

1917

TO THE HONORABLE, THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY OF JEFFERSON:

We, the Commissioners of Elections of the County of Jefferson, herewith submit our annual report for the year 1917, pursuant to Section 192 of the Election Law.

Special legislation enacted last spring under which the soldiers and sailors in the service of the United States were permitted to vote, and making provision for the canvassing of such vote has delayed the compilation of the official canvass of the county, and at this date the election of a number of town and ward officers is in doubt and will be until such vote is counted. Because of the delay in receiving this vote and under an opinion of the attorney-general, regardless of how large a majority any candidate may have had, we have been restrained from issuing any determinations of election, and for this reason, it has been impossible for the town clerks and town superintendents of highways to qualify. We understand that in some instances the town superintendents have taken the necessary oath of office and have entered upon their duties. Under the ruling of the attorney-general, it would seem to us as though they were acting illegally, for the law specifically states that no town officer elected can qualify until he has received a certificate of election, and that no such certificate can be issued until all of the votes are counted. The last session of the legislature made many amendments to the Election Law, which we have followed in every particular, and these amendments have placed additional duties and responsibilities on us and on our clerk.

That the responsibilities, which have come during the present year are as nothing compared with those which we must meet and which your town board and the Common Council of the City of Watertown must meet at the coming year. By a large majority the right of suffrage was

given to women and at the next annual election, they will be permitted to vote. In all probability, it will be necessary to increase the number of election districts in Jefferson County to about double the number already in existence. There are in the county, outside of the City of Watertown sixty-eight (68) districts and the city has twenty-three (23). The Election Law provides that the number of voters in any district shall not exceed three hundred and fifty (350). In some districts there has been more than that number of voters, but the town board, as well as our office, have kept a close watch on the situation and no trouble has been experienced in voting all those who desired to avail themselves of the opportunity.

This year we have adopted a policy of economy such as has never been known in connection with the furnishing of the election stationery and supplies. We have felt it necessary to do so because of the great increase in the cost of supplies and also to act in keeping with the general scheme of economy now being practiced by all patriotic citizens. Our clerk at a considerable sacrifice of time and energy patched and repaired several articles for use again this year. The large paste board tubes, which had previously contained the tally sheets and had been filed in the past with the city and town clerks were called in and this year were used again. We advised the secretary of state that we could use the books and pamphlets, which he sent a year ago, and by a little alteration saved the state an expense of many dollars. This year all our stationery and supplies were purchased under competitive bidding, which had never before been practiced. At all times, we have tried to save the county every penny possible. And we might add that in sending out notices of election etc., we have saved a number of dollars to the county by using our friends and by using our own automobiles without charge. Our clerk has aided us materially in bringing about this system of economy.

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We have no recommendations to make at this time, but assume that after the present election districts are sub-divided to take care of the large increase in vote, due to the enfranchisement of the women, that it will be necessary for us to make suggestions and recommendations at some quarterly session of your board. These recommendations and requests we will not make until we find it absolutely necessary.

Despite the fact that the work in our office is immense at certain times of the year, particularly before the primaries and before the election, when the town tickets are being prepared, and statements of canvass etc., are being made up, and it is necessary to have additional help, no charge was made to the county, the commissioners personally taking care of any expense incurred. In order to do all of the work about election time, the commissioners and the clerk worked nights and Sundays, had some of the work done in their families and no reference has heretofore been made to working over time, as we have known definite hours in our office.

The commissioners desire to personally thank the supervisors, the town clerks for numerous services rendered them. We believe through the interests that these officials and the tax payers generally are taking in our office and in the election work, that we are instilling into the minds of the inspectors of elections the necessity of using more care in the preparation of their returns, as the returns this year showed, but there is still more room for improvement. We ask you to continue rendering us such assistance as possible.

Respectfully yours,

Commissioners of Elections,
Jefferson County.