

VETO OF H.R. 5235

MESSAGE

FROM

THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

VETOING

H.R. 5235, AN ACT TO AMEND CHAPTER 5 OF TITLE 37, UNITED STATES CODE, TO REVISE THE SPECIAL PAY PROVISIONS FOR CERTAIN HEALTH PROFESSIONALS IN THE UNIFORMED SERVICES



MARCH 11, 1980.—Message and accompanying act ordered to be printed

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

59-011 O

WASHINGTON : 1980

To the House of Representatives:

I am returning, without my approval, H.R. 5235, the Uniformed Services Health Professionals Special Pay Act of 1980.

In recent years, the Department of Defense has experienced increasing difficulty in retaining its physicians, particularly those who have achieved board certification in specialty areas. In order to alleviate the military physician shortage, the Administration proposed the Armed Forces Physicians Pay Act in April of 1979. The principal focus of this proposal was to increase selectively the special and bonus pay necessary to attract and retain the required number of military physicians during what is expected to be a temporary period of shortage.

Unfortunately, in considering the issue of special pay for military physicians, the Congress unnecessarily expanded the scope and costs of H.R. 5235 to such an extent that I find it unacceptable. Specifically, the bill contains a number of flaws in comparison to the Administration bill.

- It makes bonus pay permanent, instead of temporary;
- It covers medical doctors in other uniformed services, principally the Public Health Service, instead of *just* those in the Armed Forces;
- It includes dentists, optometrists, and podiatrists, in addition to physicians;
- It provides unduly generous bonuses; and
- It makes permanent the special pay for veterinarians.

Only in the Armed Forces are we experiencing a serious shortage of physicians. The Administration proposal was very carefully tailored to solve that problem while preserving the flexibility to re-examine physician pay in the future as conditions change. There is no justification for making bonus pay permanent and for expanding coverage to physicians outside the military and to other health professionals (dentists, optometrists, podiatrists, and veterinarians).

Moreover, such an expansion, when compared to the Administration proposal, would increase Federal spending by some \$170 million for the years through 1985. If we are to check the strong inflationary pressures that now prevail throughout the Nation's economy, we must exercise genuine restraint in Federal spending. H.R. 5235 is a good example, in my judgment, of the type of unjustified Federal largess that we must stop if the Budget is to be balanced and inflation brought under control.

While I am compelled to disapprove H.R. 5235, let me emphasize my commitment to alleviate the shortage of physicians in the Armed Forces. I urge the Congress to reconsider the Administration proposal as soon as possible. That proposal is designed to resolve the problem in a fiscally responsible manner.

JIMMY CARTER.

THE WHITE HOUSE, March 11, 1980.