

Secretary of State Richard C. Thomas
1 microfilm reel
1969-1977

BIOGRAPHY

Richard C. Thomas was born in Maine on May 3, 1937 and grew up in Rutland, Vermont. He graduated from Middlebury College in 1959 and attended Georgetown University Law Center for one year. Thomas worked for Vermont U.S. Senator Winston Prouty from 1963-1965 as campaign coordinator, press secretary, and research assistant. From July 1, 1965 to January 3, 1968 he was Executive Secretary of the Vermont Republican State Committee. In 1968 he was first Assistant Clerk of the Vermont House.

Richard Thomas was elected Vermont Secretary of State in the fall of 1968, and served four terms from 1969-1977. He ran unsuccessfully for a fifth term in November, 1976. The unpopularity of the Board of Elections, of which he was Secretary, may have been the reason he lost the election. After his service as Secretary of State, he worked for the Federal Election Commission as director of state relations. Thomas died on November 2, 1991.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The bulk of Secretary of State Richard Thomas' records concern elections and election law. Included is an essay by Deputy Secretary of State James Sanderson on voting in Vermont and correspondence on residency requirements for voting. Attempts by third parties (such as Independent Vermonters, the Liberty Union Party, Libertarian Party, the U.S. Labor Party and "McCarthy '76") to get on the ballot are well-documented. There is material on the Board of Elections, primarily the files of Deputy Secretary of State Robert Gibson. These records include correspondence on the legislative intent of the responsibilities of the Election Board, on Board appropriations, the reporting of campaign finance violations to the Attorney General, voting machine regulations, the maintenance of checklists, and ballot security. Included is a letter from Governor Thomas Salmon on why he vetoed H.51 (1975), an election bill. There is material on the 1976 court case which several town clerks brought against the Board of Elections and the Secretary of State for establishing regulations difficult to adhere to before the 1976 election.

There is also correspondence concerning corporations and the problems of deceptively similar tradenames, and letters to businesses not registered to conduct business in Vermont as well as correspondence about a church which was illegally selling divinity degrees. There is some correspondence on the legality of an adult bookstore in Berlin, and Thomas' decision not to dissolve its charter. There is material on the structure and the functions of the Office of the Secretary of State, the 1974 proposed constitutional amendment to abolish justice courts in favor of a district court system, the Billboard law, and vital records.

There is related material in the records of the Board of Elections.