

5-25-1948

## Correspondence, John C. Stennis, May 25-June 2, 1948

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The Int'l Conf  
De'm Mr Guyon

LAWYERS

KOSCIUSKO, MISS

May 25, 1948.

Senator John C Stennis,  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Senator Stennis:

I have received and read with much interest your statement before the Committee regarding HR 29 which the Committee unanimously recommends for passage, abolishing the payment of a poll tax for voting for President, Vice President, Representatives, and Senators.

Your statement is cogent, clear, and to the point.

It seems to me that a somewhat remarkable, if not indeed astounding, picture is presented in this HR 29 which mentions elections for "President, Vice President, Representatives, and Senators" only. Ofcourse these named officials are the sole and only Federal officials we do and can vote for, directly for members of Congress, and indirectly for President and Vice President. Why should the United States Congress "blow and bellow" so loudly and continuously about the "qualifications of an elector" in electing less than 700 Federal officials out of probably more than one million such officials? It seems "unseemly" for Congress to proclaim, viva voce only, so loudly about the "moral right" and the "sacred right" of the dear people to vote, and at the same time so tenaciously adhere to its patronage power to appoint about one million officials rather than let the dear people elect them. Does Congress fear that we the people might, for instance, unpack the Supreme Court? Why not let the dear people elect their Federal District Attorneys, District Judges, Cabinet Officers, Federal Commissioners, Bureau Heads, and the like? When that is done, then, and not until then, should the Congress worry about the qualifications of an elector. As it now stands, we have but little need for Federal laws prescribing the qualifications of an elector.

The cost of holding an election in Mississippi is approximately \$50,000.00. If Congress is going to hold its own elections, then why not let Uncle Sam pay the cost?

As I recall a little of our own history (I am not presuming to speak with absolute accuracy), Back in the "gay nineties" "The Gentelamn from Massachusetts" challenged on the floor of the U S Senate the provisions of the 1890 Constitution of Mississippi requiring an elector in Mississippi to be "able to read and write", or to "understand". Gen. J Z George, whose statue can be found in the Nation's Hall of Fame, responded to this challenge by reading to the Senate the provisions of the Massachusetts' constitution requiring an elector to own "\$250.00 worth of assessable property"; and his argument was a simple question: Is "intelligence" or "wealth" a proper measure of the right to vote? He then quoted the "Founders" of this Nation who were of one accord in agreeing that if a Democracy shall survive the people must be given some education. As to the poll tax, he called attention to the fact that this small tax is a contribution to the great cause of public education, and argued that he who was unwilling to contribute \$2.00 to this cause was unworthy of the privilege

MAY 28 1948

GUYTON AND ALLEN

LAWYERS

J. D. GUYTON - JOE F. ALLEN

KOSCIUSKO, MISS

Under our 1890 Constitution we have lived and progressed for three ~~score~~ years. One of the great purposes of government, as declared in the Preamble of our Constitution, is to insure domestic tranquility. In what other section of all the world have two distinct races of people dwelled together in domestic tranquility in as high a degree as they have in Dixie? I mention Dixie land particularly because it is apparent that all the talk about a little poll tax is intended as a jibe ~~at~~ that otherwise happy land.

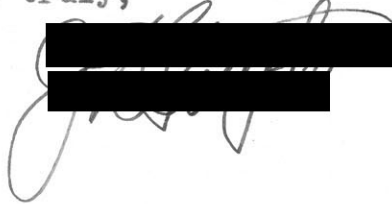
I am informed that our Legislature recently proposed an amendment to our Constitution (I have not as yet read it) so as to require an elector to be of good "moral character". I understand this "idea" was discovered in the old "Charter Oak" blue laws of Connecticut. I shall not support this amendment. I have seen some "hot" elections in Mississippi wherein arguments about some one's right to vote proximately caused a few fist fights. As I see it, a challenge to one's moral character is fraught with greater danger. We do not need laws calculated to disturb our domestic tranquility. Of all men, a ward politician is the last man on earth I would choose to pass on my moral character. I can well imagine that as soon as the good people of Connecticut find they have such a law, they will promptly repeal it.

Pardon this letter; but there seemingly must come times when our "safety valve" must pop-off.

With best wishes for your continued growth in the Senate,

I am ,

very truly,



C. WAYLAND BROOKS, ILL., CHAIRMAN  
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ALBERT L. SEIDEL, CLERK

# United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON  
RULES AND ADMINISTRATION

June 2, 1948

Honorable [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
Kosciusko, Mississippi

Dear Mr. [REDACTED]:

I certainly enjoyed reading your letter, and want you to know how deeply I appreciate your having taken the time to write me so fully about this important matter.

With the Republicans apparently intent upon ending the present session on June 19, there appears to be some basis for the hope that Civil Rights legislation will not be brought to the floor. So far, they have not included any of the so-called Civil Rights bills in their "must" program.

I am placing your good letter in my growing file on this matter and shall certainly draw upon its contents when the occasion arises in the Senate.

With kindest regards, I am

Sincerely yours,

U. S. Senator

CHM:g

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