

WILLIAM R. CONNOLLY

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JANUARY 12, 1927.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House and ordered to be printed

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Mr. UNDERHILL, from the Committee on Claims, submitted the following

REPORT

[To accompany H. R. 1134]

The Committee on Claims, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 1134) for the relief of William R. Connolly, having considered the same, report thereon with a recommendation that it do pass.

STATEMENT OF FACTS

The claimant, William R. Connolly, a member of the Buffalo, N. Y., police force, was instrumental in obtaining the conviction of three bandits who held up and robbed a mail messenger. The Post Office Department desired to extend him and the two men with whom he cooperated the maximum reward allowable, \$15,000, or \$5,000 each. It was found, however, that the department did not have sufficient funds for the purpose. The reward was therefore prorated.

The only objection the Postmaster General has to the bill in question is that it does not include the two other men who assisted in connection with the arrest and conviction of the bandits.

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WASHINGTON, D. C., March 15, 1926.

HON. CHARLES L. UNDERHILL,  
*Chairman Committee on Claims,  
House of Representatives.*

MY DEAR MR. UNDERHILL. Further reference is made to your letter of February 23, 1926, inclosing a copy of a bill (H. R. 1134) for the relief of William R. Connolly. You requested to be furnished with data of the department relating to this matter and also my opinion as to the merits of the bill.

The records of the department show that Mr. Connolly filed a claim for reward in connection with the arrest and conviction of James Wilson, Ludwig Schmidt, and James Snyder, who were prosecuted for holding up, assaulting,

and robbing a mail messenger at Niagara Falls, N. Y., March 1, 1921. Briefly the facts relating to this offense are as follows:

At about 7.20 p. m. on March 1, while the messenger was slowly driving from the post-office driveway to the street, two men jumped on the running board of his truck. One of the bandits covered the messenger with a revolver and the other took the wheel. The machine was driven to a point about a mile and a half from the center of the city, where the mail was taken from the truck, with the aid of a third man, and loaded into a waiting touring car. The hands of the messenger were then tied to the steering wheel and he was warned not to make an outcry or to move the machine within the next five minutes. The messenger succeeded in working his hands loose and notified the post office and the police department, but he could give no good descriptions of the bandits. The pouches contained no registered matter, the mailers sustaining the entire loss.

Nothing was accomplished in the way of clearing up the holdup for about five weeks, when a post-office inspector, through confidential sources, learned the identity of the bandits. However, while their identity was known, sufficient evidence to warrant their prosecution was not available. At this point, Mr. Connolly, a member of the Buffalo, N. Y., police department, entered the case and for about a month worked with inspectors and the other claimants in securing the necessary evidence and taking the offenders into custody. The conviction of the bandits followed.

Under order No. 5668 of the Postmaster General—the notice of reward in effect at the time the bandits were apprehended—the maximum reward payable for each offender was \$5,000, or a total of \$15,000 for the three. This sum was payable from the appropriation for the payment of rewards, fiscal year 1921.

It was the desire of the department to allow the maximum reward, but owing to a deficiency which existed in the reward appropriation it was found necessary to prorate the claims and \$10,000 was distributed among the several claimants. Of this sum, \$1,250 was paid to Mr. Connolly, with the advice that it represented only a partial settlement of his claim. Similar statements were made in letters transmitting the checks to the other claimants. As a supplemental appropriation to cover these particular claims could not be obtained, further payments in this case have not been made; and the bill introduced by Representative MacGregor is for the purpose of paying Mr. Connolly \$1,250, the balance of the \$2,500 awarded to him. If the bill for the relief of Mr. Connolly were passed, there would still remain an unpaid balance of \$3,750 due the other claimants.

In accordance with Circular No. 49 of the Bureau of the Budget, the facts in this case were submitted to the director of that bureau, with the advice that the department would not be inclined to recommend the passage of this bill. A reply has just been received, stating that our proposed report would not be in conflict with the financial program of the President; and in view of this, the department could not consistently submit a favorable recommendation for the passage of the bill for the relief of Mr. Connolly.

Very truly yours,

HARRY S. NEW, *Postmaster General.*