

STATEMENT BY J. STROM THURMOND, GOVERNOR OF SOUTH CAROLINA, REGARDING THE SUGGESTION THAT A SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY BE CALLED TO ENACT ELECTION LAWS, AUGUST 24, 1948.

In two Annual Messages to the General Assembly, I, as Governor, have advocated changes in our General Election laws, including an Australian ballot.

The question has now arisen whether a Special Session of the General Assembly should be called to consider this and other changes in our General Election laws.

After careful study of this question, I have reached the conclusion that it would be inadvisable to call a Special Session.

We have recently learned through experience that a Special Session is not a place to pass election laws. The Federal Courts used the fact that our Primary laws were repealed in a Special Session - - and the stated purpose of calling that session - - as justification of their decision in the Primary case.

Our present General Election laws have been upheld by both the State and Federal Courts. We know at least that we will have an election under them, conducted under South Carolina law.

If a Special Session is held, and new election laws are enacted, they may well be tied up in litigation in the courts. If so, we may either have no election this year, or our election may be conducted under Federal Court order, as the Primary was this summer.

Our present General Election laws have stood for over fifty years. They do not contain any requirements about candidates getting on a ballot. Under our laws, every candidate will receive the votes of those who want to vote for him. I have satisfied myself by due inquiry that the people of South Carolina will have an opportunity to vote for electors favoring the various candidates for President. No candidate will be shut out, and no voter will be prevented from voting for whom he pleases.

Changes in our election laws should be considered in a Regular Session of the General Assembly, fresh from the people, and after deliberate and careful consideration. They should not be made in haste or confusion. We will not save time by adopting a method which will play into the hands of those who may want to tie our election up in court.

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