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# The legal representatives of Willie Blount

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H.R. Rep. No. 27, 24th Cong., 1st Sess. (1835)

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THE LEGAL REPRESENTATIVES OF WILLIE BLOUNT.

[To accompany bill H. R. No. 27.]

DECEMBER 21, 1835.

MR. FORRESTER, from the Committee of Claims, made the following

REPORT:

*The Committee of Claims, to which was referred the claim of Willie Blount, late Governor of Tennessee, report:*

That this claim was referred to this committee at the first session of last Congress, and a report made thereon, granting relief, which report is among the papers. The committee, therefore, report a bill for his relief, on the same principles contained in said report.

JUNE, 28, 1834.

*The Committee of Claims, to which was referred the memorial of Willie Blount, late Governor of the State of Tennessee, beg leave to report:*

That this claim has been before Congress since the year 1822, and among the papers are found many reports, some adverse, and others in favor of the claim. The memorial sets forth three different principles: first, compensation for services rendered, and responsibilities incurred, in drawing drafts on the War Department, and, in many instances, procuring endorsers to secure their success in negotiating the same for the benefit of the United States, in 1812, 1813, 1814; secondly, for receiving and disbursing Treasury notes in 1814, 1815; thirdly, for expenses incurred in getting his accounts settled with the Government.

On the 21st of October, 1812, the Secretary of War, by letter of that date, requested Governor Blount to call out, organize, and equip fifteen hundred of the Tennessee militia for the defence of the lower country; for the necessary expenses of which, he was directed to draw bills on the War Department: ten days thereafter, the Secretary of War transmitted to Governor Blount a blank commission for a deputy quartermaster general, with the request to fill the blank with some suitable person, and also authorized him to draw on the War Department for ten thousand dollars, and place it in the hands of the person so appointed. William B. Lewis was appointed, and continued so to act until the close of the war. Under this requisition, volunteers were called for, when upwards of two thousand presented themselves. Governor Blount immediately informed the President of the excess, and he directed him to receive the whole into the service.

To meet the expenses of this expedition, Governor Blount drew bills to the amount of \$35,599 10, all which were paid by the Government; at least,

nothing appears to the contrary. On the 13th July, 1813, the Secretary of War wrote to Governor Blount to call into service 1,500 of the Tennessee militia, to protect the frontiers from the depredations of the hostile Creek Indians. The Legislature of Tennessee, believing that force too small, on the 24th September, 1813, passed an act to call into service 3,500 militia of her own State. The act provided that if the Government of the United States would not receive said militia into her service and pay them, that the State would do so, and in that event the Governor should borrow \$300,000 for supplying the troops and providing their pay. On the 28th September, 1813, Governor Blount informed the President of the passage of said law, and requested to know whether they would be received into the service of the United States, which was answered in the affirmative on the 19th of October, 1813. Governor Blount, about the 1st October, 1813, began to draw bills on the War Department to supply the troops; whether the whole 5,000 or 1,500 only, does not distinctly appear; about this time he executed his note as Governor of Tennessee for \$15,000, which afterwards passed into the hands of the contractor, and was liquidated by the Government of the United States. He continued to draw bills to supply the troops until the 12th October, 1814: most of them were signed in his official capacity as Governor of Tennessee. Governor Blount, in many instances, was compelled to get his friends to endorse the bills, to enable him to be successful in negotiating them with the bank; some of them were protested, but all finally paid by the Government. The amount thus drawn, including the Natchez expedition, was \$357,306 14. The only authority for drawing said bills was the letter of 21st October, 1812, and they were all disposed of at par. The committee are bound to believe that the bills were bought mainly on the faith and credit of the United States; the same time the holders of the bills held Governor Blount and his endorsers personally liable for their payment if the Government of the United States failed to do so; otherwise, endorsers would not have been required. The committee take pleasure in saying there are many satisfactory testimonials of the ardent devotion and lofty patriotism of Governor Blount in promoting the public service and the best interests of his country.

On the 29th September, 1814, the Secretary of War remitted \$100,000 in Treasury notes to Governor Blount, to defray the expenses of the campaign to Florida and Louisiana, but he refused to become responsible for them, as appears by his letter of the 18th October, 1814: he, however, endorsed and deposited them in the Nashville Bank, to the order of William B. Lewis, as directed by the War Department. On the 30th January, 1815, \$150,000 were remitted in the same way. He received and disbursed it, except \$2,675 78, without retaining any thing for his services. Governor Blount had considerable difficulty, and incurred considerable expense, in getting his accounts settled, which was not done until 1823; before which time he applied to the department for compensation, which was refused, as appears from the Secretary's letter of the 8th January, 1822. On the 14th December of the same year, he memorialized Congress, where his claim has been pending ever since.

When Governor Blount performed all these services and incurred all these responsibilities, he was not an officer of the Government of the United States, nor were they performed in defence of the State over which he presided: he therefore stood in the relation of any other private citizen to the Government of the United States, and is entitled to compensation for all

services which he rendered to the United States where a private citizen would be entitled under similar circumstances, except such as were performed in his official capacity as Governor of the State of Tennessee; and as individuals are entitled to compensation for receiving and disbursing public money, the committee can see no reason why he should not be paid for performing similar duties. They therefore report a bill for his relief.