

Sanitized - Approved For Release : CIA-RDP75-00149R00

House Unit OKs Broader Authority For Raises in Shortage Categories

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As part of the government pay-raise bill, the House Compensation subcommittee has approved a provision that could lead to additional pay raises of as much as 9 percent for federal scientists, engineers, nurses and other employees in shortage categories.

Besides providing for a 4.5 percent pay raise effective Oct. 1, for all federal classified employees, the subcommittee's measure broadens the Civil Service Commission's authority to approve above-the-rate pay adjustments in shortage category jobs.

Under the 1962 law, the CSC has authority at present to fix starting rates of a grade up through the 7th step and adjust all other salaries in the grade accordingly.

The subcommittee's bill would extend this authority to fix starting rates all the way up through the 10th step of the grade and adjust all other steps accordingly.

Since the pay differential between each step in a grade averages about 3 percent for employees in shortage categories, if the CSC decides to use this new authority.

The CSC has used its present authority quite often during the past five years and requested broadened powers to extend the initial adjustment process through step 10, a good indication that it plans to use such new authority if necessary if Congress approves. The House subcommittee's favorable action augurs well for final congressional approval.

The subcommittee's bill would also give all federal classified employees pay raises effective July 1968, amounting to one-half the comparability gap between government and industry pay that exist, according to the latest Bureau of Labor Statistics figures that will be available for 1967. The bill also provides pay raises for federal classified employees to close the second-half of the comparability gap, effective April 1, 1969.

Postal workers would receive a 6 percent pay raise effective this October and a 5 percent pay raise July 1, 1969—presumably Congress would take action on postal salaries in 1969 irrespective of comparability factors. This is all right with postal employe leaders because postal workers in the first five levels would stand to get little or nothing in 1969 if their pay raises were linked to comparability standards used by the administration.

Meanwhile, as reported here yesterday, there is a move to divorce postal employes in the first five levels from the compensation subcommittee's pay bill this year and instead give them a 6.9 percent reclassification pay increase by linking such a provision to the postal rate bill.

INCREDIBLE — The more

the facts are revealed, the more incredible is the White House's performance regarding the vetoed federal employe life insurance bill.

Yesterday's column referred to the White House's announcement that the Civil Service Commission had approved President Johnson's veto, when in fact the CSC had recommended that the bill be signed.

Now it develops that Rep. Dominick Daniels, D-N.J., the extremely able and highly respected chairman of the House Civil Service Insurance subcommittee and sponsor of the bill, was not even shown the courtesy by the White House of being notified in advance that the measure would be vetoed. He learned of the veto by reading about it in the newspapers.

This was a gratuitous insult to the conscientious New Jersey legislator, a strong administration supporter, who had worked long and hard to come up with a bill that he had every reason to believe would be satisfactory to the President.

This breakdown of communications between the White House and Cahitol Hill is one of the main reasons why Johnson's programs are having such rough going in Congress this year.

EMPLOYE RIGHTS — Despite the Senate leadership's action in postponing a Senate vote on the government employe bill of rights, its chief sponsor, Sen. Sam Ervin, D-N.C., expects the measure will be called up for action within the next few weeks and approved.

The leadership postponed action at the request of the Central Intelligence Agency and the National Security Agency, which are lobbying furiously to get themselves exempted from the bill. Ervin is strongly opposed to exempting the two agencies, pointing out that employes in CIA and NSA need protection of their constitutional rights even more urgently than other federal employes.

The vote on exempting CIA and NSA from the bill is expected to be close. However, in any event, with or without the CIA and NSA in the measure, it is expected to be approved by the Senate. The bill would establish strong safeguards to protect government workers against their private drives and conduct.

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