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Hebert Hoover to the United States Senate, May 28, 1930

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TO THE SENATE:

*The bill established a new
category of pensioners
The bill provided for a
Spanish war veterans*

I am returning this bill (S. 476) without approval. I am in favor of proper discharge of the national obligation to men who have served in war who have become disabled and are in need. But certain principles are included in this legislation which I deem are opposed to the interest both of war veterans and of the public. My major objections to this bill are those:

1. In the whole of our pension legislation over past years we have excluded from such national award persons whose disabilities arise from "vicious habits". This bill breaks down that exclusion and opens the door for claims of disability incurred at any time in the life of the pensioner arising from venereal diseases, alcoholism, drug habits, etc. Certainly such claims for public help cannot be fairly based upon sacrifice to the nation in war and must be opposed to national policy.

2. This legislation lowers the minimum service period from 90 days to 70 days for non-service connected disability pension. Under other provisions of law, men who served only one day and during that day suffered injury or impaired health, become eligible for pensions. This law, however, provides that if a man should incur any disability at any time in his life he may claim pension with only 70 days of service. The ninety day minimum service has been maintained against the Civil War veterans all these years because less service than this was not considered to imply personal danger or risk which warranted pension. If injury or impaired health incident to service is clearly proven, other laws cover such cases.

3. It seems to me that in the interest of justice to the taxpayer and to maintain the fine body of citizens comprised in our war veterans free from the stigma of encroachment upon the public treasury, there should be a requirement of "need" as well as disability as a basis for

these pensions. It is to me the height of injustice that citizens who are less well placed should be called upon to support from taxes those whose station in life enables them to support themselves or to live in independent security. The whole spirit of the pension system is that of a grateful nation rising to the support of those who have served in war, were injured or who have met with legitimate difficulties in after life which impose privation upon them. While many veterans may refuse to accept such pensions when they can get along otherwise, yet the cases of selfishness are bound to cause a constant irritation of feeling against a pension system that permits these unmerited and unnecessary payments.

4. Owing to the demands upon the national income during the next fiscal year, the expenditures under this legislation which are unobjectionable could not in justice to the nation, be begun before the fiscal year beginning July 1, 1931.

Herbert Hoover

The White House,

May 28, 1930.