

Annual Report-

1923

To the Board of Supervisors of the County of Jefferson:

We herewith submit the 13th annual report of the Board of Elections of Jefferson County in accordance with the provisions of Section 34 of the Election Law. Further and more detailed information relative to the affairs of the Board of Elections is contained in the daily record which has been kept and filed in this office.

During the year 1923, we have taken care of all of the work incident to our office without any extra charge to the county. During the rush times such as tabulating the vote at the Primaries and at General Election, when extra help has been needed to get the work out on time, the expense has been borne by the commissioners. The same is also true with reference to the compilation of the enrollment for the entire county.

This year there was a special registration for the City of Watertown followed by a special election to determine whether or not the present plan of city government should be changed. This was followed by a Nonpartisan City Primary held on the same day as the Official Fall Primary. The date had been changed since the last Nonpartisan Primary in this city by reason of the suggestions of this office, and which lessened the expense to the City of Watertown by approximately \$ 1600. Under our suggestion voters in the Nonpartisan Primary, who had changed their residence were permitted to register at the city clerk's office instead of having a special registration day and appearing personally before registration boards.

During the past year, a larger number of persons than ever before, asked for a change of enrollment, and many young people who had become of age sought the opportunity to specially enroll. Many more designating petitions for nominations were presented than heretofore, there being five candidates for the office of sheriff, four in one party, and several more prospective candidates sought advice from our office day by day.

Much information was given relative to the holding of town caucuses, and blank forms for nominations were taken care of by this office; these forms enabled the different parties to have the nominations appear on all town ballots in the same order. It was regrettable for us to learn that the town clerk's in some towns were unable, or rather did not, furnish to the different parties the number of candidates to be elected and the length of their service. Particularly was this true in the matter of the nomination and election of justices of the peace and assessors; one party would nominate a candidate for justice for two years while the other party would make the term of office four years.

The number of absentee voters this year exceeded that of the number of any "off year," and we were able by directing the printer as to the order in which the ballots of the different towns should be printed to have a town ballot for each and every applicant, who requested a ballot, on time for the returns of such ballot to our office, so that it could be made a part of the supplies sent out for election. In the majority of these cases, the ballots were returned in due time, although some voters mailed the ballots to us but neglected the necessary postage and their return address, and these found their way into the dead letter office and have recently been received by this office.

In the City of Watertown, the voting machines were used for the second time, and did not give the satisfaction that they did a year ago. This was due entirely to the inability of voters to

vote promptly, many taking time to read the text of the amendments before voting. No trouble was experienced in operating the machines other than that the voter voted exceedingly slow. To James F. O'Connor, custodian of voting machines is due the thanks of the City of Watertown, of all voters in the city and of our board for his painstaking efforts in equipping the machines so that they gave no trouble whatever. His knowledge of machinery, of the voting machines as well as of the Election Law, makes him the right man in the right place.

The tabulation of the returns with considerable outside help, the expense of which was borne by the commissioners, was made in record time and was commented on by the Secretary of State and his staff engaged in the tabulation of the returns of the entire state. The returns from Jefferson County were the first filed and were said by Secretary of State Hamilton to be exceptionally neat and the most accurate of any filed in his office.

We are now engaged in compiling the enrollment for 1924, and expect to have the enrollment books ready for distribution about March first. The Spring Primary will be held on the first Tuesday in April, and this enrollment will be needed at that time.

We recommend that some provision be made whereby the town clerks of each and every town should be compelled to file with the Board of Elections every declination and every appointment, as well as notice of the failure of any person elected to office to qualify. As it is now, our office is unable to furnish to anyone an exact list of the town officers.

During the past few years, Jefferson County has been represented in the Association of Election Commissioners of the State and through this association and through assisting with the commissioners, a considerable amount of money has been saved to our county and to the entire state, especially to those counties which were represented in the association. For instance through the

combination of Jefferson and St. Lawrence Counties in securing the printing of literacy test cards, and the large instructions for the guidance of voters, a saving of more than half was made. The commissioners belonging to the state association were responsible for acts of the legislature which brought about a great decrease in the amount heretofore paid for the publication of official notices, which notices were of no value whatever. Again, through associating with other commissioners we have changed the form of returns for General Elections, which has resulted in a saving to the county of approximately \$ 500. a year.

We would, therefore, ask your approval of a recommendation to the effect that the town clerks file in this office all changes in the officers of their towns. We would also recommend that a resolution be adopted by your board authorizing representation at the annual meeting of the Commissioners of Elections Association, of which one of your commissioners is secretary and treasurer, and that provision be made for the necessary traveling expense and hotel bills, not to exceed \$ 25. for each member attending. Many times this amount can be saved to the county each year by going over with the other commissioners election legislation while the legislature is in session. Heretofore, the committee of your board on elections has given its consent for the commissioners to attend such meeting, but it seems that an act of your board is the proper authority.

In conclusion, we will say that every proposition for printing is submitted to bids as is also everything purchased by this office. As a result, you have no doubt read in the press that the cost per vote in Jefferson County is second in the state,-this speaks for itself.

Respectfully submitted,

Jefferson County Board of Elections,

Eugene F. Livermore,

William K. Mott,

Dated December 6, 1923.

Commissioners.