

I cite these facts and figures only to indicate the pivotal role of the Court of General Sessions plays in law enforcement and in the administration of justice in the District of Columbia. Yet by July 1 of this year, unless H.R. 15678 or similar legislation is enacted, civil service employees in grade 17 and 18 and most of these in grade 16 will receive salaries well in excess of those paid to the judges of our court. And under the so-called comparability legislation, this imbalance would be still further aggravated. We believe this salary relationship does not accurately reflect the true significance of the court or the responsibilities of its judges.

I respectfully urge the committee to give sympathetic consideration to H.R. 15678, in order that the compensation paid to the judges on the Court of General Sessions and those on the District of Columbia Court of Appeals may be commensurate with their responsibilities as well as with the stature these courts and the administration of justice generally should enjoy within the general governmental framework in this city.

I should like to turn now to H.R. 15679 and H.R. 14202 which are identical bills to amend the District of Columbia Judges' Retirement Act.

As I understand it, when the Retirement Act became law late in the congressional session in 1964, it was contemplated that any possible deficiencies would be remedied when the Congress would be able to take another look at the statute, H.R. 15679 recognizes and remedies these deficiencies, and for that reason we strongly urge the enactment of this bill.

The major effect of the bill would be to permit those judges who prior to their appointment to the bench had congressional, civil, or military service, to count such service in the computation of their retirement annuities. This kind of aggregation of service is presently permitted with respect to all other major contributory retirement systems, and H.R. 15679 would merely follow the precedents set by these other systems. For example, a member of Congress or a congressional employee with prior civil service or military service may count that service toward his annuity when he retires from the Congress. But under present law, a judge on our court who retires from that court, or is not reappointed, would not at that time receive credit for any prior congressional, civil, or military service, and he might have to wait a substantial number of years before he would be eligible for such credit. We believe this disparity in treatment is inequitable, particularly since the judges on our court make the same financial contribution toward their retirement every two weeks that is made by congressional and executive employees.

The inequity of the present provisions is even more apparent when the disability features are considered. A judge on our court may retire on disability after serving for a minimum of five years. Similarly, a civil service or congressional employee may retire on disability after five years in the civil service or the congressional service. But, under the present law, if a person with as much as twenty or twenty-five years in congressional, civil or military service is appointed to the bench and becomes disabled less than five years later, he would be entitled to no retirement benefits whatever at that point, notwithstanding his total service of almost thirty years. Likewise, under present law, those judges who become disabled after serving more than five years on the bench will receive an annuity based only on their judicial service. Notwithstanding their permanent disability, they will have to wait until they reach the age of 62 to receive any benefits based on civil service, congressional service, or military service, no matter how lengthy. H.R. 15679 would permit an aggregation of these various kinds of service to arrive at the required five-year minimum, and it would base the disability annuity at the time of retirement on the entire service.

H.R. 15679 would effect four other amendments in present law, but I will comment on these only briefly. First, like all other federal retirement systems, it would allow credit for military service. Second, with respect to those judges who are less than sixty years old at the time of their retirement (or failure of reappointment), it would reduce the penalty for each year under 60 from 6 per cent to 1 per cent. Third, it would refund interest to those judges who withdrew money from the Civil Service Retirement Fund (where they received no interest) to deposit it in the judicial retirement fund (where they had to pay interest for the identical period). And fourth, H.R. 15679 would provide for survivorship annuities to be paid to dependent children between the ages of 18 and 21 who are pursuing a fulltime course of study in an educational institution. In that respect, too, the bill would simply follow the pattern laid out in the other federal retirement systems.