

EXECUTIVE ORDER 08-18-64

Almost two centuries ago, a man by the name of James Mackintosh said that the most substantial democracy is that state in which the greatest number of men feel an interest in expressing opinions upon political questions, and in which the greatest number of judgments and wills concur in influencing public measures.

If we can accept Mr. Mackintosh's statement as being essentially accurate, then America apparently can look forward to becoming an even more substantial democracy, because voter participation in the local, state, and national elections of our nation has never been as great as it could be. In the State of Washington, for instance, 27.7 per cent of those of voting age failed to vote in the 1960 presidential election. The figure was even higher in other states.

No matter what the reasons are for this voter inactivity -- be it apathy, disinterest, legal impediments or something else -- the fact remains that the continuation of our form of government is dependent on reflecting a truly representative opinion of the majority of all those eligible to vote, not merely the opinion of the majority of those who do vote.

In fact, those who subscribe to the democratic way of life are justified in holding that while each of us has a moral right to cast his ballot, none of us has the moral right to avoid reaching a decision and recording it at the polls; to do so is to abandon an obligation to his fellow citizen.

Furthermore, those of us who do vote cannot brush aside this matter with a philosophy of, "Well, if they don't care enough about their government to vote, they must accept what they get." This is a convenient, but unacceptable, solution to the problem.

If we genuinely believe in the theory and principles underlying democracy, then it is incumbent upon each of us to do our utmost to encourage total participation at the polls.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Albert D. Rosellini, Governor of the State of Washington, pursuant to authority vested in me under the Constitution as Chief Executive of the State of Washington, do hereby proclaim the following Executive Order:

I. There is hereby established a State Commission to be known as the "Washington State Commission on Registration and Voting Participation." The Commission shall consist of thirteen (13) members, appointed by the Governor and who shall serve at the pleasure of the Governor. Members appointed shall be representative of the public, and shall contain members from groups working toward increased voter participation through out the State.

II. Members of the Commission on Registration and Voting Participation shall serve without compensation.

III. The Governor shall designate one of the members of the Commission as Chairman, and the Secretary shall be the State Supervisor of Elections, who shall be an ex officio member of the Commission. Minutes of meetings shall be forwarded to the Governor.

IV. The Washington State Commission is hereby charged with the responsibility of reviewing existing election laws to determine if there exists legal impediments to full voter participation in Washington State.

In so doing, the Commission shall make full use of all available information, and be guided by the "Report on Registration and Voting Participation" submitted to the President of the United States. All state officers shall cooperate in every manner with the activities of this Commission. At least 15 days prior to the convening of the Washington State Legislature, the Commission shall submit its report to the Governor, and to the Legislature, recommending any changes in the election laws deemed appropriate.

V. The Commission shall also make every effort to coordinate activities of various groups within the State seeking to effectuate increased voter participation, and shall cooperate with these groups, to the end that registration and voter participation may be increased in the State of Washington.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the State of Washington to be affixed at Olympia this 18th day of August, A.D., Nineteen hundred and sixty-four.

Albert D. Rosellini
Governor of Washington

BY THE GOVERNOR:

Secretary of State
