
COMMISSIONED MEDICAL OFFICER OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE TO SERVE AS ASSISTANT TO THE SURGEON GENERAL

MARCH 30 (legislative day, MARCH 28), 1939.—Ordered to be printed

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

REPORT

[To accompany S. 1899]

The Committee on Finance, to whom was referred the bill (S. 1899) to provide for the detail of a commissioned medical officer of the Public Health Service to serve as Assistant to the Surgeon General, 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 Secretary of the Treasury. There is also attached as a part of this report a communication from the Administrative Assistant to the Secretary of the Treasury, advising that the total increase in cost as a result of this proposed legislation will at no time be greater than \$300 per annum.

The bill is approved and recommended by the Treasury Department and the committee is informed that the Bureau of the Budget has no objection to the presentation by the Treasury Department of this proposed legislation to Congress.

TREASURY DEPARTMENT,
Washington, March 8, 1939.

The PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE.

SIR: There is transmitted herewith a draft of a proposed bill to provide for the detail of a commissioned medical officer of the Public Health Service to serve as Assistant to the Surgeon General. The enactment of the proposed legislation will remedy the existing situation which is explained below.

Under the present law, commissioned medical officers who are detailed by the Surgeon General for duty in the Bureau of the Public Health Service in Washington in charge of the six administrative divisions thereof, are, while thus serving, Assistant Surgeons General of the Public Health Service and the senior officer thus serving must, ordinarily, assume the duties and responsibilities of the

Surgeon General in his absence (sec. 3 of the act of July 1, 1902, 32 Stat. 712). Naturally there has been an enormous increase in the administrative work of the Service since the passage of that statute. Thus two additional administrative divisions have been formed, viz: The Division of Mental Hygiene (act of June 14, 1930, 46 Stat. 586), and the Division of Venereal Diseases (act of July 9, 1918, 40 Stat. 886), each one of which is in charge of an Assistant Surgeon General, and many new functions have been imposed on the Public Health Service by other statutes.

With the expansion of the work of the Service and its extension into many new fields of activity the administrative responsibilities of the Surgeon General and the demands made upon his time by public-health authorities, and others with closely allied interests, throughout the country, are more than he alone can meet. The present law which provides that the senior officer serving as Assistant Surgeon General in charge of one of the administrative divisions shall be the assistant and serve as the Acting Surgeon General in the absence of the Surgeon General is totally inadequate for existing needs. The time of every officer in charge of an administrative division is fully occupied by the duties of that division. It is, therefore, impossible for such an officer to maintain sufficient familiarity with the administrative problems of the Service as a whole to aid the Surgeon General effectively, and, in the absence of the Surgeon General, to assume the duties of that office in addition to his own.

Moreover, the regulations of the Public Health Service provide that no officer shall serve as an Assistant Surgeon General for more than 8 consecutive years. It frequently happens that, when a vacancy occurs, it is desirable to select an officer for a new appointment as Assistant Surgeon General who is senior in point of service to other Assistant Surgeons General who have served for several years. Pursuant to the existing laws, such a newly appointed Assistant Surgeon General, even though unfamiliar and inexperienced with the work of the Surgeon General, would, in his absence, be obliged to assume the duties and responsibilities of that officer.

As a temporary expedient, pending the correction of the situation by the proposed legislation, the Surgeon General has removed from one of the administrative divisions the Assistant Surgeon General most experienced in the administrative work of the Service and has assigned to him a share of the responsibility and work devolving upon the office of the Surgeon General. However, although thoroughly experienced and familiar with the duties of the Surgeon General, this officer is unable, under existing law, to assume those duties and responsibilities in the absence of the Surgeon General. They must in such an instance devolve upon a division chief who is relatively unfamiliar with them and who is fully occupied with duties of his own.

The enactment of the proposed legislation will remedy this situation in the following manner:

1. It will establish the position of Assistant to the Surgeon General in a grade carrying authority next to that of the Surgeon General and with commensurable pay and allowances.

2. It will enable the Surgeon General to detail to the position a commissioned medical officer who is possessed of the experience and qualifications to enable him to aid the Surgeon General most effectively in his work, and who, in the absence of the Surgeon General, can assume the duties and responsibilities of that officer.

3. It is believed that this bill, if enacted, will add greatly to the efficiency of the administrative work of the Public Health Service by providing for the addition of one thoroughly experienced administrative officer to the staff and by relieving the senior officer, serving as an Assistant Surgeon General, of the additional duties he must now endeavor to assume in the absence of the Surgeon General as explained above.

An existing commissioned officer of the Public Health Service will be detailed to the new office and it is not contemplated that any increase in the commissioned personnel of the Public Health Service will result.

It would be appreciated if you would lay the attached proposed bill before the Senate. A similar bill has been transmitted to the Speaker of the House of Representatives. The Department has been advised by the Bureau of the Budget that there would be no objection to the presentation of this proposed legislation to Congress.

Very truly yours,

HENRY MORGENTHAU, JR.,
Secretary of the Treasury.

TREASURY DEPARTMENT,
Washington, March 21, 1939.

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

MY DEAR SENATOR: Reference is made to a letter from the Secretary of the Treasury addressed to the President of the Senate under date of March 8, 1939, transmitting the draft of a proposed bill to provide for the detail of a commissioned medical officer to serve as Assistant to the Surgeon General. This letter, together with the draft of the legislation, was referred to your committee, March 9, 1939.

In response to a telephone request from the clerk of the Senate Committee on Finance, I am glad to advise you that the total increase in cost as a result of this legislation will at no time be greater than \$300 per annum.

Very truly yours,

WM. H. McREYNOLDS,
Administrative Assistant to the Secretary.

