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A governor is removed

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In light of the recent resignation of our governor, it's perhaps interesting to look back in time when another governor found himself in a mess. That would be Gov. William Sulzer, a Democrat, who was elected in 1912 and served as governor from Jan. 1, 1913, to Oct. 17, 1913, 95 years ago.

Today nobody remembers Sulzer, who is pictured here, or why he was removed. Our assemblyman at the time, Democrat Marc Cole of Eagle Harbor, played a role in Sulzer's removal and ultimately committed political suicide, as he was only elected to one term, 1913-14.

To make a long story short, Sulzer, once he was elected, tried to clean up party bossism and the power of Tammany Hall. However, by August 1913, the Legislature voted to impeach Sulzer.

Cole supported this endeavor. He stated: "Friends of Gov. Sulzer should welcome the opportunity of a fair trial ... before the court of impeachment."

However, a local newspaper published the opinion: "The people know that the governor is really impeached for the good he has tried to do since becoming governor and not for illegal irregularities previous to his assumption of the office."

However, there were "irregularities" in Sulzer's campaign financing. Cole even said that Mrs. Sulzer on several occasions took the train into Canada and banked money.

At any rate, Sulzer stood between the party bosses and their control of the affairs of the Empire State.

Four articles of impeachment were brought against Sulzer:

Article I — That Governor Sulzer filed with the secretary of state a false statement



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of his receipts and other monetary transactions involved in his gubernatorial campaign. **(GUILTY)**

Article II — That he committed perjury in his statement to the secretary of state relative to receipts and expenditures. **(GUILTY)**

Article III — That he bribed witnesses to withhold testimony from the legislative committee which investigated his campaign

expenditures and receipts. **(NOT GUILTY)**

Article IV — That he suppressed evidence by means of threat to keep witnesses from testifying before the legislative investigation committee. **(GUILTY)**

On Oct. 17, 1913, the High Court of Impeachment, in a decision of 43-12, voted to remove William Sulzer as governor. On the same day, acting Gov. Martin H. Glynn, a Democrat, was sworn into office.

Consequently, assemblymen such as Cole and senators who supported impeachment were seen as backing the party bosses. At the time Cole stated: "I voted to impeach the governor just as a grand jury would vote to indict if the charges warranted an indictment — the desires of my constituents or the desires of any political organization or faction thereof did not, or could not, influence me without causing me to violate my oath of office."