

VETO MESSAGE RELATING TO A NATIONAL BUDGET SYSTEM.

MESSAGE

FROM THE

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,

RETURNING TO

THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, WITHOUT APPROVAL, HOUSE BILL 9783, "AN ACT TO PROVIDE A NATIONAL BUDGET SYSTEM, AN INDEPENDENT AUDIT OF GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTS, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES," AND STATING CERTAIN OBJECTIONS THERETO.

JUNE 4, 1920.—Referred to the Select Committee on Budget and ordered to be printed.

To the HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

I am returning without my signature H. R. 9783, "An act to provide a national budget system, an independent audit of Government accounts, and for other purposes." I do this with the greatest regret. I am in entire sympathy with the objects of this bill and would gladly approve it but for the fact that I regard one of the provisions contained in section 303 as unconstitutional. This is the provision to the effect that the comptroller general and the assistant comptroller general, who are to be appointed by the President with the advice and consent of the Senate, may be removed at any time by a concurrent resolution of Congress after notice and hearing, when, in their judgment, the comptroller general or assistant comptroller general is incapacitated or inefficient, or has been guilty of neglect of duty, or of malfeasance in office, or of any felony or conduct involving moral turpitude, and for no other cause and in no other manner except by impeachment. The effect of this is to prevent the removal of these officers for any cause except either by impeachment or a concurrent resolution of Congress. It has, I think, always been the accepted construction of the Constitution that the power to appoint officers of this kind carries with it, as an incident, the power to remove. I am convinced that the Congress is without constitutional power to limit the appointing power and its incident, the power of removal derived from the Constitution.

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The section referred to not only forbids the Executive to remove these officers but undertakes to empower the Congress by a concurrent resolution to remove an officer appointed by the President with the advice and consent of the Senate. I can find in the Constitution no warrant for the exercise of this power by the Congress. There is certainly no express authority conferred and I am unable to see that authority for the exercise of this power is implied in any express grant of power. On the contrary, I think its exercise is clearly negatived by section 2 of Article II. That section, after providing that certain enumerated officers and all officers whose appointments are not otherwise provided for shall be appointed by the President with the advice and consent of the Senate, provides that the Congress may by law vest the appointment of such inferior officers as they think proper in the President alone, in the courts of law, or in the heads of department. It would have been within the constitutional power of the Congress, in creating these offices, to have vested the power of appointment in the President alone, in the President with the advice and consent of the Senate, or even in the head of a department. Regarding as I do the power of removal from office as an essential incident to the appointing power, I can not escape the conclusion that the vesting of this power of removal in the Congress is unconstitutional and therefore I am unable to approve the bill.

I am returning the bill at the earliest possible moment with the hope that the Congress may find time before adjournment to remedy this defect.

WOODROW WILSON.

THE WHITE HOUSE, June 4, 1920.

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COMPTROLLER
OF THE TREASURY