

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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Sixty - Second Legislature.

SENATE.

No. 86.

STATE OF MAINE.

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD ONE THOUSAND EIGHT HUNDRED AND
EIGHTY-FIVE.

AN ACT to restore the Salary of the County Attorney
for the County of York.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives
in Legislature assembled, as follows:*

From and after the first day of January, in the
2 year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and
3 eighty-five, the salary of the County Attorney for
4 the county of York shall be seven hundred and
5 fifty dollars a year.

STATE OF MAINE.

The York County Delegation, to which was referred the petition of John M. Goodwin and others for restoration of the salary of the County Attorney of York County, have had the same under consideration, and ask leave to report the accompanying bill that the same ought to pass.

Per order.

RUFUS P. TAPLEY,

For the Delegation.

MINORITY REPORT.

The minority of the York County Delegation, to which was referred the bill entitled "An Act to restore the Salary of the County Attorney for the county of York," on petition of members of York County Bar, report.

For this action, we would respectfully submit the following reasons :

1st.—A statement of facts of this case.

2d.—The inferences we deduce from these facts,—

First, the present salary is \$450 dollars per annum, which has been the stipulated amount since 1879. At that time this sum was considered a fair compensation and its adjustment was made at the suggestion of the County Attorney himself, who, last September, ran in opposition to the present incumbent for this office, expecting, if elected, to serve for the present salary. The present County Attorney has already served a full term for said compensation, and has not, to our knowledge, asked for any increase until the present time. With the full knowledge of the extent of its labors, he sought and obtained the office the second time. While the duties are scarcely in excess of what they were in 1879, there has been a general shrinkage in values, rendering the present purchasing power of the stipulated sum considerably in excess of what it was at the time of adjustment.

Believing the foregoing to be an exact statement of facts we make the following deductions :

Secondly—The County Attorney having a complete knowledge of both duties and compensation, his acceptance affords reasonable grounds for belief in his willingness to serve for the present salary, otherwise he could have declined the office.

There seems to have been no grounds for deception ; indeed, there was no chance for any. His election was a contract entered into between himself and the people of the county. He agreed to fulfill the functions of the office, for which they agreed to pay him a certain amount ; under these circumstances we feel under no obligations, nor have we any right to break this compact. He should serve cheerfully for the present compensation, or resign and give place for the appointment of his able competitor, who, we doubt not, will faithfully serve the county.

If asked to pass judgment as to whether the compensation be sufficient for the service performed, we would reply that it is 70 per cent more than the net earnings of the average farmer and mechanic. The present is a time of great financial depression. The surplus product of the farmer brings but a small price. Labor is far in excess of demand, and wages are lower than for years previous ; hence, there is great need of economy in every department.

We feel it a duty to resist every form of reasonably avoidable expense, in order that taxation may be reduced to its lowest possible mean. We cannot forget that whatever goes into the pockets of the office holders is wrung from the hard earnings in the pockets of the tax-payers. While aware that an occasional re-adjustment of salaries may be just and proper, we beg leave to express our conviction that no change should be made to take effect during the existing term of office. The present salary of \$450 affords the County Attorney \$150 for each term of court, a compensation sufficiently ample as compared to that of jurymen, town officers and legislators, and especially that of the farmer who toils from early morning to late at night, for an average net yearly income, as stated by Governor Robie at Houlton, to be, in his own language "In the State of Maine, the productions of our farms are returned as averaging about \$267." Again, we believe that there has been no demand from the farmers, mechanics and laborers, who pay the larger portion of the taxes, for any increase in the salaries of the county officers. The sole

petitioners are members of York County Bar. This fact alone, taken in connection with the great rise in the charges and emoluments of the Bar as compared with those of former times, ought of itself to put the seal of condemnation upon this measure, calculated as it is, with similar "salary grab" bills which are being rushed through this Legislature, to further oppress an already over-taxed and over-burdened people.

Respectfully submitted,

ENOCH COUSENS.

DOMINICUS RICKER,
DANIEL COTE,
F. S. WARREN,
SAMUEL C. COLE.

STATE OF MAINE.

IN SENATE CHAMBER, }
February 18, 1885. }

Reported by Mr. TAPLEY, from the York County Delegation, and on motion by Mr. MARBLE, laid on table to be printed, together with majority and minority reports.

NICHOLAS FESSENDEN, *Clerk.*