

DOCUMENT RESUME

08028 - [CJ468567]

[Claim for Reimbursement for Shipping and Storing Household Goods]. B-186338. December 7, 1978. 4 pp.

Decision re: Ralph M. Koontz; by Robert F. Keller, Acting Comptroller General.

Contact: Office of the General Counsel: Personnel Law Matters I.
Organization Concerned: Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Authority: 5 U.S.C. 5724. F.T.R. (FPMR 101-7). B-186185 (1976).

A transferred employee's claim for reimbursement for expenses of shipping and storing household goods was questioned. The employee had sold his old residence but, because of his wife's illness, he purchased a new residence at his old duty station and moved his goods from storage to the new residence. He may be reimbursed since regulations allow reimbursement for moving a transferred employee's goods to a point selected by him. (HTW)

DECISION



B. Putnam, P.M.
**THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL
OF THE UNITED STATES**
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20546

8367

FILE: B-186338

DATE: December 7, 1978

MATTER OF: Ralph M. Koontz - Transportation of
Household Effects

DIGEST: Civilian employee of HUD was transferred from Jacksonville Beach, Florida, to Atlanta, Georgia. He sold old residence in Jacksonville Beach but due to unexpected illness of wife, moved to Atlanta and his family remained in Jacksonville Beach. Employee placed household effects in storage and subsequently had them moved to a new residence purchased in Jacksonville Beach. Paragraph 2-8.2d, FTR, allows reimbursement of cost of transportation of household effects to an employee's new official station or some other point selected by him. Accordingly, claim for reimbursement for shipment and storage of household goods may be allowed.

This case arises from a request by the Director, Office of Finance and Accounting, Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), for a decision as to whether a voucher in the amount of \$995.42, submitted by Mr. Ralph M. Koontz, an employee of HUD, may be certified for payment. Mr. Koontz is claiming reimbursement for expenses which he incurred in the shipment and storage of his household goods from his old residence to a new residence, both in Jacksonville Beach, Florida, in connection with his transfer of official station from Jacksonville, Florida, to Atlanta, Georgia.

The record discloses that by Travel Authorization No. 1028-IV-76, dated March 2, 1976, Mr. Koontz was authorized a change of official duty station from Jacksonville, Florida, to Atlanta, Georgia. The travel authorization provided for reimbursement to Mr. Koontz of real estate expenses incurred in the sale of his residence at his old station and the purchase of a residence at his new station. The estimated cost of expenses in the sale of his old residence was stated not to exceed \$5,000, in accordance with chapter 2, Federal Property Management Regulations (FPMR) 101-7. The travel authorization also stated that recommendation and/or approval involved, among other considerations, a determination that the change of station was in the

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interest of the Government and not primarily for the employee's convenience or at his request.

The claimant reports that on May 31, 1977, he sold his residence in Jacksonville Beach, Florida, and placed his furniture in storage with a transfer company. He states that prior and subsequent to that time, he was looking for a residence to purchase in the Marietta, Georgia, area. Mr. Koontz further states that during July he learned that his wife was suffering from a severe physical ailment which necessitated surgery and several weeks for recuperation. He reports that he was advised by his wife's physician that she should not entertain any thoughts of moving or relocating as it would be inimical to her health. Mr. Koontz and his wife then decided that moving to Atlanta, particularly since they had not found a home to purchase, was inadvisable and therefore elected to purchase a house in Jacksonville Beach so that Mrs. Koontz could be near friends and relatives during the period of her illness and recuperation.

Mr. Koontz states that he located and purchased a house in Jacksonville Beach and on July 31, 1977, had his household goods removed from storage and placed in the new house in Jacksonville Beach. He reports that prior and subsequent to that time, he commuted regularly to communicate with his family and tend to their needs.

It is the contention of Mr. Koontz that the sale of his old residence, the movement and storage of his household goods and other relocation expenses were incurred in connection with and resulted from the transfer and were incident thereto. He therefore feels that he is entitled to reimbursement of such expenses by the Government. The claimant also asserts that when he does move his household effects to a new residence in Atlanta or its environs, the Government should reimburse him for that portion of the charges he incurs for the movement over the road of his household goods from Jacksonville Beach to Atlanta.

The travel voucher in question, submitted August 12, 1977, in the sum of \$995.42, represents storage and transportation expenses incurred by the claimant in storing and transporting his household effects in connection with moving into his new residence, also located in Jacksonville Beach, Florida.

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The entitlement of civilian employees of the Federal Government to reimbursement of the cost of transportation of household goods upon transfer of official station is governed by the provisions of 5 U.S.C. § 5724 (1970). The implementing regulations which provide for reimbursement of relocation expenses are contained in chapter 2 of the Federal Travel Regulations (FTR) (FPMR 101-7) (May 1973). Paragraph 2-1.3 provides, in pertinent part, as follows:

"Travel covered. When change of official station or other action described below is authorized or approved by such official or officials as the head of the agency may designate, travel and transportation expenses and applicable allowances as provided herein are payable in the case of (a) transfer of an employee from one official station to another for permanent duty, Provided That: the transfer is in the interest of the Government and is not primarily for the convenience or benefit of the employee or at his request; the transfer is to a new official station which is at least 10 miles distant from the old official station * * *."

We have been informally advised by officials of HUD and the vouchers submitted with the claim disclose that the agency determined that the sale of the claimant's old residence in Jacksonville Beach was incident to his change of official station. Accordingly, Mr. Koontz has been reimbursed for expenses incurred in the sale of his old residence in the amount of \$5,000 as specified in his travel authorization and has also been paid the sum of \$1,152.86 representing reimbursement for expenses incurred by him and his dependents for travel, a house-hunting trip, temporary quarters, and miscellaneous moving expenses.

Paragraph 2-8.2d, FTR, sets out the points between which transportation costs of the employee's household effects may be allowable and provides, in pertinent part, as follows:

"Origin and destination. Cost of transportation of household goods may be paid by the Government whether the shipment originates at the employee's last official station or place of residence or at some other point, or if part of the shipment originates at the last official station and

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the remainder at one or more other points. Similarly, these expenses are allowable whether the point of destination is the new official station or some other point selected by the employee, or if the destination for part of the property is the new official station and the remainder is shipped to one or more other points. However, the total amount which may be paid or reimbursed by the Government shall not exceed the cost of transporting the property in one lot by the most economical route from the last official station of the transferring employee (or the place of actual residence of the new appointee at time of appointment) to the new official station. * * *

In light of the aforementioned regulation, and inasmuch as HUD has determined that the transfer was in the interest of the Government, and that the sale of Mr. Koontz' old residence was incident to his transfer of official station, it was not incumbent upon the claimant to have his household goods transported to his new duty station in Atlanta. He had the option to have his household effects shipped to Atlanta or some other point (Jacksonville Beach) selected by him. However, in accordance with paragraph 2-8.2d, reimbursement for transporting such household goods may not exceed the constructive cost of transportation thereof to Atlanta. Matter of Stanley H. Fretwell, B-186185, November 15, 1976.

Accordingly, Mr. Koontz may be reimbursed for expenses which he incurred in the shipment and storage of his household goods in the amounts found due and as otherwise proper. The voucher, which is returned, may be certified for payment in accordance with the foregoing.


Acting Comptroller General
of the United States