

Systematic Technical Accuracy Review found that, in 1998, initial review of veterans claims was accurate only 64 percent of the time.

(4) The Veterans Benefits Administration could lose up to 30 percent of its workforce to retirement by 2003, making adequate training for claims adjudicators even more necessary to ensure veterans claims are processed efficiently.

(5) The Veterans Benefits Administration needs to take more aggressive steps to ensure that veterans claims are processed in an accurate and timely fashion to avoid unnecessary delays in providing veterans with compensation and pension benefits.

(b) PLAN REQUIRED.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the House of Representatives, the Majority Leader of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives a comprehensive plan for the improvement of the processing of claims for veterans compensation and pension.

(c) ELEMENTS.—The plan under subsection (b) shall include the following:

(1) Mechanisms for the improvement of training of claims adjudicators and for the enhancement of employee accountability standards in order to ensure that initial reviews of claims are accurate and that unnecessary appeals of benefit decisions and delays in benefit payments are avoided.

(2) Mechanisms for strengthening the ability of the Veterans Benefits Administration of the Department of Veterans Affairs to identify recurring errors in claims adjudications by improving data collection and management relating to—

(A) the human body and the impairments common in disability and pension claims; and

(B) recurring deficiencies in medical evidence and examinations.

(3) Mechanisms for implementing a system for reviewing claims-processing accuracy that meets the Government's internal control standard on separation of duties and the program performance audit standard on organizational independence.

(4) Quantifiable goals for each of the mechanisms developed under paragraphs (1) through (3).

(d) CONSULTATION.—In developing the plan under subsection (b), the Secretary shall consult with and obtain the views of veterans organizations and other interested parties.

(e) IMPLEMENTATION.—The Secretary shall implement the plan under subsection (b) commencing 60 days after the date of the submittal of the plan under that subsection.

(f) MODIFICATION.—(1) The Secretary may modify the plan submitted under subsection (b).

(2) Any modification under paragraph (1) shall not take effect until 30 days after the date on which the Secretary submits to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the House of Representatives, the Majority Leader of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives a notice regarding such modification.

(g) REPORTS.—Not later than January 1, 2000, and every 6 months thereafter, the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the House of Representatives, the Majority Leader of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives a report assessing implementation of the plan under subsection (b) during the preceding 6 months, including an assessment of whether the goals set forth under subsection (c)(4) are being achieved.

CLELAND AMENDMENT NO. 1788

(Ordered to lie on the table.)

Mr. CLELAND submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill, H.R. 2684, *supra*; as follows:

On page 11, line 11, strike “\$97,256,000” and insert “\$99,756,000, of which \$500,000 shall be available for development of national cemeteries in each of the areas of Atlanta, Georgia, southwestern Pennsylvania, Miami, Florida, Detroit, Michigan, and Sacramento, California.”

On page 11, line 19, strike “\$43,200,000” and insert “\$40,700,000”.

WELLSTONE AMENDMENT NO. 1789

Mr. WELLSTONE proposed an amendment to the bill, H.R. 2684, *supra*; as follows:

On page 17, between lines 14 and 15, insert the following:

SEC. 108. (a) FINDINGS.—The Senate makes the following findings:

(1) One of the most outrageous examples of the failure of the Federal Government to honor its obligations to veterans involves the so-called “atomic veterans”, patriotic Americans who were exposed to radiation at Hiroshima and Nagasaki and at nuclear test sites.

(2) For more than 50 years, many atomic veterans have been denied veterans compensation for diseases, known as radiogenic diseases, that the Department of Veterans Affairs recognizes as being linked to exposure to radiation. Many of these diseases are lethal forms of cancer.

(3) The Department of Veterans Affairs almost invariably denies the claims for compensation of atomic veterans on the grounds that the radiation doses received by such veterans were too low to result in radiogenic disease, even though many scientists and former Under Secretary for Health Kenneth Kizer agree that the dose reconstruction analyses conducted by the Department of Defense are unreliable.

(4) Although the Department of Veterans Affairs already has a list of radiogenic diseases that are presumed to be service-connected, the Department omits three diseases—lung cancer, colon cancer, and central nervous system cancer—from that list, notwithstanding the agreement of scientists that the evidence of a link between the three diseases and low-level exposure to radiation is very convincing and, in many cases, is stronger than the evidence of a link between such exposure and other radiogenic diseases currently on that list.

(b) SENSE OF SENATE.—It is the sense of the Senate that lung cancer, colon cancer, and brain and central nervous system cancer should be added to the list of radiogenic diseases that are presumed by the Department of Veterans Affairs to be service-connected disabilities.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, be allowed to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, September 23, 1999. The purpose of this meeting will be to (1) to examine the impact of electronic trading on regulation and (2) to consider the nominations of Paul Riddick to be Assistant

Secretary of Agriculture for Administration and Andrew Fish to be Assistant Secretary of Agriculture for Congressional Relations.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING, AND URBAN AFFAIRS

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, September 23, 1999, to conduct a mark-up on the committee print of the Export Administration Act and pending nominations.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources be granted permission to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, September 23, for purposes of conducting a full committee hearing entitle “Y2K—Will the Lights Go Out,” which is scheduled to begin at 9:30 a.m. The purpose of this hearing is to explore the potential consequences of the year 2000 computer problem to the Nation's supply of electricity.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the full Committee on Environment and Public Works be granted permission to conduct a nominations hearing Thursday, September 23, 3:00 p.m., Hearing Room (SD-406), to receive testimony from the following: Dr. Richard A. Meserve, nominated by the President to be a Member of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission; Dr. Paul L. Hill, Jr., to be Member and Chairperson of the Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board; and Major General Phillip R. Anderson, U.S. Army, to be a Member and President, Mr. Sam Epstein Angel, to be a Member, and Brigadier General Robert H. Griffin, U.S. Army, to be a Member, of the Mississippi River Commission.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Foreign Relations be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, September 23, 1999, at 3:30 pm to hold a hearing.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, the Committee on the Judiciary requests unanimous consent to conduct a mark-up on Thursday, September 23, 1999 beginning at 10:00 a.m. in Dirksen Room 226.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON RULES AND ADMINISTRATION

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Rules and Administration be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, September 23, 1999 at 9:00 a.m. to continue the markup of S. Res. 172, a resolution to establish a special committee of the Senate to address the cultural crisis facing America.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Select Committee on Intelligence be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Thursday, September 23, 1999 at 2:00 p.m. to hold a close hearing on intelligence matters.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE YEAR 2000

TECHNOLOGY PROBLEM

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Special Committee on the Year 2000 Technology Problem be permitted to meet on September 23, 1999 at 9:30 a.m. for the purpose of conducting a hearing.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, the Immigration Subcommittee of the Committee on the Judiciary requests unanimous consent to conduct a markup on Thursday, September 23, 1999 beginning at 2:00 p.m. in Dirksen Room 226.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT OF GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT, RESTRUCTURING AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Governmental Affairs Committee's Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, Restructuring and the District of Columbia be permitted to meet on Thursday, September 23, 1999 at 9:30 a.m. for a hearing on Quality Management at the Federal Level.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

ON THE SERVICE OF JUDGE LEWIS STITH TO SULLIVAN'S ISLAND

• Mr. HOLLINGS. Mr. President, it is a pleasure for me to recognize today one of South Carolina's finest public servants, Judge Lewis Stith. August 1 marked Mr. Stith's 43d year of continued service to the town of Sullivan's Island.

A native of Sullivan's Island, Mr. Stith and his wife, Marguerite, raised their five children there after he returned from service in the U.S. Coast Guard during World War II. He later served in the Korean war.

In 1956, Lewis Stith was appointed a Charleston County magistrate, a position he held for 25 years. In 1981, he was appointed municipal judge of Sullivan's Island, a position he still holds. Judge Stith's civic accomplishments are numerous and include helping to organize the Sullivan's Island Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department 51 years ago.

The Sept. 1-7 issue of the Moultrie News featured an article which pays tribute to Lewis Stith's commitment to Sullivan's Island and to his wife and children who are continuing the island leadership tradition. I ask that the article be printed in the RECORD.

The article follows:

[From the Moultrie News, Sept. 1999]

LEWIS STITH OF SULLIVAN'S ISLAND

The "Island Boys" ruled the beach back then. Lewis Stith, Burt and George Wurthman, Frank and Vernon Damewood, Tony Blanchard, and John and Otis Pickett, just to name a few, spent their days enjoying the ocean, and playing half rubber on the beach at Sullivan's Island. Life was simple. Being surrounded by summer cottages and neighbors that knew everyone made life a yearlong vacation. The Pavilion was located at Station 22 and Burmester's Pharmacy was where Sullivan's Restaurant now stands. The soldiers at Fort Moultrie shot off the cannons everyday at 5 p.m. to mark the end of the day.

Lewis Stith, who was born at Station 24, November 9th, 1921, is still there and though his life has taken him on many journeys, he always returns because, "There's no place in the world like Sullivan's Island!"

The son of Luther P. and Susan Maguire Stith, Lewis is a well known figure on Sullivan's Island. After high school, Lewis went on to work for the Army as a Post Exchange Clerk and later as a bookkeeper until WW II. He then entered the Coast Guard and served at various shore stations and was eventually assigned to a troop transport—U.S.S. General A.W. Brewster APA 155—as a gunners mate. He traveled the European, Asiatic and Pacific theaters transporting troops. At the end of the war, Lewis was discharged on the WWII Point System in 1945.

Lewis returned to Sullivan's Island to be with his wife Marguerite Strickland and eventually raised five children. His sons are well known islanders as well. Paul is a Wachovia Bank Manager, Marshall is the Mayor of Sullivan's Island and owner of Station 22 Restaurant, and Anthony is the Sullivan's Island Fire Chief. Their two daughters, Debbie White and Susan Hindman, are both school teachers. The Stith's have six grandchildren.

After several jobs, 35 years at the Exxon corporation and also serving in the Korean War, Lewis was appointed a Charleston County Magistrate on August 1st, 1956, by State Senator T. Allen Legare. He remained a Magistrate for 25 years. On August 1st, 1981, Lewis was appointed Municipal Judge for Sullivan's Island and is still serving in this position.

"When I was first appointed Magistrate in 1956," said Stith, "Mount Pleasant, Sullivan's Island, and the Isle of Palms had only one police officer in each town. Buck Gossett was the only Highway Patrolman in the area and Charleston County had very few officers back then."

Fifty-one years ago, five guys got together to form the Sullivan's Island Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department. Lewis, along with Art Chiola, Joe Rowland, Red Wood and Leo Truesdale are the original five members and

are still active in the volunteer effort today. The Army donated two trucks and a station to house them. They were the first volunteer rescue squad in the county.

Lewis served as chief of the department, and recalls one particular devastating fire that was very chilling. "I think it was 1952 on Station 28. The house was in the shape of an H. The kitchen wall backed up to the children's bedroom wall and a gas fire ignited and spread. Art Chiola and I found the children the next day in a closet," he said, describing the remains as gruesome. "Apparently, they couldn't find the door and entered the closet looking for a way out."

The Volunteer Fire Department started some of Sullivan's Island's most popular events including the annual Fish Fry and Oyster Roast. Fifty one years ago, the Fish Fry started as a fund raiser for Red Wood's sister-in-law who need surgery for an aneurysm. It eventually grew into a large community event and the proceeds raised now go to fund the Fire and Rescue Division's special training and equipment. "We have a tremendous turnout these days," said Lewis. "When we first started it was in the same location that it is now, but all we had was some cinder blocks and a steel plate to cook on. Now things have grown and we have the present facility called 'The Big Tin.'"

Lewis and Marguerite remember the good old days on the island. "After Labor day," said Marguerite, "The vacationers would all go home and there would only be about 25 permanent residents."

"We played recreation activities with the soldiers and got to see first run movies at the fort," added Lewis. "Middle Street was the only road through the town and you could drive your car on the beach."

Marguerite was a Charleston girl, and Lewis met her through a friend. He began to date her and, according to Marguerite, "We'd come over the Sullivan's Island Bridge and every time he would say, 'Smell that good salt air? Isn't it great?' I never told him that I could smell that same air on the Cooper River Bridge and in Charleston," she said laughing. "He thought there was no better place than Sullivan's Island, and he was right!"

After Hurricane Hugo though, the island completely changed. "All the summer cottages were wiped out entirely and replaced with massive homes that tower over the beach. But this is still God's country!" said Lewis. "You can't find a better place to raise a family."

August 1st of this year marked the 43rd Anniversary of Lewis's continued service for the Town of Sullivan's Island. He's done many other things for the town, including forming the VFW Walter Brownell Post #3137 on Sullivan's Island. He served as the first Commander.

Lewis attributes all of his success to many things, but his greatest accomplishment he said, was marrying his wife and raising his five successful children. "I owe it all to my good family upbringing. I grew up during the Depression and we just learned to take care of what you had. I am also a member of St. Maria Maris Catholic Church. These things have taken me where I'm at today."

Still active as a judge, and still loving Sullivan's Island like he always has, Lewis sums it up by saying, "I've been all over the world, and there is no place like the sandy spot we live on. I love it here."•

TRIBUTE TO DAVID LEWIS WILLIAMS

• Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise today to offer a tribute to Kentucky State Senator David Williams,