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Dr. Louis A. Warren Editor

LINCOLN ASPIRES TO THE SENATE

This Lincoln Lore bulletin, coming from the press on the eve of the November election, aspires to capture some of the atmosphere of the occasion in which to release excerpts from letters showing some of Lincoln's political activities.

In 1854 Lincoln made a concerted effort to gain a seat in the United States Senate. The following excerpts reveal his methods of campaigning and also tell of his defeat.

Clinton, DeWitt Co.,
Nov. 10, 1854.

Mr. Charles Hoyt.

Dear Sir:

You used to express a good deal of partiality for me, and if you are still so, now is the time. Some friends here are really for me, for the U. S. Senate, and I should be very grateful if you could make a mark for me among your members. Please write me at all events giving me the names, post-offices, and "political position" of members round about you. Direct to Springfield.

Let this be confidential.

Clinton, DeWitt Co.,
Nov. 11, 1854.

J. Harding, Esq.

My dear Sir:

I have a suspicion that a Whig has been elected to the Legislature from Edgar. If this is not so, why then "nix cum arous," but if it is so then could you not make a mark with him for me for U. S. Senator? I really have some chance.

Springfield, Ill., Nov. 27, 1854.

T. J. Henderson, Esq.

My dear Sir:

It has come around that a Whig may, by possibility, be elected to the United States Senate and I want the chance of being that man.

Springfield, Dec. 1, 1854.

J. Gillespie, Esq.

My dear Sir:

I have really got it into my head to try to be United States Senator, and, if I could have your support, my chances would be reasonably good. But I know, and acknowledge, that you have as just claims to the place as I have; and therefore I cannot ask you to yield to me, if you are thinking of becoming a candidate, yourself.

Springfield, December 14, 1854.

E. B. Washburne.

My dear Sir:

So far as I am concerned, there must be something wrong about United States senator at Chicago. My most intimate friends there do not answer my letters, and I cannot get a word from them. Wentworth has a knack of knowing things better than most men. I wish you would pump him, and write me what you get from him. Please do this as soon as you can, as the time is growing short. Don't let any one know I have written you this; for there may be those opposed to me nearer about than you think.

Springfield, December 15, 1854.

T. J. Henderson.

Dear Sir:

Yours of the 11th was received last night, and for which I thank you. Of course, I prefer myself to all others; yet it is neither in my heart nor my conscience to say I am any better man than Mr. Williams.

Springfield, January 6, 1855.

E. B. Washburne.

My dear Sir:

... Besides the ten or a dozen on our side who are willing to be known as candidates, I think there are fifty secretly watching for a chance. I do not know that it is much advantage to have the largest number of votes at the start. If I did know this to be an advantage, I should feel better, for I cannot doubt but I have more commitments than any other man.

Springfield, February 9, 1855.

E. B. Washburne.

My dear Sir:

The agony is over at last, and the result you doubtless know. I write this only to give you some particulars to explain what might appear difficult of understanding. I began with 44 votes, Shields 41, and Trumbull 5,—yet Trumbull was elected. In fact, 47 different members voted for me,—getting three new ones on the second ballot, and losing four old ones. How came my 47 to yield to Trumbull's 5? It was Governor Matteson's work. He has been secretly a candidate ever since (before, even) the fall election.

On the seventh ballot, I think, the signal was given to the Nebraska men to turn to Matteson, which they acted on to a man, with one exception, my old friend Strunk going with them, giving him 44 votes.

Next ballot the remaining Nebraska man and one pretended Anti went over to him, giving him 46. The next still another, giving him 47, wanting only three of an election. In the meantime our friends, with a view of detaining our expected bolters, had been turning from me to Trumbull till he had risen to 35 and I had been reduced to 15. These would never desert me except by my direction; but I became

satisfied that if we could prevent Matteson's election one or two ballots more, we could not possibly do so a single ballot after my friends should begin to return to me from Trumbull. So I determined to strike at once, and accordingly advised my remaining friends to go for him, which they did and elected him on the tenth ballot.

Such is the way the thing was done. I think you would have done the same under the circumstances; though Judge Davis, who came down this morning, declares he never would have consented to the forty-seven men being controlled by the five. I regret my defeat moderately, but I am not nervous about it. I could have headed off every combination and been elected, had it not been for Matteson's double game—and his defeat now gives me more pleasure than my own gives me pain. On the whole, it is perhaps as well for our general cause that Trumbull is elected. The Nebraska men confess that they hate it worse than anything that could have happened. It is a great consolation to see them worse whipped than I am. I tell them it is their own fault—that they had abundant opportunity to choose between him and me, which they declined, and instead forced it on me to decide between him and Matteson.

With my grateful acknowledgments for the kind, active, and continued interest you have taken for me in this matter, allow me to subscribe myself,

Yours forever,

Springfield, Ill., Feb. 21, 1855.

Hon. W. H. Henderson.

My dear Sir:

The election is over, the session is ended and I am not Senator. I have to content myself with the honor of having been the first choice of a large majority of the fifty-one members who finally made the election. My larger number of friends had to surrender to Trumbull's smaller number, in order to prevent the election of Matteson, which would have been a Douglas victory. I started with 44 votes and T. with 5. It is rather hard for the 44 to have to surrender to the 5 and a less good humored man than I, perhaps, would not have consented to it,—and it would not have been done without my consent. I could not, however, let the whole political result go to swan, on a point merely personal to myself.

Springfield, March 10, 1855.

Messrs. Sanford, Porter and
Striker, New York.

Gentlemen:

Yours of the 5th is received, as also was that of 15th Dec. last, inclosing bond of Clift to Pray. When I received the bond I was dabbling in politics, and of course neglecting business. Having since been beaten out I have gone to work again.