

CHAPTER 444 - 1ST SESSION

(H. R. 6635)

AN ACT

TO DISPENSE WITH THE NECESSITY FOR INSURANCE BY THE GOVERNMENT AGAINST LOSS OR DAMAGE TO VALUABLES IN SHIPMENT, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That as soon as practicable after the approval of this Act the Secretary of the Treasury and the Postmaster General shall, jointly, with the approval of the President, prescribe regulations governing the shipment of valuables by the executive departments, independent establishments, agencies, wholly owned corporations, officers, and employees of the United States, with a view to minimizing risks of loss and destruction of, and damage to, such valuables in shipment. After the effective date of such regulations, which shall be not more than thirty days after their issuance, it shall be the duty of every such executive department, independent establishment, agency, wholly owned corporation, officer, and employee, and of every person acting for him or it, or at his or its direction, to comply with such regulations in making any shipment of valuables.

Sec. 2. There is hereby authorized to be appropriated, out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, the sum of \$500,000 to be used, under the direction of the Secretary of the Treasury, for the replacement of valuables, or the value thereof, lost, destroyed, or damaged in the course of shipment effected pursuant to the regulations prescribed under section 1. There is hereby further authorized to be appropriated annually, beginning with the fiscal year 1939 and ending with the fiscal year 1948, inclusive, the sum of \$200,000 for the said purposes, and from time to time such additional sums as may be necessary for the said purposes. There shall be in the Treasury of the United States a revolving fund, to be known as "the fund for the payment of Government losses in shipment" (hereinafter referred to as "the fund"), to be constituted of the said sum of \$500,000 and the sums hereafter appropriated for the said purposes, together with all recoveries and repayments credited to the fund as hereinafter provided. There is hereby further authorized to be appropriated, out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, the sum of \$10,000, for expenditures under the direction of the Secretary of the Treasury, to be used for the payment of administrative expenses, including personal services, necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act for the fiscal year 1938.

Sec. 3. In the event of loss or destruction of, or damage to, valuables of which shipment shall have been made pursuant to the regulations prescribed under section 1, a claim in writing for replacement shall be made upon the Secretary of the Treasury who, if he shall be satisfied that such loss, destruction, or damage has occurred and that shipment was made substantially in accordance with such regulations, shall cause replacement to be made out of the fund through such officers as he may designate. Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, the decision of the Secretary of the Treasury that such loss, destruction, or damage has occurred or that

such shipment was made substantially in accordance with such regulations shall be final and conclusive and shall not be subject to review by any other officer of the United States: Provided, however, That where the Secretary of the Treasury determines that such replacement can be effected, in whole or in part, without actual or ultimate injury to the United States, by a credit in the accounts of the executive department, independent establishment, agency, officer, employee, or other accountable person making the claim, he shall not resort to the fund, except to the extent that such replacement cannot be so effected by such credit, but shall certify such determination to the Comptroller General and, upon receipt of such certification, the Comptroller General is authorized and directed to make such credit in the settlement of accounts in the General Accounting Office: Provided further, That the fund shall not be available with respect to any loss, destruction, or damage affecting valuables of which shipment shall have been made by or on behalf of the Public Debt Service of the Treasury Department, insofar as such loss, destruction or damage is chargeable against the indefinite appropriation "Expenses of loans, Act of September 24, 1917, as amended and extended" (U. S. C., 1934 edition, title 31, secs. 760, 761): And provided further, That the fund shall not be available with respect to any loss, destruction, or damage affecting valuables, insofar as such loss, destruction, or damage may be adjusted by the Postmaster General under the provisions of the Act of March 17, 1882, as amended (U. S. C., 1934 edition, title 39, sec. 49); nor shall it be available with respect to any loss, destruction, or damage affecting valuables of which shipment shall have been made at the risk of persons other than the United States, its executive departments, independent establishments, agencies, wholly owned corporations, officers, and employees. All recoveries and repayments on account of loss, destruction or damage to valuables of which replacement shall have been made out of the fund shall be credited to it and shall be available for the purposes thereof.

Sec. 4. On and after the effective date of the regulations prescribed under section 1, no executive department, independent establishment, agency, wholly owned corporation, officer, or employee shall expend any money, or incur any obligation, for insurance, or for the payment of premiums on insurance, against loss, destruction, or damage in the shipment of valuables except as specifically authorized by the Secretary of the Treasury. The Secretary of the Treasury may give such authorization if he shall find that the risk of loss, destruction, or damage in such shipment cannot be adequately guarded against by the facilities of the United States or that the circumstances are such that adequate replacement cannot be provided under this Act.

Sec. 5. Every officer and employee of the United States and every person acting on behalf of a wholly owned corporation who makes a shipment of valuables in good faith pursuant to and substantially in accordance with the regulations prescribed under section 1 shall be deemed, insofar as there may be concerned the propriety with respect to such shipment of any act or omission governed by such regulations, to be acting in faithful execution of his duties of office and in full performance of the conditions of his bond and oath of office, if any.

Sec. 6. The Secretary of the Treasury shall have power, with the approval of the President, to make such rules and regulations as may be

may for such purpose require persons making shipment of valuables or making claims for replacement to make such declarations or to furnish him with such other information as he may deem necessary.

Sec. 7. For the purposes of this Act--

(a) The term "valuables" means any article or thing or representative of value in which the United States has any interest, or in connection with which it has any obligation or responsibility, direct or indirect, and which is of, or is similar to, a class or kind of article or thing or representative of value which it has been the practice heretofore of the United States to insure as the insured party, against loss, destruction, or damage in shipment, and includes, but is not limited to, coin, speci, bullion, currency, bonds, coupons, debentures, bills, notes, certificates of indebtedness, certificates of deposit, mortgages, assignments, certificates of stock, warehouse receipts, checks, trust receipts, warrants, stamps, and any other securities, papers, or materials of value, whether complete, incomplete, mutilated, in definitive form, or represented by interim documents; the term "United States" as used in this subsection means the United States or any of its executive departments, independent establishments, agencies, wholly owned corporations, officers, or employees;

(b) The term "shipment" means the transportation, or the effecting of transportation, of valuables, without limitation as to the means or facilities used or by which the transportation, is effected or the person to whom it is made, and includes, but is not limited to, shipments made to any executive department, independent establishment, agency, wholly or partly owned corporation, officer, or employee of the United States, or any person acting on his or its behalf or at his or its direction;

(c) The term "wholly owned corporation" means any corporation, regardless of the law or laws under which it is incorporated, the capital of which is entirely owned, directly or indirectly, by the United States, and includes the duly authorized officers, employees, and agents thereof;

(d) The term "replacement" means payment, reimbursement, replacement, or duplication or the expenses incident thereto.

Sec. 8. (a) Whenever it is clearly proved to the satisfaction of the Secretary of the Treasury--

(1) That any interest-bearing security of the United States, identified by number and description, payable to bearer or so assigned as to become, in effect, payable to bearer, has been wholly or partly destroyed, or so mutilated or defaced as to impair its value to the owner, or has been lost or stolen under such circumstances, and such a period of time having elapsed after it has matured or has become redeemable pursuant to a call for redemption, as in the judgment of the Secretary would indicate that it has been destroyed or irretrievably lost, is not held by any person as his own property and will never become the basis of a valid claim against the United States; or

- 4 -

(2) That any interest-bearing security of the United States, identified by number and description, which is not payable to bearer and which has not been so assigned as to become, in effect, payable to bearer, has been lost or stolen, so that it is not held by any person as his own property, or has been wholly or partly destroyed, or so mutilated or defaced as to impair its value to the owner;

the Secretary, upon receipt and approval by him of a bond of indemnity, if and as required by subsection (b) hereof, shall, in the case of a security which has not matured or become redeemable pursuant to a call for redemption, issue a substitute marked "duplicate" and showing the serial number of the original security; or shall, in the case of a security which has matured or become redeemable pursuant to a call for redemption, make payment thereof to the owner, with such interest only as would have been paid had the security been presented when it became due and payable: Provided, That in the case of an interim certificate relief may be given by the issue of a definitive security, whether before or after maturity, rather than by the issue of a substitute or by payment: And provided further, That no payment shall be made on account of interest coupons claimed to have been attached to such original security unless the Secretary is satisfied that such coupons have not been paid, and are in fact destroyed or can never become the basis of a valid claim against the United States.

(b) Except as hereinafter provided, the owner of such lost, stolen, destroyed, mutilated, or defaced security shall file with the Secretary of the Treasury a bond, to indemnify the United States, in such form and amount and with such surety, sureties, or security as the Secretary of the Treasury shall require: Provided, That in case of securities payable to bearer or so assigned as to become, in effect, payable to bearer, the destruction of which has not been proved, a corporate surety, qualified under the provisions of the Act of August 13, 1894, as amended (U. S. C., 1934 edition, title 6, secs. 6-13), shall be required on such bond of indemnity; And provided further, That a bond of indemnity shall not be required in any of the following classes of cases, except as hereinafter provided:

(1) If the Secretary of the Treasury is satisfied that the loss, theft, destruction, mutilation, or defacement, as the case may be, occurred without fault of the owner and while the security was in the custody or the control of the United States (not including the Postal Service when acting solely in its capacity as the public carrier of the mails), or of a person thereunto duly authorized as lawful agent of the United States, or while it was in the course of shipment effected pursuant to and in accordance with the regulations issued under the provisions of this Act;

(2) If substantially the entire security is presented and surrendered by the owner and the Secretary of the Treasury is satisfied as to the identity of the security

- 5 -

presented and that any missing portions are not sufficient to form the basis of a valid claim against the United States;

(3) If the lost, stolen, destroyed, mutilated, or defaced security is one which by the provisions of law or by the terms of its issue is transferable only by operation of law;

(4) If the owner is a State or political subdivision thereof, a corporation the whole of whose capital is owned by the United States, a foreign government, or a Federal Reserve bank: Provided, however, That in any of the foregoing classes of cases the Secretary of the Treasury may require a bond of indemnity if he deems it essential to the public interest.

(c) The term "interest-bearing security of the United States," or "security", wherever used in this section, means any direct obligation of the United States issued pursuant to law for valuable consideration and which by its terms bears interest, or is issued on a discount basis, and includes (but is not limited to) bonds, notes, certificates of indebtedness, and Treasury bills, and interim certificates issued for any such security.

(d) The Secretary of the Treasury shall have the power to make such rules and regulations as he may deem necessary for the administration of this section.

(e) Sections 3702, as amended, 3703, 3704, and 3705 of the Revised Statutes of the United States (U. S. C., title 31, secs. 735, 736, 737, and 738) are hereby repealed.

Sec. 9. Section 3646 of the Revised Statutes of the United States (U. S. C., 1934 edition, title 31, 528), as amended, is further amended to read as follows:

"(a) Except as hereinafter provided, whenever it is clearly proved to the satisfaction of the Secretary of the Treasury that any original check of the United States is lost, stolen, or wholly or partly destroyed, or is so mutilated or defaced as to impair its value to its owner or holder, persons authorized to issue such checks on behalf of the United States are authorized, before the close of the fiscal year following the fiscal year in which the original check was issued, to issue to the owner or holder thereof a substitute, marked 'duplicate' and showing the number, date, and payee of the original check, upon the receipt and approval by the Secretary of the Treasury of a bond, to indemnify the United States, in such form and amount and with such surety, sureties, or security as the Secretary of the Treasury shall require; but no such substitute shall be payable if the original check shall first have been paid: Provided, however, That the authority herein conferred to issue substitute checks may, in the case of checks issued on account of public-debt obligations and transactions regarding the administration of banking and currency laws, be issued without limitation of time.

- 6 -

"(b) A bond of indemnity shall not be required under subsection (a) of this section in any of the following classes of cases except as hereinafter provided: (1) If the Secretary of the Treasury is satisfied that the loss, theft, destruction, mutilation, or defacement, as the case may be, occurred without fault of the owner or holder and while the check was in the custody or control of the United States (not including the Postal Service when acting solely in its capacity as the public carrier of the mails), or of a person thereunto duly authorized as lawful agent of the United States, or while it was in the course of shipment effected pursuant to and in accordance with the regulations issued under the provisions of the Government Losses in Shipment Act; (2) if substantially the entire check is presented and surrendered by the owner or holder and the Secretary of the Treasury is satisfied as to the identity of the check presented and that any missing portions are not sufficient to form the basis of a valid claim against the United States; (3) if the Secretary of the Treasury is satisfied that the original check is not negotiable and cannot be made the basis of a valid claim against the United States; (4) if the amount of the check is less than \$50 and the Secretary of the Treasury is satisfied that the giving of a bond of indemnity would be an undue hardship to the owner or holder; (5) if the owner or holder is a State or political subdivision thereof, a corporation the whole of whose capital is owned by the United States, a foreign government, or a Federal Reserve bank: Provided, however, That in any of the foregoing classes of cases the Secretary of the Treasury may require a bond of indemnity if he deems it essential to the public interest.

"(c) The Secretary of the Treasury shall have the power to make such rules and regulations as he may deem necessary for the administration of the provisions of this section.

"(d) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsections (a), (b), and (c) of this section, whenever any original check of the Post Office Department has been lost, stolen, or destroyed, the Postmaster General may authorize the issuance of a substitute, marked 'duplicate' and showing the number, date, and payee of the original check before the close of the fiscal year following the fiscal year in which the original check was issued, upon the execution by the owner thereof of such bond of indemnity as the Postmaster General may prescribe: Provided, That when such original check does not exceed in amount the sum of \$50 and the payee or owner is, at the date of the application, an officer or employee in the service of the Post Office Department, whether by contract, designation, or appointment, the Postmaster General may, in lieu of an indemnity bond, authorize the issuance of a substitute check or warrant upon such an affidavit as he may prescribe, to be made before any postmaster by the payee or owner of an original check.

"(e) Substitutes, marked as hereinabove provided, drawn on the Treasurer of the United States, shall, after the lapse of the period fixed by section 21 of the Permanent Appropriation Repeal Act, 1934 (48 Stat. 1235; U. S. C., 1934 edition, title 31, sec. 725 (b)), for the payment of the original checks, be payable only as the original checks would be payable thereunder.

"(f) The term 'original check' wherever used in this section means any check, warrant, or other order for the payment of money, payable upon demand and not bearing interest, drawn by a duly authorized officer or agent of the United States on its behalf against an account or funds of the United States, whether upon a bank or upon the Treasurer or other paying officer of the United States, but does not include money, coins, or currency of the United States nor instruments issued by any corporation or other entity owned or controlled by the United States, whether in whole or in part, against such corporation's or entity's own funds; as used in subsection (d) of this section it means such an instrument drawn by a duly authorized officer or employee of the Post Office Department."

Sec. 10. This Act may be cited as the "Government Losses in Shipment Act".

Sec. 11. This Act shall become effective on July 1, 1937.

Approved, July 8, 1937.