

in the county where he is elected; and another provision in the Constitution requires, that "all elections of judges and other officers provided for in this Constitution, State's Attorneys excepted, shall be certified, and the returns made by the Clerks of the several counties to the Governor who shall issue commissions," &c. Although the clause quoted makes no exceptions save in the case of State's Attorneys, it is evident that it must be taken with other qualifications; the returns of the election of Governor for instance are required to be made to the Speaker of the House of Delegates, and in no part of the Constitution is there any express direction as to the returns to be made of the election of a Lieutenant Governor. To prevent the irregularities to which I have referred, secure uniformity in the manner of making the returns, and provide for the returns of every election, and without conflicting with constitutional provisions, I would recommend that in the cases of Governor and States' Attorneys where special returns are required, the judges be directed to file in the Clerk's office duplicates of such returns, and that the returns of the election of all other officers addressed to the Executive, be filed also in the Clerk's office, and the Clerks be directed to forward immediately to this Department certified copies of said returns, including copies of the duplicates aforesaid.

You are also, by the Constitution, required to provide by law for taking the vote of the Soldiers of this State, serving in the field in the Armies of the United States, and as there is no longer any doubt of the Constitutional right of such citizens to the elective franchise, I hope that your deliberations will enable you to devise a plan by which it may be effectually enjoyed and fairly exercised. The mode prescribed in the Constitution for taking that vote in the recent elections, is not, in my opinion, the best that can be provided; whilst I am entirely satisfied that so far as questions of fraud or unfairness were concerned, there was no part of the State's vote less obnoxious to such suspicions, experience has nevertheless shown what we can all very well understand, that Soldiers in the field, but little versed in official formalities, find themselves very naturally embarrassed in acting as Judges, and making the proper returns of the election, and their vote may be frequently lost from some oversight or omission. It seems to me that the appointment of Commissioners for the purpose, their number dependent upon the number and location for the time being of our different Regiments, and charged with the duty of taking and returning the Soldiers' vote, with proper time allowed for the purpose, suggests the outline of a plan as well adapted to the object in view as any I can at present present.