

REMOVING THE EXISTING LIMITATION ON THE NUMBER OF ASSOCIATE MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF VETERANS' APPEALS IN THE VETERANS' ADMINISTRATION

JUNE 5 (legislative day, MARCH 5), 1946.—Ordered to be printed

Mr. JOHNSON of Colorado, from the Committee on Finance, submitted the following

REPORT

[To accompany H. R. 6153]

The Committee on Finance, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 6153) to remove the existing limitation on the number of associate members of the Board of Veterans' Appeals in the Veterans' Administration, having considered the same, report favorably thereon, without amendment, and recommend that the bill do pass.

The House report on the bill is self-explanatory and is as follows:

The Committee on World War Veterans' Legislation, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 6153), to remove the existing limitation on the number of associate members of the Board of Veterans' Appeals in the Veterans' Administration, having considered the same, submit the following report thereon, with the recommendation that it do pass with the following amendment:

Page 2, line 2, after the word "necessary" and before the comma, add the following: "not to exceed fifty (50)".

EXPLANATION OF THE BILL

The Board of Veterans' Appeals in the Veterans' Administration was created by Veterans Regulation 2 (a), dated July 28, 1933, to conduct hearings, consider and dispose of all questions on claims involving benefits under the laws administered by the Veterans' Administration on which appeals may be taken to the Administrator. Since 1934, the number of associate members, in addition to a chairman and a vice chairman, has been limited by statute to not more than 30. Although the existing statutory limitation on the number of associate members was adequate during the peacetime period, the rapid demobilization of millions of veterans during recent months and the resulting tremendous increase in requests for the review of claims has increased manifold the burden imposed by law on the Board of Veterans' Appeals. At the present time, therefore, it appears that the Board of Veterans' Appeals is cramped by a statutory restriction which seriously threatens the proper and expeditious disposition of veterans' appeals.

The bill under consideration would amend paragraph I preceding subparagraph (a) of part II of Veterans Regulation 2 (a), as amended, to authorize the appointment of such number of associate members as may be found necessary, not to

exceed 50. Increase in the authorized personnel of the Board of Veterans' Appeals within the limit provided, will serve to expedite the final determination of the great number of appeals which are entitled to prompt and efficient, as well as judicious, consideration.

RAMSEYER RULE

Pursuant to the provisions of clause 2a, rule XIII, Rules of the House of Representatives, the changes in the present law made by the bill are shown as follows (existing law proposed to be omitted is in black brackets; new matter is in italics; existing law in which no changes are proposed is shown in roman):

Paragraph I preceding subparagraph (a) of part II of Veterans Regulation No. 2 (a), as amended:

"I. There is hereby created in the Veterans' Administration a Board of Veterans' Appeals under the administrative control and supervision of a chairman directly responsible to the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs. The Board shall be composed of a [c]Chairman, a [v]Vice [c]Chairman, [and not more than 30] *such number of associate members as may be found necessary not to exceed fifty (50)*, and such other professional, administrative, clerical, and stenographic personnel as are necessary in conducting hearings and considering and disposing of appeals properly before such Board in accordance with the instructions herein provided. Members of the Board, including the [c]Chairman and the [v]Vice [c]Chairman, shall be appointed by the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs with the approval of the President."

LETTER FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS

The proposed legislation was recommended by the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs in his letter of April 15, 1946, to the Speaker, House of Representatives. The Bureau of the Budget has advised that there would be no objection by that office to the submission of the proposed legislation to the Congress.

The letter from the Administrator of Veterans' Affairs is as follows:

VETERANS' ADMINISTRATION,
Washington 25, D. C., April 15, 1946.

Hon. SAM RAYBURN,
The Speaker's Rooms, House of Representatives,
Washington, D. C.

MY DEAR MR. SPEAKER: There is transmitted herewith a draft of a bill to remove the existing limitation on the number of associate members of the Board of Veterans' Appeals in the Veterans' Administration, with the request that it be referred to the appropriate committee in the House in order that it may be introduced and enacted into law.

The Board of Veterans' Appeals in the Veterans' Administration was created by Veterans Regulation No. 2 (a), dated July 28, 1933, to be composed of a chairman, a vice chairman, and not to exceed 15 associate members and such other professional, administrative, clerical, and stenographic personnel as would be necessary in conducting hearings and in the consideration and disposition of appeals before the Board. By Veterans Regulation No. 2 (b) dated January 2, 1934, the authorized number of associate members was increased to not more than 30.

The existing legislation on the subject was enacted approximately 15 years after the close of World War I during a peacetime period. The mentioned limit on associate members was proper for the normal requirements at that time and adequate during the succeeding years to handle efficiently all applications for review of veterans' claims. The rapid demobilization of millions of veterans within the past few months, however, which has placed a tremendous work load on the Veterans' Administration and necessitated an expansion of all its phases and activities, has found the Board of Veterans' Appeals cramped by a statutory restriction which seriously threatens the proper and expeditious disposition of veterans' appeals. The volume of claims has now reached an unprecedented figure and will, of course, continue to swell in the coming months. Experience has shown that the volume of appeals increases in direct proportion to the claim load, yet there is no present authority for increasing the personnel of the Appeals Board to meet this increase in one of the most important duties with which the Administration is charged, due to the statutory limitation established 12 years ago.

Unless legislation similar to that herein proposed is enacted, an overburdening backlog of work will be inevitable, resulting in unavoidable, yet in many cases

tragic, delays in the final determination of the appeals of our veterans, which are entitled to prompt and efficient, as well as judicious, consideration.

Advice has been received from the Bureau of the Budget that there would be no objection by that office to the submission of the proposed legislation to the Congress.

Very truly yours,

OMAR N. BRADLEY,
General, United States Army, Administrator.

