

The Administration's Indiana Ally:  
Governor Oliver P. Morton's  
Relationship With The Lincoln Administration  
During The American Civil War

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Oliver Hazard Perry Throck Morton served two terms as governor of Indiana from 1861 to 1867. Disgusted with the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854, Morton abandoned the Democrats for the new Republican Party. Although he failed in his attempt to win the governorship in 1856, Indiana Republicans chose Morton as Henry Lane's running mate in 1860. Lane won the governorship, but the Indiana General Assembly elected him to the US Senate shortly after inauguration. Lane's promotion elevated Morton from Lieutenant Governor to Governor, a position he would hold until after the Civil War. As Governor, Morton would frequently correspond with President Abraham Lincoln and the two men who served as Secretary of War, Simon Cameron and Edwin Stanton. While Morton sometimes disagreed with Lincoln and the War Department and sought to preserve state sovereignty, Indiana had one of the most energetic and dedicated war governors who worked toward the same goals as the Lincoln administration.<sup>1</sup>

Indiana had a complicated political landscape when Morton became governor in 1861. There were north-south political divisions that mimicked the country as a whole. The southern counties were mostly Democrats and tied to the South by the history of the residents, proximity to Kentucky, and economic connections via the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. Railroads and the Great Lakes connected the northern part of the state was better connected with the rest of the North. Indiana Democrats were divided between factions lead by Joseph Wright and Senator Jesse Bright. Bright had led a vigorous campaign in 1860 against Stephen Douglas and in favor of John C. Breckenridge. Yet the same state that chose a Senator as pro-South as Bright had also elected Representative George Julian, a Radical Republican. As in most northern states, the Indiana Republican Party had formed from a coalition of Whigs, anti-slavery Democrats, Free Soilers, and Know Nothings. The Lane/Morton ticket had teamed a former Whig with a former

<sup>1</sup> A. James Fuller, "Oliver P. Morton and Civil War Politics in Indiana." *Indiana Historical Bureau*. Web. 4 Apr. 2013. <<http://www.in.gov/history/3996.htm>>.

Democrat. Besides the conflicting conservative, moderate, and radical outlooks, the Republicans were further divided by partisan rivalries between Morton, Julian, and Representative Schuyler Colfax.<sup>2</sup>

Even before secession began, Morton expressed dedication to preserving the Union by force if necessary. He did not believe the Constitution allowed states to leave the Union and that the secession of any state would lead to the dissolution of the entire nation. In a speech in late November 1860, he declared “If it was worth a bloody struggle to establish this nation, it is worth one to preserve it.” Similarities between this speech and Abraham Lincoln’s inaugural address a few months later suggest the two speakers held similar opinions against secession. The events at Fort Sumter caused a surge of pro-Union sentiment in Indiana.<sup>3</sup>

Morton made prompt use of the post-Sumter patriotism to secure funds for Indiana’s war effort. The Indiana General Assembly readily acquiesced to the governor’s requests. These included an allocation of \$500,000 to purchase weapons, a sale of \$2 million in state bonds to secure additional funding, a \$100,000 contingency fund, and expanded authority over the state militia.<sup>4</sup>

The governor also called for Republicans and Democrats to set aside their partisan differences for the duration of the conflict. In a demonstration of such nonpartisanship, Morton appointed Lew Wallace to the post of adjutant general. Wallace was a Mexican War veteran, but also a Democrat. He promptly set up Camp Morton at the state fairgrounds in Indianapolis to

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<sup>2</sup> Fuller.

<sup>3</sup> Foulke, *Life of Oliver P. Morton* (Indianapolis: The Bowen-Merrill Company, 1899), 85-94; Emma Lou Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War Era* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1965), 95, 102-104.

<sup>4</sup> Fuller.

receive, organize, and train volunteers. Morton also crossed party lines to appoint Robert Dale Owen an Agent of the State responsible for securing arms and ammunition for Indiana volunteers. Owen would continue in this role until February 1864. Morton would commission a number of other Democrats as regimental officers during the course of the war.<sup>5</sup>

Morton was an energetic and effective recruiter who put his organizational skills to work from the moment he took office. He determined civil war was inevitable even before southerners fired on Fort Sumter. The governor attempted to secure muskets to arm Indiana troops before the war started and before volunteers had been called for. Meeting with Lincoln in Washington in March 1861, Morton promised to support any “vigorous policy” with 6,000 troops. In response to Lincoln’s first call for volunteers, Morton raised his previous offer to 10,000 volunteers. The War Department responded that Indiana’s quota was only six regiments totaling 4,683 men. Morton’s offer underestimated the enthusiasm of his state: over 12,000 Indianans volunteered in the first week.<sup>6</sup>

Morton repeatedly offered additional regiments to the war department, but was rebuffed by then Secretary of War Simon Cameron. Rather than turn the remaining volunteers away, the governor persuaded the state legislature to pass a bill that organized six additional regiments. These extra regiments would serve the state for twelve months, with the governor empowered to use them to fill any subsequent enlistment requests from Washington. In May, four of these regiments filled Indiana’s quota for the next call for volunteers after accepting an extension of their terms of service to 3 years. The other two state regiments joined national service in July.

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<sup>5</sup> Thornbrough, 165.

<sup>6</sup> Kenneth M. Stamp, *Indiana Politics During The Civil War* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1949), 68-70; Fuller; Foulke, 113.

When the 90 day enlistments of the first six regiments expired in July, most also reenlisted for 3 year terms.<sup>7</sup>

Morton also set up a state arsenal in Indianapolis. This was not directly permitted by the state constitution, but the governor considered it a power implied by the weapons purchasing legislation. Secretary of War Simon Cameron visited the facility in October 1861, gave it his approval, and asked that it continue operation. The head of federal ordinance later called for the plant to be closed, but Morton successfully appealed to new Secretary of War Edwin Stanton to keep it open. A federal arsenal opened in Indianapolis in 1863, but the state arsenal did not finally close until April 1864. Final bookkeeping showed the arsenal had turned a profit.<sup>8</sup>

While the Secretary of War endorsed Indiana's state arsenal, other efforts by Morton to procure arms and supplies were less appreciated. Competition between state purchasing agents like Robert Dale Owen and their federal counterparts inflated prices. Morton ignored repeated orders from the Secretary of War and Army Quartermaster to stop such purchases. The Indiana governor was determined to ensure his state's troops were well equipped. Morton also violated federal orders against issuing uniforms to volunteers before their company was mustered in. Instead, uniforms were issued to Indiana volunteers upon enlistment because Morton believed it good for recruiting and morale.<sup>9</sup>

Procurement of arms was not the only aspect of the war where Morton tried to preserve state sovereignty. He set up an Indiana Sanitary Commission and successfully kept it separate

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<sup>7</sup> Foulke, 128-129; Fuller; Thornbrough, 104, 107, 125-126.

<sup>8</sup> Thornbrough, 165-167.

<sup>9</sup> Thornbrough, 167.

from the U.S. Sanitary Commission. Early in the war, Morton persuaded the Indiana General Assembly to authorize local taxes to support families of volunteers. In 1865, Morton got the Assembly to pass a special state tax because the local taxes were proving inconsistent and ineffective. After the federal government had taken responsibility for feeding troops, Morton sent the state Commissary General on visit Indiana regiments in the field and ensure they remained well taken care of.<sup>10</sup>

Relations between Oliver Morton and Edwin Stanton were better than those between Morton and the previous Secretary of War, Simon Cameron. Morton and Stanton would eventually get along very well, but during Stanton's first year there would be several disagreements and sharp exchanges. In August 1862, a frustrated Secretary of War promised "The Department will furnish the best material it can, but without any hope of preventing complaints or avoiding dissatisfaction."<sup>11</sup> Morton replied that he regretted that his suggestions and complaints were construed as complaints. The next month, Morton had a disagreement with Stanton over a new prohibition against officers being promoted out of existing regiments to command new regiments. Morton wanted to place experienced officers in command of regiments full of inexperienced soldiers, but the Secretary of War insisted no officers could be spared from the field.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Thornbrough, 169, 170, 175-178.

<sup>11</sup> United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Series 3, Volume 2, 375-376 [hereafter cited as *OR*].

<sup>12</sup> Oliver Morton to Abraham Lincoln, 6 Sep 1862, Abraham Lincoln Papers, American Memory from the Library of Congress, Web <<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/alhtml/malhome.html>>.

Oliver Morton's four years of dedication to Indiana's soldiers earned him a well-deserved reputation as "The Soldiers' Friend." In November 1862, he appealed to Congress to increase soldiers' pay. In addition to his political efforts, Morton frequently visited Indiana soldiers in camp throughout the war. His support was surely a factor in keeping Indiana soldiers in the army: when their terms expired in 1864, three quarters of surviving 1861 three year men reenlisted. For the entire war, Indiana had one of the highest contributions in terms of percentage of military age men who served.<sup>13</sup>

As much as Indiana soldiers appreciated Morton's concern for their condition it also caused conflict with the federal government and army. Efforts to bring sick and wounded troops home while they recuperated lead to clashes with generals who believed it was demoralizing to the army as a whole. Morton repeatedly went over the heads of generals to Secretary of War Stanton and usually succeeded in getting furloughs for the sick and wounded. Other clashes came over efforts to get additional clothing to Indiana soldiers and Morton's insistence in keeping the Indiana Sanitary Commission independent.<sup>14</sup>

Morton did complain to Lincoln on several occasions about the appointment of officers in Indiana regiments without his consent. As governor, Morton had the right to appoint all Company and Regimental officers and he commissioned more than 18,000 officers during the war. In June 1861, Morton protested Lincoln's appointment of colonels for three of the six new Indiana regiments. The next month, Morton insisted he have input on which men were made brigadiers of Indiana volunteers. In January 1863, Morton telegraphed Lincoln to protest the

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<sup>13</sup> Oliver Morton to Congress, 29 Nov 1862, Lincoln Papers; Thornbrough, 124, 134, 169.

<sup>14</sup> Thornbrough, 171, 174-175

promotion of Walter Gresham to Brigadier General, calling him “incompetent & unworthy.”<sup>15</sup> At the time, Gresham was Colonel of the 53<sup>rd</sup> Indiana and a political rival of Morton. Despite the governor’s possible bias, the telegram may have had some impact as Gresham’s promotion did not occur until August. Overall, Lincoln seemed receptive to Morton’s opinions even if he did not always follow them.<sup>16</sup>

The military situation in Kentucky frequently concerned Oliver Morton during the first part of the war. He found Lincoln’s policy of inaction towards Kentucky very frustrating and wanted to occupy strategic points in the border state. In August 1861, Morton requested muskets to arm Kentucky unionists. Once Confederate forces finally entered Kentucky, Morton became anxious about the danger posed to Louisville, just across the Ohio River from Indiana. He sent several worried telegrams to Lincoln in late September 1861 that expressed concern that Lincoln did not respect his opinion and did not appreciate the Confederate threat in Kentucky. Morton reminded Lincoln that “the hands of men who labor without ceasing to sustain the Government should be help up and not deposed by indifference to their recommendations or demands.”<sup>17</sup> Morton protested the suspension of recruiting in April 1862 and was among those who actively lobbied for Buell’s removal from army command later that same year.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Oliver Morton to Abraham Lincoln, 15 Jan 1863. Information about Gresham is annotated on the American Memory transcription of this telegraph.

<sup>16</sup> Stampp, 89; Thornbrough 128; Oliver Morton to Abraham Lincoln, 19 June 1861, Lincoln Papers; Oliver Morton to Abraham Lincoln, 31 July 1861, Lincoln Papers.

<sup>17</sup> Quoted in Thornbrough, 108.

<sup>18</sup> Thornbrough, 108; Oliver Morton to Abraham Lincoln, 3 Aug 1861, Lincoln Papers; Oliver Morton to Abraham Lincoln, 26 Sep 1861, Lincoln Papers; Oliver Morton to Abraham Lincoln, 28 Sep 1861, Lincoln Papers; Thornbrough, 131, 175; OR, Series 1, Volume 16, Part 2, 634; Foulk, 196-198.



Lincoln usually responded to Morton's concerns with his usual patience. A late September 1861 letter is typical of Lincoln's style. In response to a series of worried telegrams, Lincoln acknowledged the shortage of muskets and calmly explains the situation:

You do not receive arms from us as fast as you need them, but it is because we have not near enough to meet all the pressing demands; and we are obliged to share around what we have, sending the larger share to the points which appear to need them most. We have great hope that our own supply will be ample before long, so that you and all others can have as many as you need.<sup>19</sup>

Lincoln did express concern about an article in an Indianapolis newspaper that criticized the president for not responding to Morton's letters. The governor responded that he had nothing to do with the article and assured the president that he sought to give Lincoln's administration "strength in every possible way."<sup>20</sup> Aware of the situation after a meeting with Morton, Richard W. Thompson also wrote Lincoln to assure the president that he had "not a more zealous supporter in the country" than the governor of Indiana.<sup>21</sup>

Morton was among the participants in the Appeal of the Governors. On Lincoln's behalf, Secretary of State William Seward privately contacted numerous war governors and asked them to request conscription. On July 9, 1862, Morton and his cabinet wrote to Lincoln to "urge upon you the vital importance of procuring the passage of a law by Congress by which men can be drafted into the Army" to spurn enlistments. The draft would prove mostly unnecessary in Indiana as the state would fill its quotas entirely with volunteers until autumn 1864.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Abraham Lincoln to Oliver Morton, 29 Sep 1861, Lincoln Papers.

<sup>20</sup> Oliver Morton to Abraham Lincoln, 7 Oct 1861, Lincoln Papers.

<sup>21</sup> Richard Thompson to Abraham Lincoln, 6 Oct 1861, Lincoln Papers.

<sup>22</sup> Stamp, 143; OR, Series 3, Volume 2, 212-213; Thornbrough, 131.

Despite having been advocated the draft in 1862, Morton sought to avoid or delay its implementation on several occasions. When informed that some Indiana districts had not met their quotas in early 1864, Morton successfully argued that this was irrelevant because the state had overall exceeded its quota. In September 1864, he unsuccessfully requested a postponement under the belief that the draft would be bad for the upcoming elections. In February 1865, Morton appealed to Lincoln to extend Indiana's time to fill her latest quota of troops.<sup>23</sup>

While he had been a proponent of the original state draft in 1862, Morton had some concerns about the Conscription Act of 1863 that created the federal draft. In particular, he disliked the option for draftees to pay for exemption or hire substitutes, believing it created a great deal of "ill feeling" among the poorer classes toward the government. He also believed Peace Democrats in Indiana were collecting money to provide exemptions or substitutes for any anti-war Indianans who could not afford their own.<sup>24</sup>

Although no draft was necessary in Indiana in 1863, sporadic anti-draft violence still broke out. Morton declined a suggestion by General Burnside to declare martial law. The governor did issue a June 1863 proclamation that warned interference with the draft would not be tolerated. Morton also appointed a commission to investigate a shooting in Brown County that was suspected of being draft-related.<sup>25</sup>

Morton was among the governors who participated in the Hundred Days system, brainchild of Ohio Governor John Brough in April 1864. The plan was quickly approved by

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<sup>23</sup> Stamp, 227; Thornbrough, 134; Wilfred A. Harbison, "Indiana Republicans and the Re-election of President Lincoln," *Indiana Magazine of History* (Mar. 1938), 61; OR, Series 3, Volume 4, Part 1, 1169-1170.

<sup>24</sup> Oliver Morton to Abraham Lincoln, 6 Mar 1863, Lincoln Papers.

<sup>25</sup> Thornbrough, 201; Stamp, 204; OR, Series 3, Volume 3, 392.

Grant, Stanton, and Lincoln. Hundred Days Men were volunteers (usually from state militias) that enlisted for one hundred days, starting in May 1864. These inexperienced soldiers performed garrison and guard duty in Tennessee and northern Alabama, freeing up veteran soldiers for use in Sherman's Atlanta campaign. Indiana contributed approximately 7,000 Hundred Days Men, although this was far less than Morton had originally intended.<sup>26</sup>

In addition to supporting the war with constant efforts to raise and equip new units, Morton also supported the expanding nature of the war. When Jesse Bright was expelled from the US Senate in 1862, Morton made one of his cross-party appointments by selecting Joseph Wright. Wright was the leading War Democrat in Indiana, but before making the appointment the Republican governor privately demanded assurances that Wright "truly supported the war [and] that he would not oppose the confiscation of rebel property – including slaves..."<sup>27</sup>

The expansion of war aims caused a great deal of tension in Indiana. Most of the pro-war sentiment after Fort Sumter was only in favor of restoring the Union. In the special legislative session in 1861, both houses of the Indiana state legislature passed resolutions that the men and money of the state should not be used in any "aggression upon the institution of slavery." Throughout 1861, Democratic newspapers and Democratic conventions in Indiana condemned any attempt to arm blacks or turn the war into an attack on slavery. No efforts were made to change the 1851 state constitution had prohibited blacks from settling in Indiana. Although it continued to reelect Radical Republican George Julian, Indiana remained one of the most conservative states in the North.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Thornbrough, 135; OR, Series 3, Volume 4, Part 1, 237-239; Oliver Morton to Abraham Lincoln, 21 May 1864, Lincoln Papers.

<sup>27</sup> Fuller; Thornbrough, 116.

<sup>28</sup> Thornbrough, 111-112.

Morton was personally opposed to slavery, but on numerous occasions before and during the war chose to focus on the restoration of the Union. He recognized this would be more effective in Indiana at rallying support for the war. He was among the seventeen governors who endorsed emancipation at the Altoona War Governors Conference in September 1862. The next month, Morton defended emancipation as a “stratagem of war.”<sup>29</sup> He did so in the face of criticism from the Democratic press in Indiana which denounced the Emancipation Proclamation as a confession of weakness and proof that the war had been an abolition crusade all along. In a January 9, 1863 speech to the state legislature, Morton made the lukewarm declaration that “it remains to be seen what effect this proclamation will have in suppressing the rebellion” but insisted that “the authority upon which it was issued is beyond question.”<sup>30</sup> By February 1864, Morton had publicly taken higher ground on the issue of slavery. In a speech before the Union state convention, he declared emancipation “sanctioned by the laws of war and upheld by the constitution...in especial harmony with the principles of Eternal Justice.”<sup>31</sup>

Some of the few blacks in Indiana tried to volunteer to serve in Indiana regiments, but were turned down by Morton. As a result, some Indiana blacks joined the famous 54<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts before Morton changed his mind. Indiana began accepting black volunteers in November 1863 and enough joined to form a single regiment, the 28<sup>th</sup> Indiana Colored Infantry. Indiana residents became more willing to enlist blacks as the war went on, motivated by the realization that every black man who fought was one less white man who might be drafted.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Thornbrough, 121.

<sup>30</sup> William Terrell, *Indiana in the War of the Rebellion* (Indianapolis: Douglass & Conner, 1869), 316.

<sup>31</sup> Quoted in Thornbrough, 199-200; Foulke, 207; Stampp, 147.

<sup>32</sup> Thornbrough, 138.

Combined with setbacks to the Union war effort, opposition to the Emancipation Proclamation helped Democrats win a large majority in the Indiana General Assembly in the October 1862 elections. The new Democrat legislature elected anti-Morton Democrat Thomas Hendricks to the US Senate and passed resolutions denouncing Lincoln and Morton. The Democrats' next goal was the Military Bill that would take away the governor's control over raising militia regiments and appointing their officers; this responsibility would instead be given to a new state military board made up of Democrats. The Republican minority resorted to bolting the session to deny a quorum and thus prevent passage of the military bill. Although Morton could have vetoed the bill, the Indiana state constitution at the time only required a simple majority in the legislature to overturn the governor's veto. The session ended without the passage of the Military Bill, but also without an appropriations bill and thus without a state budget.<sup>33</sup>

Rather than call a special session of the now hostile state legislature, Oliver Morton embarked on a period dubbed "One Man Rule." He traveled to Washington where he met Lincoln and Chase, but both felt they had no legal grounds to provide the funds Morton needed. The governor then turned to Edwin Stanton for funding from the War Department. Stanton successfully acquired the necessary funds, in part from a loose interpretation of an 1861 military appropriations bill intended to help states threatened with rebellion. Some funds were advanced against Morton's personal credit. The governor secured additional funding via New York bank loans and from Republican-controlled counties in Indiana. Morton kept personal control of this outside funding and successfully operated the state government despite the dubious legality of

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<sup>33</sup> Towne; Foulke, 236-239. The General Assembly elected Hendricks to finish the term of Jesse Bright. Morton had appointed Joseph Wright to temporarily fill the seat because the legislature was out of session.

his actions. Morton finally reconvened the State Assembly in January 1865 after the October 1864 elections returned Republicans to the majority.<sup>34</sup>

Despite his willingness to stretch laws for the war effort, Morton wanted to do so only when he believed it absolutely necessary. In April 1863, General Burnside issued his General Order No. 38 which created very broad conditions in which someone might be tried for treason and executed or exiled. Although aimed at Clement Vallandigham and his Ohio Copperheads, the order applied to Burnside's entire military department which included Indiana. Morton protested this order in a letter to Lincoln the next month on the grounds that the order violated an act of Congress from March. Besides circumventing the federal government, the governor believed "that the effect of the order is bad, and that it has wholly failed to accomplish the purpose for which it was intended." On the contrary, it was unnecessarily antagonizing the populace and increasing support for the Peace Democrats. Any such measures should come from "the highest authority" not a military department commander. But Morton did not believe such measures were necessary. "The preservation of the peace and loyalty of the North Western States," he declared, "had better be left with the State authorities, to be aided and supported by federal power when necessary."<sup>35</sup>

Morton's opposition to General Order 38 was not due to a lack of Copperheads in Indiana. Anti-war Democrats caused Morton concern throughout much of the Civil War. In June 1862, he wrote Secretary of War Stanton "to call your especial attention to certain matters existing in this State which, in my judgment, deeply concern the welfare and interest of both the State and General Governments." Particularly worrisome were a number of newspapers that

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<sup>34</sup> Foulke, 260-261; Stampp, 227.

<sup>35</sup> Oliver Morton to Abraham Lincoln, 30 May 1863, Lincoln Papers.

regularly published articles Morton considered disloyal if not treasonous. The governor deemed it “of vital importance to the Government that immediate, vigorous and effective steps be taken to break up these unlawful and dangerous combinations” in Indiana. In February 1863, as the battle between the governor and state legislature heated up, Morton wrote Lincoln with great concern about Copperhead activity. He warned of secret societies, especially the Knights of the Golden Circle, and a conspiracy to form a Northwestern Confederacy. The governor advised that securing the rest of the Mississippi River and reopening it to commercial traffic was the best way to ensure the loyalty of citizens in states like Indiana. It is unclear how seriously Lincoln and Stanton took these warnings.<sup>36</sup>

Radical Copperheads did give Morton a major public relations victory in time for the 1864 elections. While Morton questioned the loyalty of Democrats in general, he kept a particularly close eye on a group called the Sons of Liberty. Spies turned up a planned uprising by Harrison Dodd, Grand Commander of the Sons of Liberty in Indiana. Morton held off the arrest of Dodd and the confiscation of his personal correspondence (and a suspicious cache of firearms) until September 1864, the month before state elections. Democrat leaders in Indiana had not supported Dodd, but the damage was done. The timing of the arrest of Dodd and several alleged accomplices helped discredit the Democrats and elect a Republican majority in the State Assembly.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Oliver Morton to Edwin Stanton, 25 June 1862, Lincoln Papers; Oliver Morton to Abraham Lincoln, 9 Feb 1863, Lincoln Papers; Towne. There seems to be much debate about how serious the threat of groups like the KGC actually was. David Keehn’s forthcoming *Knights of the Golden Circle: Secret Empire, Southern Secession, Civil War* will apparently argue the threat was serious.

<sup>37</sup> Thornbrough, 216-219.

During the 1864 election season, Morton's support for war effort remained strong, although he privately told Lincoln that it was important that the war end before the end of the year. There were Republican factions in Indiana favoring John C. Fremont or Salmon P. Chase over Lincoln, but they were unable to gain support from any of the state's major politicians like George Julian, Schuyler Colfax, or Morton. The Indiana governor had rebuffed efforts by Chase supporters in October 1863 and likewise rebuffed a few local efforts to put forward Morton's name as a presidential candidate. From the beginning of the war, Morton tried to form a coalition of Republicans and War Democrats. This alliance amongst politicians expanded into local Union Leagues in 1863 as a counter to the growing Copperhead movement. In February 1864, the Union State Convention at Indianapolis in successfully nominated a ticket that included Lincoln for president and Morton for governor. The governor was able to run for reelection on a technicality: although the state constitution did not permit election to multiple terms as governor, Morton had officially been elected Lieutenant Governor in 1860.<sup>38</sup>

After Lincoln received the national Union Party nomination in June 1864, ratification meetings were held in Indiana to garner support. Governor Morton spoke at the meeting in Indianapolis where he denounced Fremont's rival candidacy and declared support for Lincoln. Author Winfred Harbison summarized Morton's speech as follows: "the President, despite his occasional errors and apparent slowness, still remained the unbounded confidence of the people...the masses believed in him because of his simplicity and directness of character, his keen sense of humor, [and] his unswerving integrity."<sup>39</sup> Morton urged Joseph Holt, Judge

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<sup>38</sup> Thornbrough, 209-210; Harbison, 43, 47-53.

<sup>39</sup> Harbison, 57-58.



Advocate General and native of Kentucky, to come to Indiana and campaign for the Union Party. Morton also appealed to Lincoln for funds to help Union Party political campaigns in Indiana.<sup>40</sup>

Indiana was among the states without absentee voting for soldiers so Morton campaigned vigorously for furloughs to allow soldiers to vote. He wrote several letters to Lincoln and Stanton and visited Washington, D.C. personally. In September 1864, a letter signed by Morton, Colfax, and other Indiana Republicans asked for at least 15,000 furloughs and postponement of the draft until after the election. General Sherman vehemently objected to any postponement of the draft and insisted he could not spare men for voting furloughs. At Lincoln's request, Sherman did acquiesce to furloughs for sick and wounded soldiers. Morton and his agents managed to get over 9,000 such men home in time for the October 11 state elections. Immediately afterwards, Morton appealed to Lincoln and Stanton to extend these furloughs long enough to vote in the November national election. Lincoln declined to press Sherman on the issue, but deferred to Stanton who approved of the extensions. In addition to these furloughs, Morton also kept new regiments in Indiana until after the elections. These efforts proved unnecessary: Lincoln won the state in November 1864 by 20,000 votes, more than twice the number of soldiers that the governor had brought home.<sup>41</sup>

Oliver Morton had a sometimes strained, but generally positive relationship with the Lincoln administration. Morton seems to have had better relations with Stanton than Lincoln and could nearly always count on the Secretary of War's support after 1862. Morton did not

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<sup>40</sup> Harbison, 60; Oliver Morton to Abraham Lincoln, 9 Aug 1864, Lincoln Papers.

<sup>41</sup> Thornbrough, 220-222; Harbison, 61; Stamp, 251-252; OR, Series 3, Volume 4, Part 1, 732; Oliver Morton to Abraham Lincoln, 12 Oct 1864, Lincoln Papers; Oliver Morton to Abraham Lincoln, 13 Oct 1864, Lincoln Papers; Oliver Morton to Abraham Lincoln & Edwin Stanton (Oct 13, 1864, Lincoln Papers; Foulke, 365-370. There are some discrepancies between different sources regarding the details of the Indiana voting furloughs. Stamp seems to offer the best and most complete explanation.

always see eye to eye with Lincoln about the finer points of how to conduct the Civil War, but the governor and the president do not seem to have disagreed on any major policy issues.

Morton recognized his important role in keeping Indiana in the Union and committed to the war despite internal strife and political conflict. His disagreements with Lincoln were usually well-intended. Indiana soldiers liked to call their governor “The Soldier’s Friend,” but he was also the administration’s ally.

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