

## Registration Irregularities at Houston Convention--1979

At Houston the Convention voted almost unanimously "that the registration secretary, Lee Porter, be instructed by this Convention to study and report to the next Executive Committee meeting any registration irregularities and that the Executive Committee report or recommend to the annual meetings of the Southern Baptist Convention next year necessary Bylaw changes and/or registration procedure to prevent irregularities and to maintain the integrity of the balloting system."

The purpose of this investigation has not been to investigate the election of any Convention officer or the results of any ballot vote. The ballots cast were carefully tabulated and retabulated. No question has been raised concerning the accuracy of the vote count. No consideration has been given to "Who voted for whom." The confidentiality of the ballot has been maintained.

### PROCEDURE:

Over 300 hours have been used in studying registration cards and in corresponding with churches and individuals. Before the study is finished, almost 400 hours will have been used.

Each card was examined at least twice, and some member's cards were personally handled five times. All registration cards were alphabetized again according to churches.

Churches that appeared to have registered messengers in excess of the Constitution provisions were written and asked to furnish information. (See Attachment A.) A cross sample of churches also were written to verify the election of their messengers in keeping with Constitution provisions. (See Attachment A.) Three hundred seventy-seven (377) churches were written.

Individuals (107) who appeared to have registered twice also were written and asked to furnish information. (See Attachment B.)

A few individuals and churches wrote or called me before I contacted them.

### RESPONSE:

The spirit of response from churches and individuals has been largely favorable and helpful. I have received only four unfavorable replies. Sixteen percent (16%) have not responded to date, but replies are being received daily.

### PROBLEMS WITH REGISTRATION CARD (See Attachment 3):

The majority of messengers failed to fill in the blanks on the card accurately. Many churches and messengers seemed unsure as to the information requested. Messengers from the same churches often gave widely varying information. The high percentage of errors indicates the need to redesign the registration card.

CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE:

Approximately 14,000 messengers registered at the Convention in Houston (1,516 had pre-registered). Over 7,200 received cards from the Credentials Committee. Under present system, this committee cannot possibly screen individuals or credentials properly while handling this volume of work.

RECORD OF BALLOTS VOTES:

Ballot #1

To amend the Constitution Article IX "Missionaries' Qualifications" The vote was to determine whether or not to place on agenda for later consideration.

YES	4,822	58.5%
NO	<u>3,412</u>	41.5%
Total	8,234	

13,798 were registered at that time.  
59.68% of registered messengers voted on Ballot #1.

Ballot #2

Election of officers: President

Ed Price	223	1.87%
Doug Watterson	474	3.97%
Abner McCall	643	5.39%
William Self	1,673	14.02%
Robert E. Naylor	2,791	23.39%
Adrian Rogers	<u>6,129</u>	51.36%
Total	11,975	(includes 42 ballots rejected)

14,935 were registered at that time.  
80.18% of registered messengers voted on Ballot #2.  
2,960 or 19.82% of registered messengers did not vote on Ballot #2.

Ballot #3

Election of Officers: First Vice-President

Charles Harvey	1,098	14.18%
T. A. Patterson	3,317	42.82%
Abner McCall	3,331	43.00%
Ballots rejected	<u>35</u>	
Total votes cast	7,781	

15,005 messengers were registered at this time.  
51.86% of registered messengers voted on Ballot #3.

Ballot #4

Runoff Election: First Vice-President

T. A. Patterson	2,431	45.56%
Abner McCall	2,905	54.44%
Ballots rejected	<u>31</u>	
Total votes cast	5,367	

15,248 messengers were registered at this time.  
35.19% of registered messengers voted on Ballot #4.

Ballot #5

Election of Officers: Second Vice-President

Roy Ladd	816	12.37%
Milton Cunningham	1,513	22.93%
Don Touchton	1,742	26.41%
Homer Lindsay, Jr.	2,526	38.29%
Ballots rejected	<u>67</u>	
Total votes cast	6,664	

15,446 messengers were registered at this time.  
43.14% of registered messengers voted on Ballot #5.

Ballot #6

Runoff Election: Second Vice-President

Homer Lindsay, Jr.	2,182	43.11%
Don Touchton	2,879	56.89%
Ballots rejected	<u>40</u>	
Total votes cast	5,101	

15,676 messengers were registered at this time.  
32.54% of registered messengers voted on Ballot #6.

PERCENTAGE OF TEXAS REGISTRATION TO TOTAL REGISTRATION:

1979	Texas	4,155	26.06%
1978	Georgia	3,895	17.03%
1977	Missouri	2,314	14.22%
1976	Virginia	3,172	17.02%
1975	Florida	1,869	11.38%
1974	Texas	4,078	22.41%

I feel this could show the danger of meeting in a limited number of cities.

CHURCHES WITH MORE THAN TEN (10) MESSENGERS:

- 47 churches had more than 10.
- 28 of these churches were in Texas.
- First five churches were in Texas--none from the Houston area.
- 1 church had 22 messengers.
- 1 church had 20 messengers
- 1 church had 16 messengers
- 2 churches had 14 messengers
- 5 churches had 13 messengers.
- 11 churches had 12 messengers.
- 26 churches had 11 messengers.
- 13 churches had 11 messengers and were from the Houston area.

The church with 22 messengers had elected 20 messengers and "alternates." No cards were marked "alternates."

The church with 20 messengers felt that 6 or 7 of the messengers were not going to attend the Convention so the pastor appointed 7 more. Then 3 other messengers registered on their own.

Ten churches elected "alternates," and they registered thereby causing the church to go over 10 messengers. Four churches elected 11 or 12 messengers.

Thirty-nine (39) churches had members who had not been elected or appointed by the church and registered on their own. Thirty-one (31) of those who registered on their own were denominational workers (Convention-wide, state, or associational). VERY SAD.

The 47 churches who registered more than 10 registered a total of 99 extra messengers.

#### CHURCHES WITH MESSENGERS OVER THE LIMIT OF CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS:

Twenty-six (26) churches elected more messengers than they were entitled to.

- 17 elected an extra messenger.
- 7 elected 2 extra messengers.
- 1 elected 3 extra messengers.
- 1 elected 4 extra messengers.

These 26 churches elected 38 extra messengers.

#### MISSION CHURCHES:

Six missions elected their own messengers instead of the sponsoring church. Total messengers elected were 17.

#### NOT MEMBERS OF CHURCH THAT ELECTED THEM:

Three interim pastors and their wives were elected by churches where they were serving but were not members. One individual said at the Convention that he was a former supply speaker and an honorary member of the church that elected him.

Other interim pastors probably were elected as messengers, but this information was not available to me. I received letters from two of these interim pastors, and I have personal knowledge of one other case.

#### FOREIGN MISSIONARIES:

Five foreign missionaries registered without being elected as messengers from a local church.

#### NEWLY CONSTITUTED CHURCHES:

Four newly constituted churches elected 26 messengers. According to the Constitution, this is wrong.

CHURCHES NOT IN FRIENDLY COOPERATION:

In my opinion, two churches not in friendly cooperation with the Convention elected 4 messengers. This matter would have had to be solved by the Credentials Committee.

MESSENGERS WHO REGISTERED TWICE:

- 107 messengers registered twice.
- 47 had pre-registered and had left their ballots at home so they registered again.
- 16 registered by mistake, not knowing that someone had registered for them (husband, wife, pastor).
- 11 registered again because they had lost their ballots or had left them at hotel.
- 2 denied having registered twice.
- 13 have not answered by letter.
- 18 others did not give legitimate or valid reasons.

The above information should be the saddest information in this report.

Fifty-seven (57) of these who registered twice turned in their extra books of ballots at Houston or since the Convention by mail.

CHILDREN:

Apparently, 69 children not elected by their church as messengers were registered as messengers.

TOTAL OF THOSE WHO SHOULD NOT HAVE BEEN REGISTERED AS MESSENGERS:

- 99 from churches with more than 10 messengers.
- 26 from churches with less than 10 messengers.
- 17 from mission churches.
- 7 from churches which elected them.
- 5 foreign missionaries.
- 26 from newly constituted churches.
- 4 from churches not in friendly cooperation.
- 31 who registered twice.
- 69 children not elected as messengers.
- 284 TOTAL

MESSENGERS NOT ELECTED BY CHURCH:

Over 1,000 messengers apparently were not elected by their church to be messengers, but they registered. Many of these were pastors and their wives. This information was gathered in sample survey.

PROXY VOTING:

In my files, I have letters in which persons confess that they voted for approximately fifty other people. Husbands voted for wives. Pastors and others voted for church members.

MAJOR CONCERNS DURING AND AFTER THE CONVENTION:

Because these concerns were raised during or after the Convention, I feel that as a result of my research I should give my studied opinion.

Concern #1

Many churches within 150 miles of Houston brought in large bus loads of people and registered them to vote.

Response

No indication of this was found in registration. No one gave me any solid facts on this matter.

Concern #2

Some extra ballots were taken or stolen.

Response

Ballots were under careful security most of the time. The security was broken for three hours on Tuesday morning when numbers of people traveled through the registration booth.

I personally doubt that any ballots were taken or stolen.

Concern #3

Many books of ballots with only Ballot #2 missing were thrown away after the Tuesday afternoon session.

Response

This is true. One usher collected about 400 sets off the floor. Others turned in 30-40 sets at the registration booth. The clean-up crew showed me another large container of discarded ballot books. Apparently, between 1,000-2,000 sets of ballots were thrown away after the Tuesday afternoon session.

Concern #4

Much political activity was conducted.

Response

Approximately 200 churches with 150-1,000 members located within 150 miles of Houston elected 6, 7, 8, 9, or 10 messengers. Most of these registered on Tuesday. Through a sample survey, I have confirmed that many of these came in small vans or buses and that 83% attended only business sessions on Tuesday. The survey indicates that 71% of them also attended the Wednesday night service in the Astrodome. In my judgment, registration facts point to a "get out the vote" campaign.

CONCLUSIONS:

Churches must elect their messengers carefully in keeping with the constitutional provisions.

Churches must publicize the names of elected messengers so that other members will not register on their own. (Example is First Baptist Church, Nashville, Tennessee.)

Messengers must bring proper credentials with them to the Convention.

Messengers must register individually.

We must change the bylaws in regard to proxy voting. When you are present, you raise only one hand; therefore, you must vote only one ballot. No proxy voting should be allowed.

Plans must be developed to eliminate churches overregistering and to prevent individuals registering twice.

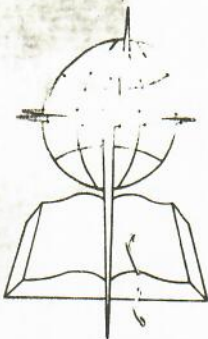
The registration card needs to be redesigned, and the Constitutional provisions on registration need to be clarified.

The integrity of the balloting system must be maintained.

The registration process must continue to operate on a system of trust of the churches and the personal integrity of the individual messengers.

Lee Porter  
Registration Secretary

September 17, 1979



# SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

OFFICE OF REGISTRATION SECRETARY  
LEE PORTER, TH. D.  
127 NINTH AVENUE, NORTH  
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37234  
(615) 251-2181 OFFICE  
(615) 794-7616 HOME

August 27, 1979

Dear Church Clerk:

As registration secretary of the Southern Baptist Convention, I need some information from your church.

Would you please send me the names of those who were elected as messengers from your church at the recent Convention in Houston. On what date were they elected? How many members does your church have?

I also need the information as to the amount of money given last year to the (1) Cooperative Program, (2) Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, and (3) Annie Armstrong Easter Offering.

Your prompt answer to these questions and giving me this information will be greatly appreciated. I need to hear from you as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

*Lee Porter*

Lee Porter  
Registration Secretary  
Southern Baptist Convention

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August 27, 1979

As registration secretary of the Southern Baptist Convention, I need some information from you.

According to my records, it is indicated that you registered twice for the recent Convention in Houston.

Would you please take the time to write and give me the details as to how this happened and what were the circumstances, and so forth.

What use was made of your second set of ballots? If you still have the second set of ballots, please send them to me.

I need this information as soon as possible so that I might be able to clear your file. Were there any other members registered from your church as messengers?

Your prompt reply in giving me this information will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Lee Porter  
Registration Secretary  
Southern Baptist Convention

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