

Act which has a major aim of eliminating non-tariff trade barriers.

For the foregoing reasons, I am compelled to withhold my approval from H.R. 2933.

H.R. 11897

MEMORANDUM OF DISAPPROVAL

I have today vetoed H.R. 11897, a bill which would name the United States Courthouse and Federal Office Building in Grand Rapids, Michigan, the "President Gerald R. Ford Federal Office Building."

Although I appreciate the honor expressed by the Congress in enacting this legislation, I intend to continue the policy of past Administrations that the executive branch not endorse the naming of Federal office buildings. Generally, the executive branch has deferred to the desires of the Congress on such matters.

However, I know of no Federal office buildings that have been named for a President while still in office. This legislation might begin a precedent I believe it best not to establish.

The proposed naming of this facility for me in my home community is a great honor, and one for which I am deeply grateful; however, for the reasons I have assigned above I feel I cannot sign H.R. 11897.

H.R. 13296

MEMORANDUM OF DISAPPROVAL

I am withholding my approval from H.R. 13296, a bill to authorize appropriations for the Maritime Administration.

This is the annual appropriations authorization bill for certain activities of the Maritime Administration in the Department of Commerce. I would be pleased to approve the measure if it were limited to those authorizations.

Unfortunately, the Congress added an unacceptable amendment which would require the Federal Government to reimburse U.S. flag fishing vessel owners for damage to their equipment by foreign flag ships.

The amendment would require the Secretary of Commerce to provide interest free loans to fishermen to cover the property and the value of produce lost as a result of damage caused by foreign vessels operating in the area of the U.S. Continental Shelf. If an ensuing investigation proved the loss was caused solely by a foreign ship, the loan repayment would be canceled and the United States would attempt to recover claims from the government of the foreign national involved. The program would be retroactive to January 1, 1972, for claims already filed.

This indemnity program would pose serious problems of administration because it would be difficult to establish responsibility for any damage caused. Furthermore, since the bill provides no basis for advance review of the recipient's financial ability to repay a loan the Commerce Department could find itself in the position of holding a group of bad debts. At the same time, claims for damage would be difficult to validate and the result would essentially be a grant program with few effective restraints.

Moreover, this program sets a precedent for the Federal relief of private parties from the actions of foreign nationals. Currently, relief is extended only to fishermen whose vessels are the victims of actions by foreign governments beyond recognized territorial limits. International procedures now exist through which claims against foreign nationals can be asserted and adjudicated and these should be used in preference to a Federal indemnity program.

I urge the Congress to pass once again the appropriations authorizations provisions of the bill early in the next session. Meanwhile, the programs covered by these authorizations and funded by appropriations already enacted can be continued under the continuing resolution which runs through February 28, 1975.

S. 3943

MEMORANDUM OF DISAPPROVAL

I am withholding my approval from S. 3943, a bill "to extend the time for using funds appropriated to carry out the 1973 Rural Environmental Assistance Program and the 1974 Rural Environmental Conservation Program."

The bill would extend from December 31, 1974, to December 31, 1975, the time within which farmers may request and receive approval of cost-sharing assistance under the 1973 Rural Environmental Assistance Program (REAP) and the 1974 Rural Environmental Conservation Program (RECP). In total, this bill would make \$125,000,000 available to farmers for water and soil conservation practices which would otherwise not be available beyond December 31, 1974.

In my judgment, this bill is not necessary because sufficient cost-share funds have been made available for producers to finance sound conservation practices. Those producers interested in these programs have had adequate time to request and receive approval of these cost-share funds by the end of December 1974. I understand that those farmers, who have started approved conservation practices during the allotted time and were unable to complete them because of weather or other uncontrollable circumstances, will be permitted to complete these practices and receive cost-sharing assistance during 1975.

This Administration shares the view that REAP and RECP have made important contributions to conservation and the rural environment. However, the programs have long ago achieved their objectives. These programs were initiated in the 1930's to supplement farmers' incomes and provide incentives to farmers to install soil and water conservation practices. They were successful in demonstrating the value of conservation as a good farming practice. Many of the practices supported by the programs are profitable without Federal assistance and the supplementary income from this source has diminished in importance at a time when net farm income is near an all-time high.

It is, therefore, my earnest opinion that this bill is both unnecessary and unjustified, and on that basis I withhold my approval.

S. 3341

MEMORANDUM OF DISAPPROVAL

I have withheld my approval from S. 3341, the "Travel Expenses Amendments Act of 1974."

This bill would raise the maximum per diem allowance and mileage rates for civilian Government employees traveling on official business. I endorse this proposal. Unfortunately, a provision was added to the bill which would establish a rigid system of mileage reimbursement to the disabled veteran—with no discretionary authority for payment of a lesser amount where justified when the veteran was authorized to travel for treatment.

This provision assumes that there are great similarities in the travel situations of Veterans Administration beneficiaries and Federal employees who are away from home on Government business. This is not the case, however. Generally, a short span of time and distance is involved in VA beneficiary travel to a facility for vocational rehabilitation, counseling and health care, while Government employees may be traveling for days or weeks at a time. The employee per diem is designed to pay for necessary living expenses during this period, including those of lodging and meals.

Under this bill, Government employees using their privately owned vehicles may be reimbursed at the minimum 15¢ per mile, or at a rate comparable to the cost to the Government if the employee used a Government-owned vehicle. This flexibility would be continued for Government employee travel under the bill passed by the Congress. However, such management flexibility would not be applicable to travel of VA beneficiaries. The result would be the required payment of unwarranted mileage rates that would add an estimated \$25 million a year to the VA budget.

The Administration will ask the 94th Congress for a new bill to raise the maximum per diem and mileage rates for Federal employees which have been inadequate for some time. Many Federal employees who are required to travel in connection with their work have suffered considerable out-of-pocket expenses in recent years. This should be rectified as soon as possible.

GERALD R. FORD.

THE WHITE HOUSE.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES ON PRIVATE BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

Under clause 2 of rule XIII, reports of committees were delivered to the Clerk for printing and reference to the proper calendar, as follows:

[Submitted Dec. 30, 1974]

Mr. EVINS of Tennessee: Select Committee on Small Business. Energy data requirements of the Federal Government (Rept. No. 93-1648). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union.

Mr. HOLIFIELD: Committee on Government Operations. Reducing abuses in proprietary vocational education (Rept. No. 93-1649). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union.

Mr. HOLIFIELD: Committee on Government Operations. Impact of heroin addiction on the criminal justice system (Rept. No.