and treatment, forwarded to the President of the Senate under date of June 13, 1939.

The proposed bill, if enacted, would not increase or diminish the amount of travel required to be performed by beneficiaries to or from Veterans' Administration facilities or other places for examination, treatment, or care.

It is estimated that travel allowance based on mileage under the regulations to be prescribed will not exceed the average cost of such travel. The bill would, however, dispense with the necessity of securing receipts and auditing claims for reimbursement for expense of travel, meals, lodging, and securing refunds of amounts paid as State taxes, which, under existing procedure, requires a greater administrative expense and more difficulty than is warranted by the amount involved. It is estimated that allowance based upon mileage travel in lieu of the actual necessary expense of travel, including lodging and subsistence, will result in saving of administrative expense required under existing procedure, and in many cases provide an easier means for beneficiaries to be reimbursed for expense of travel.

Enactment of the proposed bill would not, therefore, result in any additional cost for travel allowance on the part of beneficiaries of the Veterans' Administration but would result in an administrative saving.

Very truly yours,

FRANK T. HINES, *Administrator.*

