

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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ACTS AND RESOLVES
AS PASSED BY THE
Ninety-first and Ninety-second
Legislatures
OF THE
STATE OF MAINE

From April 10, 1943 to April 21, 1945
AND MISCELLANEOUS STATE PAPERS
From April 10, 1943 to May 24, 1945

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ADDRESS

of

Governor Sumner Sewall

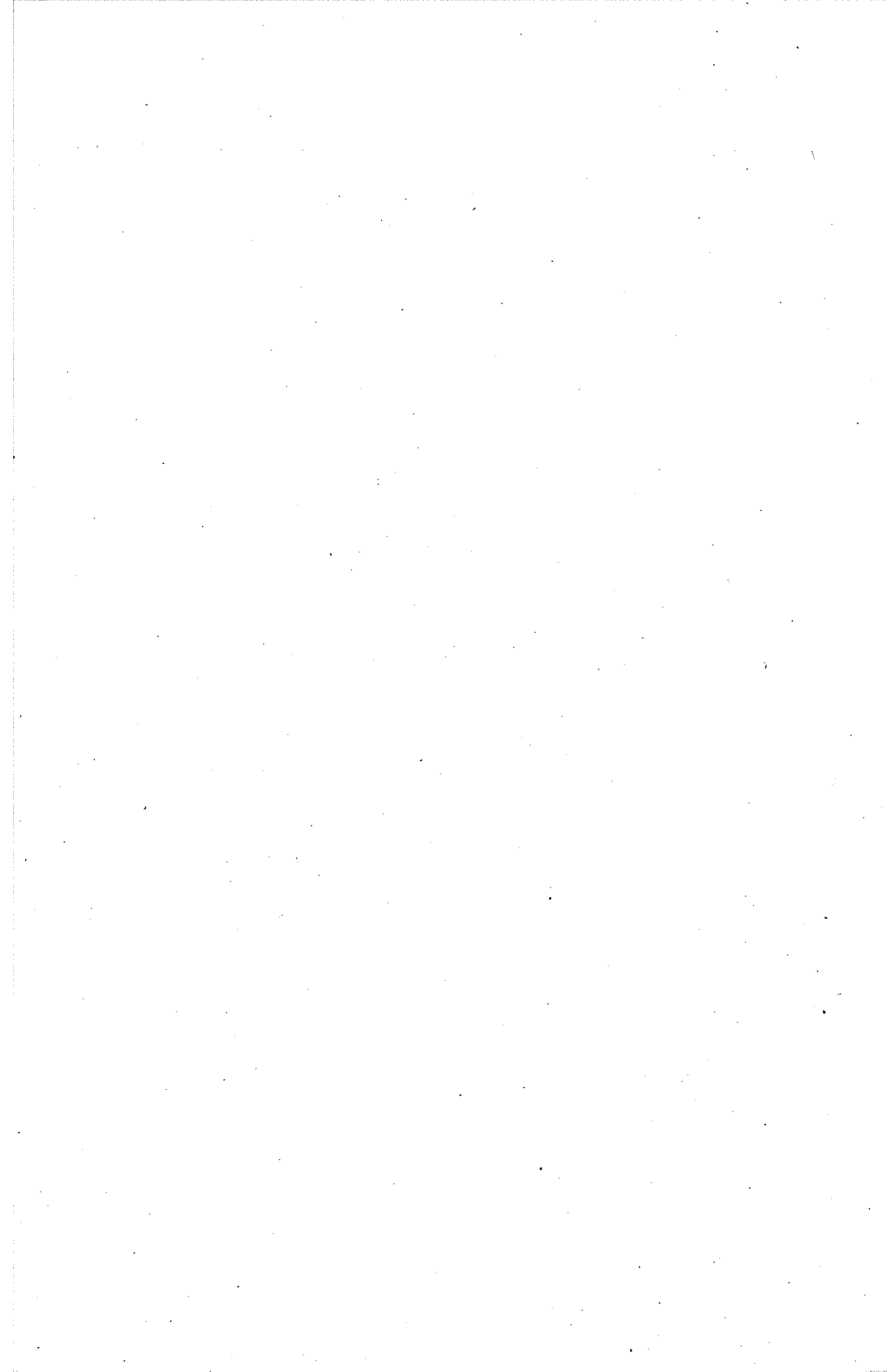
to

SPECIAL SESSION

of the

91ST MAINE LEGISLATURE

April 17, 1944



ADDRESS

Mr. President and Members of the 91st Legislature :

Many thousands of Maine citizens are today outside our country, in the armed forces of our nation, fighting to preserve the democratic way of life. We meet to enable them to exercise the fundamental right of democracy—the right to vote.

Only this Legislature can make this possible. Only by the use of the State ballot can these soldier citizens vote for an entire slate of public officials and representatives in County, State, and National government.

Under existing law, it will not prove practical for those serving abroad to vote in this year's elections. Personal appearance for registration in towns of over three thousand population is obviously impossible. Party enrollment by overseas mail is impractical. Time of transit between the fighting fronts and the voting residence severely limits the voter's ability to secure and cast his ballot.

From studies made by the Attorney General and the Secretary of State, it appears that full voting privileges can be made available to these soldier citizens by a private and special law expiring after the next regular session.

If enacted, the following changes will be effected in our present law :

Registration boards or municipal officers in communities of over 3,000 population will be called upon to register all citizens whom they reliably know to be qualified, absent from their residence, and in the armed forces or in certain specified service organizations. Necessity for personal appearance before the board is eliminated. Under present law registration without personal appearance is limited to communities of less than 3,000 population.

Application for absentee ballots may be made in behalf of the soldier-voter by a parent, grandparent, former guardian, spouse, adult brother, adult sister or adult child of such voter. Under present law this application must be made by the voter himself.

Party enrollment may be declared by the soldier-voter on the envelope in which he encloses his ballot. Under present law he must make a separate declaration before receiving his ballot.

The Federal war ballot may be used in cases where the soldier-voter has applied for a State ballot and has not received it in time for use. By Congressional action the use of the Federal war ballot is limited to the November election and applies solely to the offices of President and Vice-President.

Other provisions are of a minor nature. All can be drawn in a form which does not require changes in the general Statutes. I am informed that any such changes would make impossible the timely completion of the current work of revision of statutes, and should be scrupulously avoided.

My sole purpose in convening the Legislature at this time is to make it possible for every Maine citizen in the armed forces to vote wherever he or she may be. I am confident that we are in agreement as to this purpose, and that you will be glad to take appropriate action.

Mindful of the fact that many of you will wish to return to your homes and occupations as quickly as possible after the matter of soldier-voting is disposed of, I am refraining from other recommendations at this time. Should you decide, however, to consider other legislation, there are several matters of an administrative nature which I would ask that you include.

We here are not privileged to serve in our nation's armed forces in this period of world crisis. It is for us to serve at home as trustees of freedom and of democracy.

I am sure we shall be faithful to this trust.

SUMNER SEWALL,

Governor

April 17, 1944