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## THE SOLDIER VOTE IN THE ELECTION OF 1864

OSCAR OSBURN WINTHER\*

THE 1944 controversy over soldier voting is not without precedent in American history. The nation experienced both a mid-term and a presidential election during the Civil War, and in anticipation of these war elections the question of soldier suffrage arose. During the Civil War, however, this issue was confined to the separate states, and there was no discussion of a federal ballot. Politicians and the politically inclined press became painfully aware of the departure of thousands upon thousands of potential voters from their home precincts, and it was then generally believed that existing constitutional provisions on suffrage would disqualify service men who were at the fighting fronts.

Most state constitutions contained, then as now, the provision that no elector should be deemed to have lost his residence in a state by reason of his absence on business of the United States or of his own particular state. But the courts were generally agreed that service men eligible to vote under such a provision would be required to cast their ballots in the district where they resided at the time of entering the armed forces.<sup>1</sup> Such a provision would in any event prevent soldiers from voting in the field. Soldiers would be obliged to return home on furloughs if they were to cast their ballots, and obviously such a procedure would have its limitations.

While there was some discussion of soldier suffrage during the first year of the war, it was not until 1862—with

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<sup>1</sup> *The American Annual Cyclopaedia and Register of Important Events of the Year 1862* (New York, 1863), 706. Hereafter cited as *American Annual Cyclopaedia*. See also *Indianapolis Daily Sentinel*, July 20, 1864.

mid-term elections in the offing—that any direct action was taken. The Old Northwest states of Wisconsin and Minnesota led the way in the enactment of appropriate legislation.<sup>2</sup> In Wisconsin the constitution was so interpreted as to permit soldiers to vote outside the state borders, and on September 25, 1862, a bill was approved which directed officers in the army camps to conduct the vote in the camps, to permit all qualified “white” electors to cast their ballots, and to forward to the governor and the secretary of state for final tabulation the results of the vote.<sup>3</sup>

The Minnesota law was approved two days after the Wisconsin law was passed. It provided that a resident in any election district of the state, if mustered into the service ten or more days prior to an election, should be privileged to cast his ballot wherever he might be. Having done so he should place his marked ballot in an envelope, then seal said envelope with wax, and mail to the judges of his district.<sup>4</sup> In both states supplementary laws were passed in 1863 that pertained to the details of management relative to the elections in the field.<sup>5</sup>

Following a similar pattern the states of Ohio and Vermont, respectively, passed soldier voting laws during 1863, and West Virginia (admitted in this year) had made a special soldier suffrage provision in her new constitution.<sup>6</sup> During this year, also, other states were busy processing constitutional amendments that would pave the way for

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<sup>2</sup> Both the Connecticut and New Hampshire legislatures attempted to provide for soldier voting during 1862, but their respective supreme courts declared such enactment unconstitutional. See *American Annual Cyclopaedia . . . 1863* (New York, 1864), 330, 681.

<sup>3</sup> *Acts of . . . Wisconsin [1862, 1863]* (Madison, 1863), 17. See also *New York Times*, April 1, 1863.

<sup>4</sup> *General and Special Laws of the State of Minnesota . . . 1862* (St. Paul, 1862), 13-17.

<sup>5</sup> *Acts of . . . Wisconsin [1862, 1863]*, 77; *General and Special Laws of . . . Minnesota . . . 1862*, 267.

<sup>6</sup> *Act of . . . West Virginia . . . 1863* (Wheeling, 1863), 119. The West Virginia legislature passed no act to implement soldier voting, but since the constitution was so explicit, perhaps none was deemed necessary. The constitution provided for absentee voting, a plan somewhat similar to that of Minnesota.

subsequent legislative enactments. Then, in chronological order, the states added to the soldier vote roster during 1864, and in time for the presidential election, were: Michigan, Missouri, Kentucky, Iowa, Kansas, Maryland, Maine, California, Massachusetts, New York (April 21st), Connecticut, Pennsylvania, and New Hampshire.<sup>7</sup>

The state of Illinois approved a soldier vote law on February 16, 1865, but obviously too late for the presidential election for which its sponsors had intended it. Delaware, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Indiana, Nevada, and Oregon—all for particular reasons—likewise made no special provision for voting by the men in uniform, and of course the commonwealths of the Confederacy took no part whatsoever in the election of 1864.

An analysis of the soldier vote legislation as a whole reveals that fifteen of the seventeen state soldier suffrage laws (West Virginia excluded) followed very closely the pattern first laid down by Wisconsin in her act of September 25, 1862.

Section One of this law provides that "All qualified [white] electors of this state who shall be in the actual military service of the United States or of this state, [but not in the regular or standing army of the United States] either within this state or without the same, . . . shall be entitled to exercise the right of suffrage at any general election . . . at the several posts, camps, or places where the regiment or battery of artillery, or part of a regiment not less than one company, under a separate command, . . . may be. . . ."

Section Two reads that the elections at the camps should be in the manner consistent with the general election laws of the state.

Sections Three, Four, and Five prescribe that the three ranking officers of each unit shall act as inspectors of the elections; and if they refuse or cannot serve, their duties

<sup>7</sup> The dates of approval were obtained directly from the statute books.

“shall be performed by the officers next in rank.” Moreover, said inspectors shall appoint two electors to act as clerks of the election. All are required to take an oath of allegiance.

Subsequent sections prescribe the number of voting hours, the right of inspectors to challenge electors, that clerks keep poll lists, that (most important of all) votes be counted and results forwarded to the secretary of state who shall transmit same to county boards of supervisors. Penalties are not overlooked, for Section Seventeen reads that “Any person who shall vote at any election held under this act, who shall not be a qualified elector under the laws of this state, shall . . . be punished by imprisonment in the county jail not more than one year, nor less than six months; and any person who shall vote more than once, at any such election, shall, on conviction, be punished by imprisonment in the state prison, and kept at hard labor, not more than two years nor less than one year.” And finally, the secretary of state shall supply the ballots.<sup>8</sup>

Some variation may, of course, be observed in the laws of other states. The Minnesota law, unlike that of Wisconsin, stipulates that, having voted, the elector shall seal his ballot folded in an envelope bearing his signature and service designation, which envelope in turn shall be mailed to the election district where such voter resided at time of entering the service. Once there “The judges . . . shall keep the same unopened until the opening of the polls, at the said election, when they shall examine the registry list of their district, and upon finding the name of the person endorsed upon such envelope, on said registry list, they shall open the said envelope, and . . . shall deposit the ballot contained therein, unopened. . . .” And as the law further prescribes, there shall be “no way of distinguishing the same from the other votes cast.” This method was called for in other states and in such instances

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<sup>8</sup> *Acts of . . . the Legislature of Wisconsin* [1862, 1863] 17-22.

it thus became impossible to know what preferences the service men showed for the candidates.<sup>9</sup>

Moreover, the Minnesota statute was the first to provide for the appointment of commissioners by the governor, a feature widely copied by other states. The duty of such commissioners "shall be," according to the Minnesota enactment, "to visit the several regiments, battalions . . . for the purpose of carrying out the provisions of this act."<sup>10</sup>

New York's 1846 constitution, like those of other states, did not specifically disenfranchise its service men. But since such individuals were required to vote in their respective home election districts, "and not elsewhere," very few soldiers, sailors, and marines would ever have cast their ballots.<sup>11</sup> Thus the question of allowing volunteers from the state of New York to vote at elections began reaching serious proportions early in 1863. Not unlike editorial opinion expounded by the 1944 press, one finds the *New York Times* excoriating those trying either to delay or to prevent the passage of appropriate soldier suffrage legislation. Wrote this newspaper: "We cannot comprehend either the mind or the heart of any really loyal man who interposes these wretched quibbles and cavils to prevent his neighbor, who has answered his country's call, from exercising the same civil rights he himself enjoys, though he has not answered it. We should suppose the mere thought would overwhelm him with shame."<sup>12</sup>

New York's Democratic administration was apparently conscious of the increasing pressure in behalf of soldier voting, and in a special message to the legislature in 1863 Governor Horatio Seymour suggested that an amendment be made to the Constitution in order to enable soldiers to vote. A clash ensued between the governor and the law-making body, and not until March, 1864, had the amend-

<sup>9</sup> *General and Special laws of . . . Minnesota . . . 1862*, p. 15.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 16-17.

<sup>11</sup> *American Annual Cyclopaedia . . . 1864*, p. 581.

<sup>12</sup> *New York Times*, April 1, 1863.

ment passed the legislative and executive channels and been submitted to the people for final approval.<sup>13</sup> A majority of 210,716 favored the amendment, and thus the way was at last cleared for favorable legislative enactment which followed on April 21, 1864.<sup>14</sup>

This New York Act contains many of the features found in both the Wisconsin and Minnesota statutes. Its specifications as to who are entitled to vote, requirement of oaths and affidavits, specifications as to nature of the ballots, and penalties to be imposed on those who might violate the law, are in common with the laws of both Wisconsin and Minnesota. The distinctive feature of the New York Act may be found in Section Two, which reads as follows:

Such absent elector shall, by an instrument executed by him not more than sixty days previous to any general or special election to be held in this State, authorize and empower any elector of the town or city where the said absent elector shall reside, on the day of said election, to cast for him his vote or ballot, in the manner prescribed by this act. . . .<sup>15</sup>

The manner so prescribed calls for affidavits as to age, residence, and identity with the armed services to accompany the ballot. Said instrument shall be sealed in an envelope which shall be enclosed in still another envelope marked "Soldier's Vote," and sent to the person empowered to cast said ballot for the absentee serviceman. The agent thus delegated to cast the absentee ballot, "upon receiving such letter from such absent elector, may," according to Section Five of the law, "open the outer envelope thereof, but he shall not open the inner envelope thereof. On the day of such election . . . he shall deliver such inner envelope to the inspectors of elections of the proper elec-

<sup>13</sup> For the wording of the amendment see *Laws of the State of New York* [1864] (Albany, 1864), 26.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 549-553. See also *American Annual Cyclopaedia . . . 1864* (New York, 1865), 581.

<sup>15</sup> *Laws of the State of New York* [1864], 549.

tion district," and if the name of the affidavit corresponds with that found on the register of electors, "said envelope shall be by said inspectors publicly opened, and the votes or ballots therein contained shall be duly deposited in the appropriate boxes. . . ." <sup>16</sup>

The votes of service men and civilians accordingly would be mixed together in the ballot boxes and there should be no way of telling—as in the case of Minnesota—for what candidates the military voted. The only other states with special soldier suffrage laws that embodied the feature last described, namely to have the votes of the military and civilians combined, were Connecticut, Massachusetts, Missouri, and West Virginia. Connecticut's plan was very similar to that of New York.<sup>17</sup> All that Massachusetts did was to declare persons in the military service "entitled to the right of suffrage in any town in the state" on condition that their poll taxes for the current year were paid.<sup>18</sup> In Missouri camp voting was permitted, "viva voce or by ballot," and the results were to be sent to county clerks for counting;<sup>19</sup> whereas the West Virginia constitutional provision has been described above.<sup>20</sup>

Other minor variations in the Wisconsin-Minnesota formulae may be noted in the soldier vote enactments of other states. Ohio liberalized the ruling on polling places by providing that all electors stationed within two miles of a camp poll could cast their ballots at such a place. The Ohio law also democratized the election procedure by declaring that ten or more electors could choose their election judges by voice.<sup>21</sup> The Iowa law made specific voting provision for service men in hospitals.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 549-551.

<sup>17</sup> *The General Statutes of the State of Connecticut* (New Haven, 1866), 368-370.

<sup>18</sup> *Private and Special Statutes of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, for the Years 1860 . . . '65* (Boston, 1869), 531-532.

<sup>19</sup> *Laws of the State of Missouri* [1863-1864] (Jefferson City, 1864), 29. The law does not specify precisely that the soldier votes should be deposited in boxes with civilian ballots, but no differentiation was made in the vote of the state in 1864.

<sup>20</sup> *Supra*, n. 6.

<sup>21</sup> *General and Local Laws . . . Ohio . . . 1864* (Columbus, 1864), 80.

<sup>22</sup> *Acts . . . of the State of Iowa* [1864] (Des Moines, 1864), 26-27.

In 1864 a constitutional convention was held in the border state of Maryland in which the abolition of slavery was the main issue. Even so the delegates took time to discuss soldier voting and to make provision in their constitution for army camp elections. This constitution was not approved until October 11th and 12th, so that the legislature elected under the provision of the new constitution scarcely had time to pass an act to implement soldier voting before election day. Not until March 25, 1865, was such legislation enacted and approved in Maryland, but even without it there is evidence that soldiers voted according to the constitutional provision.<sup>23</sup>

The acts of Maine, California, Michigan, and Pennsylvania followed very closely the original Wisconsin plan. Pennsylvania added the stipulation that service men detached from their company or ship could vote by placing their ballots in sealed envelopes and mailing them to their respective home clerks for deposit in the general boxes on election day.<sup>24</sup>

The reason for the failure of Indiana and Illinois to pass laws providing for out-of-state soldier voting in the election of 1864 was largely political. Democrats and Union Republicans profoundly distrusted each other; each group feared the strength of the other. As a final resort Governor Morton suggested that all soldiers unfit for service—many of whom were in hospitals outside of the state—be sent home for the election, and to this suggestion President Lincoln apparently agreed.<sup>25</sup> This, then, became the procedure followed in the state of Indiana.

In New Jersey the Attorney-General handed down a clear opinion which declared the state's 1844 constitution (still in force in 1864) as adequate for the passage of an out-of-state soldier vote law. The legislature, however, failed to act in time for the presidential election. In fact,

<sup>23</sup> *American Annual Cyclopaedia* . . . 1864, p. 504; *Laws of the State of Maryland* . . . 1865 (Annapolis, 1865), 187-189.

<sup>24</sup> *Laws . . . of the State of Pennsylvania* . . . 1864 (Harrisburg, 1864), 997.

<sup>25</sup> W. D. Foulke, *Life of Oliver P. Morton* (Indianapolis, 1899) I, 366.

not until 1875—and then for no immediate reason—did New Jersey enact such a law.<sup>26</sup> Rhode Island managed to secure the popular approval of an amendment to its constitution in 1864 which would enable the passage of soldier vote legislation, but no such act followed.<sup>27</sup>

The Delaware legislature passed a law, approved just six days before the 1864 presidential election, which made it a little easier for service men to vote in their respective home districts, but no out-of-state voting was permitted.<sup>28</sup> On examination of the many resolutions passed by Delaware's legislature during 1864 it is apparent that the chief concern of the lawmakers was not soldier voting but the finding of some way to forestall Union soldier intervention at the polls on election day.

And finally, there were the two far western states of Oregon and Nevada which did nothing at all about soldier suffrage. Oregon had very few of her sons in the army, and there was little or no demand for such legislation; whereas Nevada's first legislature did not convene until December 12, 1864—more than a month after the presidential election had been held.

This, then, was the legal status of the soldier electorates on the eve of an important presidential election. Through the months during which these many laws were being enacted the bloody Civil War continued unabated, but none too favorably for the North. Criticism of President Lincoln's administration mounted as the Union Army suffered heavy losses without seemingly bringing the country nearer to victory. Nevertheless, the Republicans (now Union Republicans), at their Baltimore Convention in June, 1864, renominated Lincoln as their standard bearer for another term, and from then on this group presented

<sup>26</sup> *New York Times*, April 1, 1863. See also *General Statutes of New Jersey* (Jersey City, 1896), I, xxvi, xxxviii.

<sup>27</sup> *American Annual Cyclopaedia* . . . 1864, p. 723.

<sup>28</sup> *Laws of the State of Delaware, 1861 . . . 1865* (Dover, Wilmington, 1861-1865), 514.

a united front. The Democrats, on the other hand, continued their fight against the administration. In their Chicago Convention in August the delegates nominated on their first ballot General George B. McClellan, affectionately known as "Little Mac." McClellan, whom President Lincoln had removed from command, cannot be thought of as one who favored peace with the South—in fact the opposite is the case—but the platform on which he was nominated went so far as to say that the war had been a failure, and many prominent Democrats personally favored a compromise peace.<sup>29</sup> Thus as the Lincoln-McClellan campaign intensified, bitter, disgruntled, and anxious politicians in both the major parties resorted to practices that in some instances involved service men whose votes were now eagerly sought.

Most astounding were the attempts made at pre-election and election day frauds relative to soldier voting. Blatant irregularities were exposed in connection with the New York and Pennsylvania sponsored field elections, and there is reason to believe that soldier voting within Indiana had its odious aspect.

The New York scandal revolved almost wholly around election commissioners appointed, according to law, by Governor Horatio Seymour. Two such agents, named Moses J. Ferry and Edward Donahue, Jr., had been stationed at Baltimore to receive and forward New York soldier ballots from the Army of the Potomac. On October 27, 1864, Ferry and Donahue were arrested by a provost marshal and their office was closed. They were arraigned before the military commission then sitting in Baltimore and the following charges were made against them: "Conduct prejudicial to the welfare of the service. Falsely personating and representing officers and soldiers in the United States service, and in such assumed capacity,

<sup>29</sup> Edward Stanwood, *A History of the Presidency* (Boston, 1903), 301-302. See also H. J. Eckenrode and Bryan Conrad, *George B. McClellan* (Chapel Hill, 1941), 270-273.

falsely and fraudulently signing and forging names of officers and soldiers in such service."<sup>30</sup>

Ferry made a complete confession before the court and stated that in his office at 85 Fayette Street, Baltimore, names and ballots of New York officers and men (dead and alive) had been forged and sent to local New York agents who were to deposit the ballots on election day at designated voting places. This confession was particularly shocking, because Ferry had been especially assigned by Governor Seymour to secure the votes of the "sick and wounded soldiers of New York."

How Ferry and Donahue were detected and how they had gone about their business in cold blooded and wholesale fashion was revealed by Orville K. Wood, a Clinton County agent for the Union Republican party who testified in court against Ferry. Wood related that while in Baltimore he visited some wounded and sick home county soldiers at base hospitals and in conversations with them came to the conclusion that there had been some, as he put it, "checker playing." He then went to the State Agency at 85 Fayette Street, and by pretending that he was a McClellan man managed to win the confidence of Ferry. When Wood expressed surprise that out of four hundred ballots cast by the Ninety-First New York Regiment only eleven votes were for Lincoln, Ferry was supposed to have confided: there were more Union votes that came into the office, but they were "all right when they went out." And when showing Wood a long list of forged names, Ferry cynically remarked, "Dead or alive, they all had cast a good vote." Edward Newcomb, party to this conspiracy, also testified in court and admitted that he had gone to Forts Marshall and McHenry and had told soldiers that he was collecting nothing but McClellan votes. And finally it was revealed that no less than seven drygoods boxes of votes for the Democratic national and

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<sup>30</sup> *New York Times*, October 28, 1864.

state nominees had been forwarded from the Baltimore office.<sup>31</sup>

The trial of Donahue differed only in the sense that the defendant did not throw himself on the mercy of the court and argued vainly that the body trying him was without proper jurisdiction. Both were found guilty and were given prison terms.

A similar case of fraud in connection with New York soldier voting was detected in Washington, D. C., in connection with which Colonel Samuel North and others were arrested and held *incommunicado* in the federal Carroll Prison. When Governor Seymour heard of this he immediately appointed the Honorables William F. Allen, William Kelly, and Amasa J. Parker as commissioners to investigate this affair. The three investigators found that the defendants were being horribly mistreated. All efforts, including an appeal to President Lincoln, to have the case tried out of federal courts failed, but the commissioners did succeed in hastening the trial which resulted in acquittals and in the Colonel's discharge from the army.<sup>32</sup>

The stories of these soldier vote scandals made front page news in many sections of the country, and Republican editorial comment was caustic. The *New-York Tribune* believed that the Union party had been "cheated" of not less than 30,000 votes.<sup>33</sup> But not unmindful of the political capital that might be made of the affair, the *New-York Times* hastened to implicate Governor Seymour, who was candidate for reelection. "The discovery of the conspiracy to falsify the suffrage of the soldiers," wrote this newspaper, "puts the last brand of infamy on the brow of Horatio Seymour. . . . his plotting to reverse, by fraud, the votes of living soldiers, and forge the votes of dead soldiers, affixes the supreme stigma."<sup>34</sup> This accusation,

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, November 28 and 29, 1864. See also *American Annual Cyclopaedia* . . . 1864, p. 584.

<sup>32</sup> *American Annual Cyclopaedia* . . . 1864, pp. 585-588.

<sup>33</sup> *New-York Tribune*, November 17, 1864.

<sup>34</sup> *New York Times*, October 29, 1864.

however, was softened a few days later when charges of direct complicity were renounced.<sup>35</sup> Union Republican politicians, too, made the most of the situation as a way of retrieving their probable losses by forgery, and in his election eve speech at his home town of Auburn, William H. Seward used these words: “. . . frauds more fraudulent in conception, more wicked in design, than we have before encountered [cheers].”<sup>36</sup>

The soldier vote of 1864 has been referred to frequently as the “bayonet vote,” that is, the boys in blue voted as desired by their superior officers—in other words, for the administration.<sup>37</sup> The evidence supporting such a statement is very meagre. The soldier suffrage laws certainly left no obvious loopholes for fraudulent practices, although violations (mostly by the Democrats) did occur.

The most damaging evidence in support of the “bayonet vote” theory may be found in the case of Indiana, which state passed no soldier suffrage law at all. In this state the crucial election was that involving the governorship, held on October 11, 1864. A Morton victory at that time would in all likelihood mean a Lincoln victory in November. And that over-anxious Union Party workers there did try to induce soldiers to vote their ticket can scarcely be questioned. Since there was no camp voting all soldiers would necessarily have to cast their ballots within the borders of the state, and it appears that many did so with good measure. In Indianapolis where, according to *The Crisis*, leading Copperhead organ, there existed a voting population of 6,000 in 1860, a gain of 4,000 was recorded in the 1864 gubernatorial election.<sup>38</sup> The explanation of the abrupt swelling of the ballot boxes of the state’s capital city may be explained, according to the Democratic newspapers, in two ways. Firstly, the Sixtieth Regiment of

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, October 31, 1864.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, November 8, 1864.

<sup>37</sup> Eckenrode and Conrad, *op. cit.* 274. See also Clarence E. Macartney, *Little Mac* (Philadelphia, 1940), 344-346.

<sup>38</sup> *The* (Columbus, Ohio) *Crisis*, October 19, 1864.

Massachusetts Infantrymen, loyal to the administration, were invited to participate in the election; secondly, there were no restrictions placed on the number of times service men cast their ballots. In support of their charge that fraud had taken place with a vengeance these Democratic organs, among other things, reprinted two letters by members of the Massachusetts regiment that had been published first in the *Boston Courier* and next in the *Quincy (Massachusetts) Patriot* respectively.

The first letter reads as follows:

Indianapolis, Ind.

Oct. 13, 1864

Dear Brother: Did you ever attend an election out West? It is a big thing! The people are more enlightened, of course; it is a natural consequence that there is more liberty and freedom than in Massachusetts and benighted lands; so much so that people vote as many times as they please, and allow all their friends to do the same, provided they are "sound on the goose."

It is estimated that the Sixtieth Massachusetts Regiment cast about 6,000 votes for Governor Morton last Tuesday. And I know that some of the boys of Company I voted ten and twelve times each one.

Afterwards, two or three car loads of the regiment were taken to the town of Greenville—about thirty miles from here—[sic] and treated to a big dinner. It is a copperhead town (or has been). I think the boys hardly did their duty while there, for the town only gave about 600 Republican majority.

The second letter, written from Camp Burnside, Indiana, October 12, 1864, reads in part:

. . . Yesterday was the State election here, and most of our regiment went down to the city and voted. Some of the boys voted twenty-five times each. . . . Governor Morton, the Republican candidate, was elected by a large majority. So the Massachusetts men helped elect him.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Indianapolis *Daily Sentinel*, October 31, 1864. See also *The (Columbus, Ohio) Crisis*, October 16, 1864.

In contrast to what apparently happened in Indiana, the reports from various army headquarters indicates that not only preparations for the camp elections but the voting itself were managed calmly and expeditiously. On the 7th of November the Fifth Army headquarters in Virginia simply issued a circular (Number 152) which declared: "To-morrow, 8th instant, being election day, all drills will be suspended. Division commanders and the commanders of the Artillery Brigade are requested to take measures to enable their men to vote early and as promptly as possible, so that polls may be closed as early as practicable, and that their men be held ready to meet any emergency. . . ." Then on the day after the election Major-General G. K. Warren, commander of the Fifth Army, which was heavily weighted with Pennsylvania volunteers, reported that nine regiments had given Lincoln 1,346 votes, McClellan 769.<sup>40</sup> General George G. Meade, in charge of the huge Army of the Potomac, referred to lack of interest in politics among his men. He earnestly wished that the election was over, though, so that proper thought could be given to the war. "It is generally believed here," wrote General Meade, "that McClellan has very little chance. I think he is very unfortunate in his friends and backers."<sup>41</sup> And on the 9th Meade reported that "The election passed off quietly yesterday." About 19,000 votes had been cast in his army, and of these 13,500 were for Lincoln; 5,500 for McClellan. The vote for McClellan was larger, Meade declared, than had been expected.<sup>42</sup>

General Grant made a final official report to Secretary of War E. M. Stanton on how the Army of the Potomac—the forces that in the fall of 1864 faced Richmond—had voted. This report is of special value to the present study, because the figures are arranged according to the various

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<sup>40</sup> *The War of the Rebellion: . . . Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, 1893), ser. I, vol. XLII, pt. III, 549, 576-577.

<sup>41</sup> George Meade, *The Life and Letters of George Meade* (New York, 1913), II, 232.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 239, 242.

state units and are the only figures available on the soldier vote for states which had made no provision for separate military and civilian tabulations.

SOLDIER VOTE OF THE ARMY OF THE POTOMAC (1864) <sup>43</sup>

State	Total Votes Cast	Lincoln	McClellan	Lincoln's Majority
Maine	1,667	1,404	261	1,143
Maryland	1,428	1,294	134	1,160
Michigan	1,917	1,331	586	745
New Hampshire	515	397	118	279
New York	305	209	96	113
Ohio	684	495	189	306
Pennsylvania (seven counties not reported)	11,122	7,308	3,814	3,494
Rhode Island	190	162	28	134
U. S. Sharpshooters	124	107	18	89
Vermont	102	72	30	42
West Virginia	82	76	6	70
Wisconsin	1,065	849	215	633
Total	19,201	13,704	5,495	8,208

A report dated November 9, 1864, from Major-General John G. Parke on the results of the vote of the Ninth Army then in Virginia and North Carolina, shows similar results for the same states reported by General Grant, with the one exception of Maryland. The Third Maryland Veteran Volunteers gave McClellan thirty-three votes as against twenty-five for Lincoln and as such was the only unit to give the Democratic standard bearer a majority.<sup>44</sup>

Results from other theatres of operation, especially in the West, are much more incomplete, although scattered reports are available. Some of the votes, such as those of New Yorkers, may be construed as irregular, but they at least show soldier preferences. A Nashville dispatch appearing in the *New-York Tribune* commented as follows on soldier voting there: "Several Tennessee regiments

<sup>43</sup> Based upon figures in *Official Records*, ser. I, vol. XLII, pt. III, 570. It is to be noted that certain votes cast were irregular, for instance those of New York and the United States Sharpshooters. The New York votes cast at the camps on election day and reported here would not have been valid according to the New York law. In addition to the total votes reported here, there should of course be added those, such as the New Yorkers, who sent their votes home, and those of other states who cast their votes at their local precincts.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, ser. I, vol. XLII, pt. III, 578.

from this county gave a unanimous vote for Lincoln. Two New York regiments voted the Union ticket unanimously. Soldiers from other States voted on an average about eighteen for Lincoln to one for McClellan.<sup>45</sup>

In Sherman's army around Atlanta the feverish military activity was such that little attention could be given to politics. Nevertheless the votes were cast by Ohio and Pennsylvania soldiers at that front: Ohio, for Lincoln 910, for McClellan 236; Pennsylvania, for Lincoln 1,273, for McClellan 389.<sup>46</sup> Western regiments at and around Atlanta are reported to have given small majorities for Lincoln, although to quote the Atlanta reporter of the Philadelphia *Sunday Dispatch*: "The election Tuesday was quite largely for Lincoln."<sup>47</sup>

There are no data on how the sailors voted, for the reason that most of those who voted, such as those from New York, sent their ballots to their home precincts. Others, like their army and marine compatriots, were required to vote in person in their home precincts. Some were doubtless disqualified by certain state requirements calling for a requisite number of electors to be members of a military unit as a condition for the establishment of a polling place. The Pennsylvania law is unique in that it provides that electors "detached or absent from their companies, or in any military or naval hospital, or in any vessel or naval yard, may vote at such polls as may be most convenient for them."<sup>48</sup> There is reason to assume, however, that relatively few sailors cast their ballots in the election of 1864.

Likewise there is no way of knowing precisely how and if the officers voted, although a letter written by General Meade from his headquarters, November 22, 1864, casts some light on this subject. He wrote: "I do not know how

<sup>45</sup> *New-York Tribune*, November 12, 1864.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*; *Indianapolis Daily Sentinel*, November 12, 1864.

<sup>47</sup> *Philadelphia Sunday Dispatch*, November 13, 1864.

<sup>48</sup> *Laws . . . of the State of Pennsylvania . . . 1864*, p. 650. See also the statutes of other states.

the fact of my not voting has reached Philadelphia . . . I cannot but be flattered that so much importance is attached to my action, particularly as nearly all other general officers, including Grant, did the same—that is, not vote.”<sup>49</sup>

Finally, what was the combined soldier vote in the states for which such data are available? These can be presented best in tabulated form as follows:

COMPARISON OF SOLDIER AND HOME VOTES<sup>50</sup>

(For states where distinction was made)

State		Total Votes Cast	Lincoln	McClellan	Lincoln's majority (Except in Kentucky)
California	1.	2,837	2,600	237	2,363
	2.	105,975	62,134	43,841	18,293
Iowa	1.	16,542	15,178	1,364	13,814
	2.	136,591	87,331	49,260	38,071
Kansas	1.	3,410	2,867	543	2,324
	2.	18,099	14,228	3,871	10,357
Kentucky	1.	4,017	1,194	2,823	1,629
	2.	92,087	27,786	64,301	36,515
Maine	1.	4,915	4,174	741	3,433
	2.	120,014	72,278	47,736	24,542
Maryland	1.	3,121	2,800	321	2,479
	2.	72,892	40,153	32,739	7,114
Michigan	1.	12,361	9,402	2,959	6,443
	2.	152,722	85,352	67,370	17,982
New Hampshire	1.	2,756	2,066	690	1,376
	2.	69,629	36,595	33,034	3,561
Ohio	1.	50,903	41,146	9,757	31,389
	2.	470,722	265,154	205,568	59,586
Pennsylvania	1.	39,061	26,712	12,349	14,363
	2.	572,697	296,389	276,308	20,081
Vermont	1.	292	243	49	194
	2.	55,747	42,422	13,325	29,097
Wisconsin	1.	13,830	11,372	2,458	8,914
	2.	143,439	79,564	63,875	15,689
Total	1.	154,045	119,754	34,291	88,720
	2.	2,010,614	1,109,386	901,228	281,188

Certain general observations and conclusions may be drawn from these election tabulations and other data. (1)

<sup>49</sup> Meade, *Life and Letters*, II, 244-245.

<sup>50</sup> Based upon figures appearing in Stanwood, *op. cit.*, 307. The soldier votes of Kansas arrived home too late to apply to the official vote. The figures on the soldier vote of Kansas appear in Horace Greeley, *The American Conflict* (Washington, D. C., 1899), II, 672.

They show that, with the one exception of Kentucky, civilians and soldiers alike cast favorable majorities for President Lincoln. (2) The soldiers tended to accord Lincoln a larger percentage of favorable votes than did the civilians. Out of the total vote cast in each category the soldier vote was approximately 78% for Lincoln; 22% for McClellan. The civilian vote, on the other hand, was only 53% for Lincoln; 47% for McClellan. In a vindictive tone Horace Greeley's *New-York Tribune* summed it up as follows: ". . . we were told daily and hourly by the Democratic press that the soldiers were all going to vote for McClellan. . . . Well, they have voted. . . ." <sup>51</sup> (3) The soldier vote apparently did not decide the election of 1864. If the total of the soldier votes in any state where such a vote is known had been cast for McClellan, Lincoln would still have carried all such states with the exception of Kentucky. (4) Apart from the presidential vote, however, the soldier ballots did decide certain congressional elections. <sup>52</sup> (5) And, finally, the huge majority of pro-administration votes cast in Ohio, both in the 1863 gubernatorial election and in the 1864 presidential election, is believed to have contributed much towards the final crushing of the Copperhead movement under the leadership of Clement L. Vallandigham in that state. <sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> *New-York Tribune*, November 11, 1864.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, November 12, 1864.

<sup>53</sup> *American Annual Cyclopaedia* . . . 1863, p. 731; Eugene H. Roseboom and Francis P. Weisenburger, *A History of Ohio* (New York, 1934), 287.