

LUMP-SUM DEATH PAYMENTS IN CERTAIN CASES WHERE INSURED INDIVIDUAL'S BODY IS UNAVAIL- ABLE FOR BURIAL

DECEMBER 3 (legislative day, NOVEMBER 29), 1971.—Ordered to be printed

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

REPORT

[To accompany H.R. 10604]

The Committee on Finance to which was referred the bill (H.R. 10604) to amend title II of the Social Security Act to permit the payment of the lump-sum death payment to pay the burial and memorial services expenses and related expenses for an insured individual whose body is unavailable for burial, having considered the same, reports favorably thereon without amendment and recommends that the bill do pass.

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THE BILL

Under present law, the social security lump-sum death payment is made to an insured person's surviving spouse, whether or not his body is available for burial, if they were living together at the time of his death. Where no eligible spouse survives, the lump-sum death payment is contingent upon there being burial expenses. The payment can be made directly to the funeral home for any unpaid burial expenses upon the request of the person who assumed responsibility for those expenses, or the payment can be made as reimbursement to the person who is equitably entitled to the payment by reason of his having paid the burial expenses. In the latter cases, when the body is not available for burial or cremation, there can be no burial expenses, and therefore the lump-sum death payment cannot be paid under the law.

While there may be no burial expenses incurred when an insured person's body is not recovered, the family often incurs expenses in connection with his death, such as expenses for a memorial service, a memorial marker, or a site for a marker. The committee believes that there is no valid reason for denying the lump-sum death payment to

help defray the cost of such expenses. On the contrary, it is difficult to justify not paying the lump-sum in such instances, especially in those cases in which the death payment is the only social security benefit that could be payable on the deceased person's earnings record. Most of the current cases in which the body of the decedent is not recovered involve servicemen killed in action.

The committee believes that, because of the above considerations and because the cost of the change would be negligible, the social security lump-sum death payment should be provided for equitably entitled individuals to the extent that they incur expenses customarily connected with a death, even though the body may be unavailable for burial.

COSTS OF CARRYING OUT THE BILL AND EFFECT ON THE REVENUES OF THE BILL

In compliance with section 252 (a) of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970, the following statement is made relative to the effect on the revenues of this bill.

It is estimated that the cost of the bill would be negligible.

VOTE OF COMMITTEE IN REPORTING THE BILL

In compliance with section 133 of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946, as amended, the following statement is made relative to the vote by the committee on reporting the bill.

The committee ordered the bill favorably reported by voice vote.

CHANGES IN EXISTING LAW

In compliance with subsection 4 of rule XXIX of the Standing Rules of the Senate, changes in existing law made by the bill, as reported, are shown as follows (existing law proposed to be omitted is enclosed in black brackets, new matter is printed in *italic*, existing law in which no change is proposed is shown in roman):

SECTION 202 OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT

OLD-AGE AND SURVIVORS INSURANCE BENEFIT PAYMENTS

OLD-AGE INSURANCE BENEFITS

SEC. 202. (a) * * *

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LUMP-SUM DEATH PAYMENTS

(i) Upon the death, after August 1950, of an individual who died a fully or currently insured individual, an amount equal to three times such individual's primary insurance amount, or an amount equal to \$255, whichever is the smaller, shall be paid in a lump sum to the person, if any, determined by the Secretary to be the widow or widower

of the deceased and to have been living in the same household with the deceased at the time of death. If there is no such person, or if such person dies before receiving payment, then such amount shall be paid—

(1) if all or part of the burial expenses of such insured individual which are incurred by or through a funeral home or funeral homes remains unpaid, to such funeral home or funeral homes to the extent of such unpaid expenses, but only if (A) any person who assumed the responsibility for the payment of all or any part of such burial expenses files an application, prior to the expiration of two years after the date of death of such insured individual, requesting that such payment be made to such funeral home or funeral homes, or (B) at least 90 days have elapsed after the date of death of such insured individual and prior to the expiration of such 90 days no person has assumed responsibility for the payment of any such burial expenses;

(2) if all of the burial expenses of such insured individual which were incurred by or through a funeral home or funeral homes have been paid (including payments made under clause (1)), to any person or persons, equitably entitled thereto, to the extent and in the proportions that he or they shall have paid such burial expenses; **[or]**

(3) if the body of such insured individual is not available for burial but expenses were incurred with respect to such individual in connection with a memorial service, a memorial marker, a site for the marker, or any other item of a kind for which expenses are customarily incurred in connection with a death and such expenses have been paid, to any person or persons, equitably entitled thereto, to the extent and in the proportions that he or they shall have paid such expenses; or

[(3)] (4) if any part of the amount payable under this subsection remains after payments have been made pursuant to clauses (1) **[and (2)]**, (2), and (3), to any person or persons, equitably entitled thereto, to the extent and in the proportions that he or they shall have paid other expenses in connection with the burial of such insured individual, in the following order of priority: (A) expenses of opening and closing the grave of such insured individual, (B) expenses of providing the burial plot of such insured individual, and (C) any remaining expenses in connection with the burial of such insured individual.

No payment (except a payment authorized pursuant to clause (1) (A) of the preceding sentence) shall be made to any person under this subsection unless application therefor shall have been filed, by or on behalf of such person (whether or not legally competent), prior to the expiration of two years after the date of death of such insured individual, or unless such person was entitled to wife's or husband's insurance benefits, on the basis of the wages and self-employment income of such insured individual, for the month preceding the month in which such individual died. In the case of any individual who died outside the forty-eight States and the District of Columbia after December 1953 and before January 1, 1957, whose death occurred while he

was in the active military or naval service of the United States, and who is returned to any of such States, the District of Columbia, Alaska, Hawaii, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, or American Samoa for interment or reinterment, the provisions of the preceding sentence shall not prevent payment to any person under the second sentence of this subsection if application for a lump-sum death payment with respect to such deceased individual is filed by or on behalf of such person (whether or not legally competent) prior to the expiration of two years after the date of such interment or reinterment. In the case of any individual who died outside the fifty States and the District of Columbia after December 1956 while he was performing service, as a member of a uniformed service, to which the provisions of section 210(1)(1) are applicable, and who is returned to any State or to any Territory or possession of the United States, for interment or reinterment, the provisions of the third sentence of this subsection shall not prevent payment to any person under the second sentence of this subsection if application for a lump-sum death payment with respect to such deceased individual is filed by or on behalf of such person (whether or not legally competent) prior to the expiration of two years after the date of such interment or reinterment.

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