

On December 23, 1980:

LUMP SUM DEATH BENEFITS TO SURVIVORS OF FEDERAL LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS, FIREFIGHTERS, AND CERTAIN OTHER EMPLOYEES KILLED IN THE LINE OF DUTY

I am withholding my approval of H.R. 5888, a bill that provides for payment of a \$50,000 lump-sum death benefit to survivors of Federal law enforcement officers, firefighters and certain other employees killed in the line of duty. This benefit would be paid in addition to the regular death benefits available to all Federal employees, and would be retroactive to September 26, 1976.

I am not approving H.R. 5888 because the special benefits it would provide are preferential and unwarranted, and because the bill would become a precedent for extension of similar benefits to other Federal employees.

My disapproval of this bill in no way reflects on the bravery and dedication of Federal employees in law enforcement and firefighting occupations. Nor does it in any way diminish the gratitude that I and this Nation feel for those who sacrifice their lives in the performance of their duty.

H.R. 5888 is objectionable because it would single out certain groups of employees for preferential treatment under the Federal employee workers' compensation law (FECA). Survivor benefits provided by the Federal Government should be adequate in all instances to ease the financial burden resulting from an employee's death, regardless of occupation. Moreover, there are many civilian employees outside the areas of law enforcement and firefighting who are also exposed to special hazards in their work. It is inequitable and unfair to provide a greater benefit to a select group of Federal employees based only on the nature of their employment. Such preferred treatment is directly contrary to the evenhandedness that must be basic to a workers' compensation system.

Under the existing FECA program, the Federal Government already pays generous death benefits to survivors of employees who die on the job. These benefits are tax-free and are adjusted annually for increases in the cost of living. Depending on family size, such benefits can be as high as 75% of the employee's salary while alive, and are limited in total amount and duration only by changed family circumstances. The Government's Group Life Insurance Program, which was recently liberalized for younger employees, also provides substantial protection in the event of an employee's death.

The proponents of H.R. 5888 argue that this legislation is needed to assure parity with State and local police and firefighters, who receive a \$50,000 death benefit under a law passed in 1976. However, one of the main reasons for enactment of that law was that States and localities' compensation systems were inadequate or nonexistent and that life in-

surance coverage was often unavailable. The Congress at that time expressly decided against granting the \$50,000 death benefit to Federal firefighters and law enforcement officers because the benefits provided under FECA are comparatively generous and would in many cases exceed the \$50,000 payment authorized for State-local public safety officers.

Although the costs entailed in H.R. 5888 are not large, the special treatment provided by the bill would inevitably set a precedent for extension of its benefits to other, if not all, Federal employees who die in the line of duty. This would result in an unwarranted and costly added burden on the taxpayers of this Nation.

Finally, the retroactive provision in the bill is objectionable by arbitrarily excluding employees whose deaths occurred before the effective date.

For all of these reasons, I cannot approve H.R. 5888.

JIMMY CARTER.

THE WHITE HOUSE, December 23, 1980.

On December 24, 1980:

NATIONAL TOURISM POLICY ACT

I am withholding my approval from enrolled bill S. 1097, "The National Tourism Policy Act."

Among other provisions, this bill would establish a United States Travel and Tourism Administration (USTTA) as an independent agency, create a Travel and Tourism Advisory Board, and abolish the United States Travel Service of the Department of Commerce.

My Administration has proposed that the Federal government's role concentrate on development and coordination of policies conducive to tourism, collection of information, and selected promotional activities. Because tourism is an integral part of other trade promotion activities, we also recommended to Congress that the Travel Service be incorporated into the Commerce Department's International Trade Administration, where overseas tourism activities would be carried out by the Foreign Commercial Service.

By contrast, S. 1097 would separate the government's travel and tourism activities from other international trade functions. This is a seriously flawed management approach. The establishment of independent agencies to promote individual aspects of international trade would only impede the efficient management and coordination of important related functions.

Furthermore, the bill would create an agency not only independent of a Cabinet department but also virtually independent of Presidential direction. The principal initial function of the USTTA would be to develop a detailed and comprehensive tourism development plan, including estimates of funding and personnel needed to carry it out. The plan would be submitted by April 15, 1982 to the House and Senate Commerce Committees. Under the bill, that plan and any budget requests or

legislative recommendations by the USTTA would have to be submitted concurrently to the President and Congress, and no Federal officer or agency would be permitted to review or approve them before their submission to Congress. I consider this to be an unacceptable derogation of the President's executive authority and responsibility.

In addition, the Travel and Tourism Advisory Board—14 of the 17 members of which would be senior executives of the travel and tourism industry—would be given extraordinary powers of oversight. It would monitor the activities of the USTTA and report to Congress on the agency's preliminary plans and final budget requests. The composition of the Board and its functions would almost certainly ensure that the USTTA would be more responsive to special industry interests than to the need for a coordinated Federal approach that will balance the needs of tourism against other national priorities.

Finally, the USTTA would be authorized to establish branch offices in foreign countries, consult with foreign governments, and represent U.S. travel and tourist interests at international meetings, conferences, and exhibitions. In this way, the USTTA would become an independent foreign office in miniature. It would be highly undesirable to grant such an agency the ability and mission to deal with foreign governments directly, and independently of the Department of State. The proper conduct of foreign relations requires that the central role be played by the Department of State, under the direction of the President, and that contacts with foreign governments by Federal agencies be undertaken only in close cooperation with the Department of State.

For these reasons, and because S. 1097 is deficient or objectionable in several other respects, I am withholding my approval from the bill.

JIMMY CARTER.

DECEMBER 24, 1980.

FOR THE RELIEF OF MR. AND MRS. CLARENCE OVESON

I am withholding my approval from H.R. 4386, a bill "For the relief of Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Oveson."

H.R. 4386 would direct the Secretary of the Treasury to pay \$50,000 to Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Oveson of Saint Louis and Koochiching Counties, Minnesota. The payment would be for full settlement of the Ovesons' claims arising from the assumption of management by the United States of certain real property owned by the United States but occupied by the Ovesons. The payment would not affect any claims that the Ovesons might have arising from the loss of any structures affixed to the land. The Ovesons apparently purchased the land in question from another individual in good faith though title to the land actually rests with the U.S. Government as part of the Voyageurs National Park.