

PENSIONS AND INCREASE OF PENSIONS TO CERTAIN
SOLDIERS AND SAILORS OF THE CIVIL WAR, ETC.

M E S S A G E

FROM

THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

RETURNING

WITHOUT APPROVAL THE BILL (S. 5) ENTITLED "AN ACT GRANTING PENSIONS AND INCREASE OF PENSIONS TO CERTAIN SOLDIERS AND SAILORS OF THE CIVIL AND MEXICAN WARS AND TO CERTAIN WIDOWS, FORMER WIDOWS, MINOR CHILDREN, AND HELPLESS CHILDREN OF SAID SOLDIERS AND SAILORS, AND TO WIDOWS OF THE WAR OF 1812, AND TO CERTAIN INDIAN WAR VETERANS AND WIDOWS, AND TO CERTAIN SPANISH WAR SOLDIERS, AND CERTAIN MAIMED SOLDIERS, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES."

APRIL 24 (calendar day, MAY 3), 1924.—Ordered to lie on the table and to be printed

To the Senate:

I am returning herewith Senate bill 5, "An act granting pensions and increases of pensions to certain soldiers and sailors of the Civil and Mexican Wars and to certain widows, former widows, minor children, and helpless children of said soldiers and sailors, and to widows of the War of 1812, and to certain Indian war veterans and widows, and to certain Spanish War soldiers, and certain maimed soldiers, and for other purposes," without my approval.

For the next fiscal year the effect of this act will be to take an additional \$58,000,000 of the moneys paid by the taxpayers of the Nation and add it to the pension checks of the veterans of the wars from 1812 to 1902 and their widows and dependents. This is the effect for the first year, but the burden upon the taxpayers will continue for many years to come. While impossible of accurate estimation the Commissioner of Pensions states that the proposed addition to the pension roll will total approximately \$242,000,000 for the first 5 years and \$415,000,000 for the first 10 years.

No conditions exist which justify the imposition of this additional burden upon the taxpayers of the Nation. All our pensions were

revised and many liberal increases made no longer ago than 1920. Every survivor of the Civil War draws \$50 per month, and those in need of regular aid and attendance, which already includes 41,000 of them, draw \$72 per month. As others come to need this the law already gives it to them. The act also proposes to extend the limits of the war period from April 13, 1865, to August 20, 1866, so that those who enlisted during this year and four months of peace now become eligible for the same treatment as those who fought through the war. There are other questionable provisions providing for the pensioning of civilians, and relating to the pensioning of certain classes of widows.

But the main objection to the whole bill is the unwarranted expenditure of the money of the taxpayers. It proposes to add more than 25 per cent to the cost of the pension rolls. It is estimated that it would bring the total pension bill of the country to a point higher than ever before reached, notwithstanding it is now nearly 60 years since the close of the Civil War. A generous Nation increased its pensions to well over a quarter of a billion annually, and has already bestowed nearly \$6,250,000,000 in pensions upon the survivors of that conflict and their dependents. While there has been some decrease in the annual expense, it is now proposed by a horizontal increase to pay all survivors \$72 each month, without regard to age, to their physical condition, or financial condition. With the other proposals a new high record of cost would be established.

The need for economy in public expenditure at the present time can not be overestimated. I am for economy. I am against every unnecessary payment of the money of the taxpayers. No public requirement at the present time ranks with the necessity for the reduction of taxation. This result can not be secured unless those in authority cease to pass laws which increase the permanent cost of government. The burden on the taxpayers must not be increased; it must be decreased. Every proposal for legislation must be considered in the light of this necessity. The cost of commodities is diminishing. Under such conditions the cost of government ought not to be increasing. The welfare of the whole country must be considered. The desire to do justice to pensioners, however great their merit, must be attended by some solicitude to do justice to taxpayers. The advantage of a class can not be greater than the welfare of the Nation.

CALVIN COOLIDGE.

THE WHITE HOUSE, May 3, 1924.