

Calendar No. 2177

81st CONGRESS }
2d Session }

SENATE

{ REPORT
{ No. 2170

PROVIDING FOR THE CONVEYANCE OF A TRACT OF LAND IN KENNEBEC COUNTY, MAINE, TO THE TOWN OF CHELSEA

JULY 27 (legislative day, JULY 20), 1950.—Ordered to be printed

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

REPORT

[To accompany H. R. 8845]

The Committee on Finance, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 8845) to provide for the conveyance of a tract of land in Kennebec County, Maine, to the town of Chelsea, having considered the same, report favorably thereon without amendment and recommend that the bill do pass.

By virtue of this act, the House report is accepted as follows:

EXPLANATION OF THE BILL

This bill authorizes and directs the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs to convey without consideration approximately 4.6 acres of land to the town of Chelsea, Maine, for use for school or other educational purposes. The land in question is situated within the borders of the Veterans' Administration center at Togus, Maine, and is a part of a tract of approximately 1.345 acres of land on which the Veterans' Administration presently maintains a neuropsychiatric hospital and regional office.

The local Veterans' Administration manager has advised that the establishment of a modern country school in the proposed area would in no way embarrass the Veterans' Administration but on the other hand would be of definite advantage to many children whose parents are employed at the center. The Administrator of Veterans' Affairs has indicated his approval of this transfer if consistent with congressional policy relating to donation of Federal land.

The bill (sec. 4) provides adequate means for safeguarding the interests of the United States with respect to any mineral or fissionable material which may be discovered in this property at a later time.

No additional costs would accrue to the Government by the enactment of this legislation.

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The Veterans' Administration report on a similar bill follows:

VETERANS' ADMINISTRATION,
Washington 25, D. C., June 14, 1950.

HON. JOHN E. RANKIN,
Chairman, Committee on Veterans' Affairs,
House of Representatives, Washington 25, D. C.

DEAR MR. RANKIN: This is in reference to your letter of March 6, 1950, requesting a report by the Veterans' Administration on H. R. 7489, Eighty-first Congress, a bill to provide for the conveyance of a tract of land in Kennebec County, Maine, to the town of Chelsea.

The purpose of the bill is to authorize and direct the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs to convey without consideration a tract of approximately 4.6 acres of land, situated within the present boundaries of the Veterans' Administration Center, Togus, Maine, to the inhabitants of the town of Chelsea, Maine, for use for school or other educational purposes. Under the terms of the bill, the inhabitants of the town of Chelsea would be required to erect and maintain a suitable fence around the tract conveyed and, in event they cease to use the tract for school or other educational purposes, it would revert to the United States.

The Veterans' Administration presently maintains a neuropsychiatric hospital, together with a regional office, on a tract of approximately 1,345 acres of land located at Togus, Maine. The land described in H. R. 7489 lies along the south-easterly boundary of the land under the jurisdiction of the Veterans' Administration and is located roughly one-half mile from the main hospital and office buildings. (See enclosed map.)

Under the provisions of H. R. 7489, the Veterans' Administration would be "directed" to convey certain land without authority to impose any conditions in the deed which the interest of the Government might dictate. In order to permit any possible contingencies to be met, it is believed desirable that the bill be amended by deleting the words "and directed" in line 4 and substituting therefor a comma and the following: "subject to such terms and conditions as he may prescribe."

It may be noted the substituted language is in accord with general congressional policy in these matters as evidenced by similar language contained in several recent enactments authorizing the transfer of land under the jurisdiction of the Veterans' Administration. See the acts of June 19, 1948 (62 Stat. 559), June 28, 1948 (62 Stat. 1065), June 28, 1948 (62 Stat. 1068), and September 1, 1949 (Public Law 281, 81st Cong.). It may also be noted that the first two cited acts provide for the reservation to the United States of all interest in and to any oil or minerals in the land and that the first three mentioned acts reserve fissionable material in the land to the United States. H. R. 7489 does not contain any such reservations or any provisions which would authorize their incorporation in the proposed conveyance.

The trustees of the Chelsea, Maine, school district have been in contact with the Veterans' Administration relative to their desire to have the subject land made available as a site for the construction of a country school. In this connection attention is invited to the enclosed copy of letter dated March 11, 1949, from the manager, Veterans' Administration Center, Togus, Maine, in which he comments favorably on a transfer of the land in question. The manager has also advised that the establishment of a modern country school in the proposed area would in nowise embarrass Veterans' Administration activities but, on the other hand, would be a definite advantage to many children whose parents are employed at the center.

It is the view of the Veterans' Administration that the question of donating property owned by the Federal Government to local governmental bodies, such as is proposed by H. R. 7489, involves broad public policy, and is accordingly a matter primarily for the consideration of, and determination by, the Congress. However, if consistent with congressional policy, I would like to see this bill receive favorable consideration, provided, of course, it is amended as indicated earlier in this report.

Advice has not been received from the Bureau of the Budget as to the relationship of the proposed legislation to the program of the President.

Sincerely yours,

CARL R. GRAY, Jr., Administrator.

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CENTER, TOGUS, MAINE,
March 11, 1949.

To: Director, Real Estate Service, Assistant Administrator Construction, Supply,
and Real Estate, Veterans' Administration Central Office, Washington, D. C.
Subject: Official request, town of Chelsea, Maine.

1. A considerable section of this Federal reservation borders on the town of Chelsea, Maine (east, southeast, south, and southwest boundaries). Unfortunately the town of Chelsea is classified as semi-indigent and often is in a position necessitating assistance from the State. Real estate and property valuations are very low, there are no industries and but a limited population (mostly small farming in a very low-income bracket).

2. Naturally their common school system is exceptionally poor, including the few country schools that are in operation. A substantial number of the citizenry of the town of Chelsea reside along the east-southeast boundary of this Federal reservation. The schoolhouse currently utilized by this group is improperly located, of ancient construction, and in no repair. The town authorities are now endeavoring to improve their situation inclusive of building a new country schoolhouse better located and consistent with modern needs.

3. By virtue of the fact that residence area along our southeast-south border is limited by a large stream and woods, there is no proper central location that is available within the immediate Chelsea, Maine, area. There is, however, a section of this Federal reservation that is not being utilized for any purpose nor has it any utilization value. It would be admirably suited for the location of a modest, rural school building and grounds.

4. You will find attached a sketch showing a section of 4 $\frac{1}{10}$ acres that could be used for a new Chelsea, Maine, rural school location. Naturally we here at this center would be very pleased to contribute to the progress of this neighboring town as many of our people (in small income brackets) there reside, and the gesture would be in line with humanitarianism and a good-neighbor policy.

5. We, therefore, recommend that the request of the town officials of Chelsea, Maine, be approved and that for a sum of \$1 or whatever amount deemed practical, title to this land be given to the town of Chelsea, Maine, for school purposes. We suggest that even though the area in question is approximately one-half mile distant from our center hospitals, the town of Chelsea, Maine, agree to have the area properly fenced at all times, thus preventing any undue and embarrassing developments.

6. Your immediate reaction will be greatly appreciated.

M. L. STODDARD, *Manager.*

