

INDIAN AGENT, MACKINAC, MICH.

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L E T T E R

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR,

TRANSMITTING

*A letter from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, recommending that the compensation of the agent at the Mackinac Agency, Mich., be increased.*

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JANUARY 31, 1888.—Referred to the Committee on Indian Affairs and ordered to be printed.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,  
*Washington, January 30, 1888.*

SIR: There is transmitted herewith, for the consideration of the House Committee on Indian Affairs, a copy of the recommendation of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, dated January 28, 1888, that the compensation of the agent for the Indians of the Mackinac Agency, in Michigan, be increased from \$1,000 to \$1,500 per annum.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully,

WM. F. VILAS,  
*Secretary.*

The SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,  
OFFICE OF INDIAN AFFAIRS,  
*Washington, January 28, 1888.*

SIR: I have the honor to call your attention to the matter of the compensation now allowed the United States Indian agent at the Mackinac Agency, Mich.

Section 2055 of the Revised Statutes fixed the salary of said agent at \$1,500 per annum, while under the annual appropriations he has been paid but \$1,000 per annum since the 1st of July, 1885.

The act of March 2, 1887 (24 Stat., 449), contains a clause repealing all provisions of law fixing compensation for Indian agents in excess of that provided in said act.

This compensation (\$1,000) is the minimum amount fixed in the act, and is paid to but eight agents, including the one at Mackinac.

Under the state of affairs now existing the salary of \$1,000 is not sufficient compensation for this agency.

The agent has charge of three reservations, requiring 1,500 miles' travel to visit. There are six schools in operation requiring the same travel. There are 40,000 acres of unallotted lands, and 7,000 acres the individual titles to which are more or less in dispute.

Much of the land has been despoiled of valuable timber. These trespasses have been committed for many years. The present agent instituted a thorough investigation and by his activity has secured the conviction of some of the trespassers. Eight civil cases are now pending in which the United States will doubtless recover several thousand dollars.

In many more cases both civil and criminal proceedings will be instituted. In all these cases the agent is required to investigate the facts and prepare the evidence upon which proceedings are had and recovery made possible.

There is no other agency where so many cases of this kind occur, and where so much work is required to bring the offenders to justice.

It is essential and of the highest importance that the agent should be familiar with the legal status of the land which has become involved in much uncertainty owing to the irregularities and mismanagement of former years.

Many tracts of land, both unallotted and those conveyed to Indians by restricted titles, have been sold by the State for non-payment of taxes, although the lands are not properly taxable.

The authorities of the State refuse to cancel the tax certificates, and legal proceedings will be necessary to clear the title. The services of an agent possessed of legal experience and training will be almost indispensable in these matters.

The work of the present agent in investigating trespasses, and his efforts to bring the offenders to justice, have been entirely satisfactory to this office, and deserve more adequate compensation.

His knowledge of the state of affairs upon the several reservations, of the methods and practices of the "ring" which for years has been despoiling the Isabella Reservation, and of the proceedings necessary to be taken to protect and secure the Indians in their rights, is such that his retirement from the service at this time would seriously embarrass this office and result in much damage to the service.

It will be impossible to get an agent qualified to discharge the duties of this position in the acceptable manner which now characterizes the administration of affairs there for the salary now paid. It is altogether probable that the present efficient agent will leave the service if an increase in salary is not given, as his talents will command more in private business.

I have the honor to recommend that the attention of the House Committee on Indian Affairs be called to the matter, and asked to recommend to the House of Representatives that the compensation of the Indian agent at the Mackinac Agency, Mich., be fixed at the sum of \$1,500 per annum, as provided in the Revised Statutes.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

J. D. C. ATKINS,  
*Commissioner.*

The SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR.