

Today, there are 304 vacancies in the ranks of the Metropolitan Police force, with an authorized strength of 3,100 men. The force has not been at full strength since February of 1964. While the number of vacancies has been reduced somewhat in the past several weeks by the most arduous recruitment efforts, the force remains dangerously understaffed.

The problem with respect to recruitment in the Fire Department is less acute, but is serious nonetheless. I am informed that in recent years the D.C. Fire Department has been obliged to accept increasing numbers of recruits who have barely achieved the minimum passing score on the mental examination for candidates, in order to fill its vacancies. With firefighting becoming ever more technical in nature, and with the Department's in-training becoming more demanding as a consequence, this poses a serious problem.

I realize that salaries alone do not constitute the sole cause of the acute problem of recruitment and retention of well-qualified personnel for these forces. However, I am convinced that the salary schedule proposed in this bill, particularly as it is weighted in favor of the lower salary classes, will have a highly salutary effect on this situation. And in these times when the safety of the citizens of this city, and of its millions of visitors each year, is in serious jeopardy, then it is incumbent on the Congress to provide every possible assistance to the solution of the problem.

Another provision of this bill would authorize additional compensation to officers and members of the D.C. Police and Fire Departments, below the rank of Deputy Chief, who acquire college credits in subjects which will enhance their value to the organization. A member acquiring 30 semester hours of credit in law enforcement or administration in the case of a policeman, or in fire science or administration in the case of a fireman, will receive \$600 of additional salary per year, and a member obtaining 60 semester hours of such credit will be entitled to an additional \$1,200 per year.

H.R. 13980 also includes a "grandfather clause", to assure that certain members of these forces who may be reassigned because of reorganization within the Departments may not be reduced in salary as a result of such reassignment.

The Deputy Police Chief presently assigned as Police Executive Officer has also been assigned as one of the Assistant Chiefs. My bill would provide this officer \$500 of additional compensation per year as long as he acts in this dual capacity.

Mr. Chairman, the classified employees of the Federal and District of Columbia governments were granted a salary increase of 4.5% as of October 1, 1967. In addition, these employees have been granted a prospective additional increase to take effect July 1, 1968. It is regrettable that time did not permit consideration of increases at that time for policemen, firemen, and teachers in the District of Columbia. Now, however, we are properly engaged in the consideration of legislation to compensate these dedicated public servants for this delay. For this reason, my bill H.R. 13980 would make these salary increases and other benefits for District of Columbia police and firemen retroactive to October 1, 1967, which I feel strongly to be necessary in fairness to these members.