

**INDEFINITE LEAVES OF ABSENCE TO
SUPERANNUATED EMPLOYEES OF
THE POSTAL SERVICE: HEARINGS
AND SUPPLEMENT TO HEARINGS, H.
R. 6915, APRIL 7 AND 8, 1916**

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Indefinite Leaves of Absence to Superannuated Employees of the Postal Service: Hearings and Supplement to Hearings, H. R. 6915, April 7 and 8, 1916 by Various

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**INDEFINITE LEAVES OF ABSENCE TO SUPERANNUATED
EMPLOYEES OF THE POSTAL SERVICE**

HEARINGS

BEFORE

SUBCOMMITTEE NO. 8 OF THE
COMMITTEE ON THE POST OFFICE AND POST ROADS
U.S. Congress, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

345

616

ON

H. R. 6915

APRIL 7 AND 8, 1916



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INDEFINITE LEAVES OF ABSENCE TO SUPERANNUATED
EMPLOYEES OF THE POSTAL SERVICE.

SUBCOMMITTEE NO. 8 OF THE COMMITTEE ON
POST OFFICES AND POST ROADS,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, D. C., Friday, April 7, 1916.

The subcommittee met at 10 o'clock a. m., Hon. Samuel W. Beakes (chairman), presiding.

The CHAIRMAN. The committee will please come to order. Mr. Griffin has got a statement to make concerning the bill 6915, which he will please read.

**STATEMENT OF HON. DANIEL J. GRIFFIN, A REPRESENTATIVE IN
CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW YORK.**

Mr. GRIFFIN. Mr. Chairman and colleagues of subcommittee No. 8 on Post Offices and Post Roads, the purpose of the meeting this morning, as I understand it, is to hear the arguments of the gentlemen who are interested in H. R. 6915, a bill to grant indefinite leaves of absence to superannuated employees of the Postal Service. As the author of this bill, I will briefly explain its provisions.

1. It authorizes the Postmaster General to allow an indefinite leave of absence, with an allowance of \$600 per annum to be paid monthly, to any person employed in the Railway Mail Service, the Rural Free Delivery Service, the City Free Delivery Service, and to post-office clerks and other employes in post offices who are in the classified civil service who become incapacitated from performing their duties through superannuation.

2. If it is found necessary to employ a substitute to fill the place of an employee who has been granted an indefinite leave of absence, the substitute shall be paid at the rate allowed for vacation work, provided, however, that such assignment shall not interfere with the promotion of the substitute to appointment to the regular force when a vacancy occurs through death or resignation, or when the force is increased and the substitute is eligible for a regular appointment by virtue of his standing on the substitute list.

3. That the Postmaster General shall have authority to establish boards of retirement to consist of not less than three members to be selected by him from among the employees of the Post Office Department and the Postal Service, whose duty it shall be to examine all applications for indefinite leaves of absence and to make recommendations based upon their findings to the Postmaster General for

his guidance. The Postmaster General is also authorized to appoint a physician to advise with each board in making its recommendations.

4. That the applications of employees for indefinite leave of absence may be either voluntary on the part of the employee or may be recommended by the proper administrative or supervisory official.

5. That the Postmaster General shall formulate such rules and regulations as in his judgment may be best calculated to carry out the purpose of this act.

6. We are fast nearing a stage in the development of the civil service where the retirement problem or pensions for superannuated employees must be squarely met. If civil service is to succeed in this country, there must be a method provided for taking care of superannuated employees and those who are retired because of injury or ill health.

A postal employee, after his selection under competitive examination, is placed in the position which he seeks. He is told that his advancement and success depends upon his ability to successfully perform the duties assigned to him and that, if he would advance, he must attain efficiency. Efficiency, in fact, is drilled into the employee from the start to the finish of his career, and so many methods are employed to keep him working under a continuous strain that he has little time or spirit to enjoy the ordinary social advantages. They receive compensation which I do not believe to be commensurate with the services they are required to perform.

When a man accepts what is known as a permanent position in the Postal Service, particularly if he is a young man just starting out in life, he can not resist the thought that the door of opportunity is closed against him. He abandons all hope of a public or successful business career, he dedicates his efforts to the faithful performance of the duties assigned to him, and he contents himself with the doubtful prospect of continued occupation. The knowledge he acquires in the Postal Service is of no practical benefit to him should he become separated from the service, as he is unfit, undesirable, inexperienced, and unqualified for work in the commercial world.

At the present time, growing old in the Postal Service is a tragedy, as it brings home to the employees their utter helplessness and their complete dependence upon the only work they know—the Postal Service.

The initial cost and the future maintenance of this indefinite leave-of-absence bill will not be so large as to become a burden upon the finances of the country. I have been informed that the approximate cost of putting this bill into effect will be explained to the committee by a reliable and competent actuary, who made the trip from New York City for that purpose. It is my opinion that the revenues derived by the Government from unpaid money orders—more than one year old—covered into the United States Treasury, together with the added revenues received from dead letters, will more than pay for the upkeep of this bill. In substantiation of this, I submit a statement prepared by Mr. Charles A. Kramm, Auditor for the Post Office Department, covering these two items for a period of several years.

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Statement showing the amount of unpaid money orders more than one year old covered into the United States Treasury which accrued during the periods indicated, and the amount of warrants issued against that account during the same period.

Period.	Amount covered into United States Treasury.	Amount of warrants issued.
July 1, 1909, to Dec. 31, 1909.....	\$266,328.41	\$319,817.24
Jan. 1, 1910, to June 30, 1910.....	270,582.39	288,919.30
July 1, 1910, to Dec. 31, 1910.....	340,784.33	190,534.65
Jan. 1, 1911, to June 30, 1911.....	387,259.23	233,518.09
July 1, 1911, to Dec. 31, 1911.....	474,382.96	266,996.32
Jan. 1, 1912, to June 30, 1912.....	500,900.00	215,390.00
July 1, 1912, to Dec. 31, 1912.....	488,534.87	194,621.64
Jan. 1, 1913, to June 30, 1913.....	478,256.94	197,270.38
July 1, 1913, to Dec. 31, 1913.....	368,477.44	118,150.26
Jan. 1, 1914, to June 30, 1914.....	300,757.45	122,684.70
Total.....	3,788,401.93	2,165,901.74
Difference.....		1,622,500.19

The amount of revenue received from dead letters was as follows:

Fiscal year—	Amount.
1911.....	\$32,854.65
1912.....	53,122.39
1913.....	31,143.01
1914.....	39,077.49
1915.....	38,514.33
Total.....	174,711.87

Mr. PAIGE, M. C., of Massachusetts. Mr. Chairman, I understand that there are a few Members of the House here who have committee meetings to attend, and I would suggest that they be allowed to put in their briefs, or statements, first.

Mr. DALE, M. C., of New York. Mr. Chairman, if my colleague would yield, I would just like to state that in urging your committee to take favorable action on the bill introduced by Mr. Griffin I do so for the purpose of getting relief for the worn-out letter carriers and post-office clerks who have devoted their lives to the Postal Service and are threatened with loss of their positions.

I have made personal investigation of the conditions surrounding the employment of the rank and file of the workers in the Brooklyn post office and unhesitatingly say that these men are not paid a commensurate salary with the duties they perform. These employees must be above the average in intelligence, and they must be in perfect health to pass the mental and physical examinations required of them before they can enter the service. Their work is not only exacting and requires mental exertion, but in the great majority of cases their work is extremely laborious. The compensation they receive is no more than sufficient to pay their ordinary living expenses, and it is an exceptional employee that can so regulate his affairs to permit of a savings account. They comprise our best citizens, and the fact of their being Government employees demands that they shall live and conduct themselves in a manner befitting the dignity of the positions they hold. They sacrifice every possible chance of a successful public career or of the opportunities encountered in the commercial world once they enter the Postal Service.

It is the duty of the Government to reward its employees who have devoted their lives in bringing up the Postal Service to a high standard of efficiency, and I urge your committee to report this bill favorably and permit the Members of Congress to register their voice and vote on it on the floor of the House.

STATEMENT OF HON. WILLIAM CARTER, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF MASSACHUSETTS.

Mr. CARTER. Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, for the information of the distinguished members of this committee, I desire to state that I am in full sympathy with this desired legislation to provide by act of Congress for the retirement of the superannuated employees of the Postal Service. Mr. Chairman, I am for a bill of this nature because it will redeem the good name of the Government, which now treats its faithful employees worse than the average corporation treats its old horses. Legislation of this caliber is sadly needed for the improvement of the Government service, for it would permit young men to take the place of men who have long since passed their days of usefulness and who have earned retirement. I am in favor of Congress adding this expense to the appropriations and thereby recognizing an army of faithful and useful employees.

Mr. Chairman, the problem of the superannuate can not be dismissed with the assertion that every man should provide for his own old age by laying aside a portion of his income during his productive years. It is one thing to preach and another to perform. You yourselves know what it costs to live and the cost is measured by the occupation. The wear and tear on the average employee of the postal service is terrible, and so the margin of saving goes glimmering, and thus it has come to be a common thing for the wage earner to enter upon the twilight borderland of old age with no provisions made for the necessities of life.

Mr. Chairman, during my whole public life there has never been a piece of legislation that has appealed to me more than this legislation in the interest of the postal employees. It shows what our humanity amounts to in the case of the superannuated human worker. It disapproves the charge that we knowingly neglected him and the passage of this kind of legislation will snatch from the lips of thousands in the service, who are broken in health, the cup of bitterness and sorrow.

Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the opportunity of being able to appear before your committee to say a word for the men in the postal service and I trust your committee will report out a bill in the interest of the superannuated employees of the Postal Service so that the Members of the House can go on record in regard to this much needed legislation.

In closing I desire to insert the remarks of Hon. James R. Mann, of Illinois, delivered on February 19, last, when the post-office bill was under consideration in the House. No man on the floor of the American Congress is more familiar with legislation than he.

Mr. Mann said:

We are all in a position of making some progress in thought along the line of making provision for men who are injured in the Postal Service, and we will reach the time after a while when we will make provision for men who have served in the public service so long that it is proper they be retired on account of age and paid something toward taking care of them.

He also said, speaking of Mr. Frank T. Rogers, president of the Post Office Clerks' Association, and who represent the post-office clerks in regard to legislation—

that of all the men whom I have ever talked with who were representing any class of employees of the Government, or people outside, in regard to legislation, I think that Frank T. Rogers is the fairest, the most reasonable man whom I have ever talked with concerning legislation which he was endeavoring to influence or affect on behalf of a number of other people. He never asks, so far as I have observed, unreasonable things. He has always been willing, as far as he was concerned, to consider matters from the governmental point of view, as well as from the point of view of employees, and I do not think it desirable for us to throw stones at men like Rogers, and possibly have them replaced by very radical men who want impossible things done. I hope that he will retain a position where he can talk to Members of Congress on behalf of the post-office employees for many years, as he will be an aid, not an obstruction, to the work we ought to do.

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Rogers has given much study and thought to this bill and considers it a fair and reasonable measure; fair alike to the employee and to the Government, and I give it my cordial support and trust your committee will report favorably upon it.

I understand the estimated cost if this measure becomes a law will be about \$360,000 the first year, an amount not greater than the Hon. James R. Mann, with his wonderful knowledge of all matters of governmental expenditures, saves the country every year.

Mr. SCULLY, M. C., of New Jersey. Mr. Chairman, I do not want to say anything, except to say that I am in favor of this bill, and to let the record show that I appeared before the committee.

STATEMENT OF HON. THOMAS J. SCULLY, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY.

Mr. SCULLY. Mr. Chairman and gentlemen of the committee, it affords me much pleasure to appear before you this morning to give my hearty indorsement to the bill (H. R. 6915) introduced in the House of Representatives by my good friend, Mr. Griffin.

The purpose of this bill is to provide a means for retiring the old worn-out employees in the Postal Service on an annuity that will provide for their wants during their declining years. The very best evidence of the merits of this bill is the large attendance of Members of Congress in the committee room, who are, no doubt, here for the purpose of encouraging this committee to report the bill favorably. It is the largest delegation of Representatives that I have ever seen gathered together in any committee room since I have had the honor of being a Member of Congress, and each of us of one mind and one accord that this measure will be doing simple justice to employees of the Postal Service who have devoted their lives to the work.

It will not require a large amount of money to put this bill into effect, and for this reason there can be no excuse of it being a great burden on the finances of the country. For the information of the committee I desire to draw your attention to a statement contained in the report of First Assistant Postmaster General Grandfield for the year ended June 30, 1911:

In the Post Office Service a large sum of money accrues annually from the lapsed salaries of employees absent without pay, where no substitute is employed or where the substitute receives less than the salary of the absent

clerk or carrier, and also on account of failure to fill vacancies immediately or where the force is reduced temporarily during the dull season when vacancies occur. The employees themselves in a measure contribute to this fund, since the absence of regular employees throws additional burdens on those remaining on duty. This fund is more than sufficient to cover the cost of pensions for the superannuated employees amongst the 90,000 clerks and carriers at first and second class post offices. There is another source of revenue that might properly be used to constitute a pension fund, and that is the money turned into the Treasury each year from money orders issued and never presented for payment.

I believe if the actual amount of lapsed salaries covering the entire service were specified and known, together with the revenue annually received from the unpaid money-order and dead-letter accounts, it would be more than sufficient to pay for the retirement of the superannuated employees.

This statement is worth the consideration of this committee, and suggests a way that the expenses of this bill can be met without making any appropriation whatever from the Public Treasury.

A pension system would aid efficiency to the service, for it would permit young men to take the place of men who have long since passed their days of usefulness and who have earned retirement. Congress would do well to add this expense to the appropriations and thereby recognize an army of faithful and useful employees.

I trust that the committee will make a favorable report to the full committee on the Post Office and Post Roads, and that the bill will be reported to the House, in order that we might have an opportunity to register our approval of it.

Mr. CHURCH, M. C., of California. Mr. Chairman, I just wish to file a telegram and have it inserted in the record which I received this morning, and to announce that I am in favor of the bill.

The CHAIRMAN. The telegram will be inserted in the record.

(The telegram referred to is as follows:)

FRESNO, CAL., April 6, 1916.

DENVER S. CHURCH, M. C.,
Washington, D. C.:

We earnestly ask you to appear before the Post Office Committee Friday, April 7, and urge favorable action on the Griffin bill, H. R. 6915, granting indefinite leaves of absence to superannuated postal employees.

EARL HUGHES, Postmaster.
And 73 postal employees.

Mr. BACHARACH, M. C., of New Jersey. I would like to make the same statement, and I would like to have the opportunity of filing a statement and to have it appear that I am in favor of supporting the bill.

(The statement of Mr. Bacharach is as follows:)

Mr. Chairman, the relief of the superannuated employees in the Government service is receiving the serious thought and consideration of all officials who have supervision over the classified civil-service employees.

Former President Taft called the attention of Congress and the public to the matter in a message to Congress, and he recommended, as a matter of economy, that provision be made for the retirement of the old employees who have outlived their energy and usefulness in order that the proper degree of efficiency in all departments of the Government could be kept up to the highest standard. Many Cabinet officers have made like recommendations in their annual reports for a number of years past, and the large business institutions of the country are putting into operation the retirement on annuities of their aged and disabled employees. This is done as a good business proposition and not purely from sentimental motives. While the question is also humanitarian in its scope, the operation of it proves conclusively that the benefits derived in the matters of increased efficiency and loyalty of the employees has resulted in an