Dec. 17, 1861

*This Date in Missouri Senate History*

On *This Date in Missouri Senate History*, the date was Dec. 17, 1861, the day a test oath for state voters took effect.

Following an attempt to make state civil servants take a loyalty oath — or be removed from office — the same concept was created for voters. Both of these moves came about after Confederate soldiers took over the state Capitol and forced a move of existing officeholders to Neosho, at the start of the Civil War.

The loyalty oath for civil officers only lasted two months, and ended on the same day as the voters’ oath began.

The loyalty oath required voters to swear they would not give aid or comfort to the enemies of either the federal government or Missouri’s provisional government. Also, oath-takers were to vow they had not levied war or taken up arms against either Missouri’s provisional or the federal government since Dec. 17, 1861.

Afterward, the U.S. Supreme Court would find the oath to be unconstitutional. Within four years, Missouri would then draft a new constitution of its own.

Dec. 17, 1861, the date marking the beginning of Missouri’s test oath for voters, on *This Date in Missouri Senate History*.

(Sources: *History of Missouri: A Text Book of State History for Use in Elementary Schools* and *The Government of the People of the State of Missouri*)