The Presidents Page

OUR LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

EVENTS, particularly those in the legislative field, keep one very much on the alert. It is a great satisfaction to report that our legislative program is in excellent shape. Slowly but surely, the important issues of primary importance are being resolved, and barring something utterly unforeseen, 1959 should prove to be another banner year in the legislative field.

Already hearings have been held before the House Armed Services Committee on the Extension of the Selective Service Act of 1948 for an additional three-year period, i.e., until June 30, 1952, and on S. 2441 providing that the officers of duty in the National Guard Bureau shall be National Guard officers. The House Armed Services Committee has concluded its hearings on the Extension of the Selective Service Act, purely as an emergency measure and now has the Bill under consideration. The Committee has given no indication, as yet, to its probable action in the matter but in light of what transpired during the hearings, it would not be out of the line to hazard a guess that the Committee will recommend an extension for at least two years but, probably, with a provision that there will be no inductions in the National Guard without specific authorization by the Congress. During the course of the hearings incident to the Bill, it was made clear that there will be no surrender of the war-making powers of the Congress to the Executive.

In connection with the Bill providing that 49% of the officers on duty in the National Guard Bureau shall be National Guard officers, it will be recalled that this measure passed the First Session of the 81st Congress without a dissenting vote. Hearings on the measure opened before Subcommittee No. 1 of the House Appropriations Committee of which Representative Brooks of Louisiana is Chairman, and almost immediately the Subcommittee recommended to the full Committee that the Bill pass. One of the interesting things in connection with the hearing came in connection with the present language of Section 81 of the National Defense Act, which provides that no duty in the Bureau shall be Guard Officers. At the time this language became effective, in 1822, there were 16 officers on duty in the Bureau, of whom four or 25%, were Guard officers. Today there are 110 officers on duty in the Bureau and if S. 2441 is passed by the House and signed by the President, approximately 44 of them will be National Guard Officers. This represents an idea of the tremendous growth of the National Guard over a period of 30 years.

The Army Construction Program Bill is Number 1 priority where the National Guard is concerned, and here real advances have been made. The Civilian Components Policy Board, by unanimous action, gave approval to S. 1289 and H.R. 2284, the Tydings and Vinson Bills respectively, relating to an armory construction program. These Bills have been sponsored by the National Guard and the National Guard Association. On 9 January, the Secretary of Defense formally advised the Chairman of the Special Committee on Reserve Components of the House Armed Services Committee of the action taken by the Civilian Components Policy Board and urged the enactment of an armory construction program as of critical importance. The action of the Board and of the Secretary of Defense unquestionably will have far-reaching effect, and indications have been given by the Chairman of the Armed Services Committees of both Houses that action may be expected in the very near future. The State Adjutants General were requested to submit certain data at the January meeting of the Adjutants General Association, and it is anticipated that the National Guard Association will be ready to submit to the Armed Services Committees of Congress final data in connection with the Army Construction Program.

Of considerable interest is the favorable action of the Civilian Components Policy Board in connection with the Common Federal Commission and United States Property & Disbursing Officers Status Bill. These Bills have been hanging fire for approximately two years due to some differences between the Department of the Air Force and the National Guard. These differences have been resolved and both measures have been approved by the Department of the Air Force and the Guard is very happy over the outcome. No difficulties should be encountered in obtaining the enactment of these important matters.

Appropriations are of course a major item in our legislative program and hearings on the Army National Guard items got underway last month before the Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee handling the National Military Establishment Appropriation Bill. It is anticipated that representatives of the National Guard Association will have been heard during the latter part of February or early March. The recommendations of the Bureau of the Budget for National Guard requirements for the fiscal year 1951 are approximately $11,090,000 less than those of the fiscal year 1950, all of which is represented, practically, in the construction item for the Air National Guard. Every effort will be made to restore this item to the Bill.

The Staff

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The Alaskan Realms are alert and his hands are steady; they have to be to hold that server. The men of the National Guard are taking on added responsibilities and the contributions of the Alaska National Guard, are taking on added importance and are performing America's most northerly duty. (Photo by_windows through the U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service.)