

SENATE No. 379

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT, BOSTON, Feb. 6, 1913.

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives:—

I return herewith without my approval an Act Relative to the Licensing Board of Boston, and providing for a substantial increase of salaries.

All proposed increases of salary should be considered with the utmost caution. A comparison of the salaries now paid the public servants in this State with corresponding salaries in other States, indicates that Massachusetts is paying, on the whole, a very liberal average salary.

Public office in Massachusetts is, and always has been, regarded as an honor. Public positions in this Commonwealth are sought by men and women of the highest standing, as a means of giving their services to the State. This principle has been so widely extended that we now have a large number of unpaid boards and commissions supervising many branches of the public business.

Office holders in other branches which call for special qualifications or for a larger degree of personal attention, are paid salaries which have been fixed mainly by the Legislature in full recognition of the rights of the tax-payer on the one hand, and of the office holder on the other.

Moreover, Chapter 719, of the Acts of 1912, creating a Commission on Economy and Efficiency, places upon that Commission the duty of examining the estimates of expenditures, including those for salaries, which are submitted annually to the Auditor by the various Boards and Commissions of the State.

One of the principal purposes for which this Commission was created would be defeated if the Legislature were to increase the salaries of our public servants without the recommendations of that Commission.

It has been my experience throughout two administrations, and thus far during a third administration, that the Commonwealth has, in general, no difficulty in obtaining the services of highly qualified men and women to fill vacancies in the public service at the existing rates of compensation.

Moreover, many serious objections may be raised against the general policy of greatly increasing the salaries of our public servants. Public office in Massachusetts must never be sought for personal profit.

In specific cases where the need of larger compensation has been demonstrated and the service of the public is suffering for want of adequate appropriations for salaries, I shall concur with you heartily in meeting these contingencies as they arise, or even in urging them upon your attention if the occasion appears to warrant such action.

I object also to this bill because the members of the Licensing Board are not required to give their entire time and attention to the duties of their office, while this bill, if approved, would grant them salaries considerably in excess of the sums paid for equally important services in other departments requiring the entire time and attention of the office holder.

EUGENE N. FOSS.