

House Gets Elections Chief Bill

An amended version of a bill stripping the Fulton County ordinary of election duties passed

the Senate Thursday and was sent back to the House.

The bill sets up a bi-partisan election board with power to employ an election supervisor. The legislation removes the responsibility of elections from the jurisdiction of Ordinary Eugene Gunby.



Rep. Hamilton

An amendment to leave Chief Registrar Leon Hay as a department head—free from supervision of the board—was tacked to the House-approved legislation.

Hay actively lobbied against the section which would make him answerable to the election supervisor and board. His staff also got into the controversy—writing letters to the newspapers and legislators.

Rep. Grace Hamilton, author of the bill, said Thursday she was not pleased with the Senate amendment, but would go along with it. She said it was too late in the session to disagree.

The bill fails to correct one of the primary ills of Fulton's election machinery. Officials of both political parties have voiced the opinion that the elections should be under one person and not spread over several departments.

Hay's office is charged with registering voters and preparing absentee ballots. The ordinary is in charge of the actual election.

The past election revealed little coordination between the two offices. Hay is appointed by the County Commission and thus is not answerable to Gunby who is elected. Gunby did not oppose the bill.

With passage of the bill, the running of elections would be in the hands of the board and supervisor and amounts to nothing more than a shift of powers. Hay will still remain in a quasi-autonomous position.

The Senate also passed a resolution which sets up a study committee for the purpose of investigating the possibility of merging the Fulton County and Atlanta schools systems.