

Alabama

Council NEWSLETTER

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"AN ORGANIZATION TO ATTAIN, THROUGH RESEARCH AND EDUCATION, EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL PEOPLE OF ALABAMA"

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NEGRO VOTING IN ALABAMA

Although the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution set forth the Negro's right to vote ninety years ago, it remains as little more than an ideal for three-quarters of the adult colored people of the South today. Progress in healing this major weakness in American democracy has been largely confined to the post-war period and this in the face of almost constant opposition.

The year 1959 saw fresh efforts launched to remove such obstacles. The new Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department initiated key voter registrar suits in Georgia, Alabama and Louisiana, while at the year's end the N.A.A.C.P. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference kicked-off a large scale joint grass roots campaign to double the present 1,400,000 Negro voters in the South by the presidential election next November. These efforts will be felt in Alabama during 1960 so it is well that we understand our situation.

What Is The Background Of Negro Voting In Alabama?

As a result of the restrictions of the white primary and the Boswell Amendment, Negro registration stood at only approximately 6,000 in 1947. It was only after these were invalidated and subsequently replaced by the present Voters' Qualification Amendment of 1951 that registration began to climb - 25,224 by 1952, 53,366 by 1956 and 73,272 by 1958. (Registration in the rest of the Deep South in 1958: La. - 131,068; Miss. - 20,000; Ga. - 161,958; S. C. - 57,978.)

What Are The Criteria For Voting?

In addition to the usual poll tax, age, residence and character requirements, the law permits registrars to give a stiff literacy test of twenty-one questions which the Educational Interpretation Service at Auburn found could be read only by persons with at least an eighth grade education (Alabama educational median - 7.9 years of schooling). Local registrars grade this test in different ways and most take the liberty of imposing additional requirements. The net result is that there are almost sixty-seven different sets of criteria for voting in Alabama under the Voters Qualification Act.

How Has This System Discriminated Against The Negro?

Statistical comparisons provide the best answer as found on page 2. Source of figures: population - U.S. Census Bureau, 1950; registration - "Birmingham News", Feb. 17, 1959, A.C.H.R. studies. In the absence of any official statewide registration figures by race, those used here are probably the most accurate available even though some are estimates. These were used by the Civil Rights Commission for its 1959 report. The last column is original with us and indicates something of the degree of registration discrimination in most counties. However, allowance should be made for Negro lethargy and educational levels. Generally, the lower the figure, the less the discrimination.

What Do These Figures Mean?

Statistics never convey the whole picture, but with 67% of the white potential voters registered and only 15% of the Negro, obviously discrimination is wide-spread being overtly employed in varying degrees in probably three-fourths of our counties generally ranging in intensity north and south from the Black Belt.

Are Boards Of Registrars Wholly To Blame?

No. A significant segment of the adult Negroes in most Black Belt Counties were not provided an education by the state which would permit them to reach state voter standards. Negro lethargy is another factor, but here again the larger white community past and present bears some guilt in that many adult Negroes are not interested in such rights having been "conditioned" by a "white supremacy" childhood and denied any real access to the ballot box until just twelve years ago. In some Black Belt Counties the lack of economic and physical security is very real, particularly in voteless Wilcox and Lowndes counties where horrible stories of violence for much less than attempted registration have come out through the "grapevine" for years.

What Boards Have Non-Racial Practices?

Negroes report no registration discrimination in the Tri-Cities, Decatur, Huntsville, Jasper, Gadsden, Anniston, Dothan and Mobile. Voters' League activity in Colbert and Morgan Counties have overcome lethargy to the extent that the proportion of Negroes registered to their potential strength is equal to that of the white while in Lauderdale County they have exceeded the white proportion!

Where Will Increased Negro Voting Be Felt Most Readily?

Below is the percentage of Negro voters in the electorate of each county:

Autauga	2	Connecuh	11	Houston	15	Morgan	15
Baldwin	3	Coosa	11	Jackson	5	Perry	5
Barbour	7	Covington	3	Jefferson	9	Pickens	9
Bibb	3	Crenshaw	7	Lamar	2	Pike	9
Blount	.9	Cullman	.6	Lauderdale	20	Randolph	3
Bullock	.2	Dale	3	Lawrence	8	Russell	6
Butler	7	Dallas	4	Lee	7	St. Clair	8
Calhoun	8	DeKalb	2	Limestone	5	Shelby	8
Chambers	5	Elmore	3	Lowndes	0	Sumter	13
Cherokee	5	Escambia	8	Macon	26	Talladega	19
Chilton	3	Etowah	13	Madison	15	Tallapoosa	4
Choctaw	3	Fayette	8	Marengo	2	Tuscaloosa	10
Clarke	6	Franklin	3	Marion	2	Walker	10
Clay	3	Geneva	1	Marshall	.2	Washington	13
Cleburne	1	Greene	10	Mobile	18	Wilcox	0
Coffee	11	Hale	5	Monroe	3	Winston	.01
Colbert	20	Henry	8	Montgomery	10	STATE TOTAL	8

Lauderdale, Colbert, Talladega, Macon and Mobile Counties possess large segments of Negro voters, but only the last three have seen local racial unrest sufficient to cause "bloc-voting". Of these only Macon County has the potential necessary for a majority Negro vote in the foreseeable future. Other counties with 10%+ Negro electorates may see this group, if unified by an issue, constituting a "balance of power" deciding the outcome of elections as happened recently in Montgomery.

What Of The Future?

The Macon County case now before the U.S. Supreme Court, and the registration campaigns now under way will have their effect on Alabama. But whether or not they succeed, YOU have a moral obligation to exercise YOUR potential in behalf of democracy for all people of Alabama. Voting requirements for you, your family and associates: if not a veteran and under 45 pay poll tax by Feb. 1 to vote this year; to register you must be 21 or over, able to read or write, not convicted of any felony, be a resident of state for two years, county one year and precinct three months. Register any first or third Monday. Call Court House for dates in Jefferson, Mobile, Montgomery, Etowah, Calhoun and Tuscaloosa Counties.

IMPORTANT: ACHR ANNUAL MEETING, TALLADEGA COLLEGE, SAT., FEB. 6, 10:30-3:00p.m.

ALABAMA VOTER REGISTRATION STATISTICS

P. 2

County	Total pop. 1950	White pop. over 21 1950	Negro pop. over 21 1950	Whites regis- tered 1958	Negroes regis- tered 1958	%white pop. over 21 regis- tered	% Negro pop. over 21 regis- tered	Diff. in %'s of W. & N.
Autauga	18,186	5,717	4,042	4,616	100	81	3	78
Baldwin	40,997	18,028	4,493	15,520	480	86	11	75
Barbour	28,892	8,012	7,158	6,289	450	79	6	73
Bibb	17,987	6,681	2,801	5,700	200	85	7	78
Blount	28,975	15,369	429	10,900	100	71	23	48
Bullock	16,054	2,633	5,425	2,200	5	81	.09	83
Butler	29,228	9,467	6,024	8,171	629	86	10	76
Calhoun	79,539	37,379	8,504	21,386	1,948	57	24	33
Chambers	39,528	15,710	7,175	12,415	650	79	9	70
Cherokee	17,634	8,821	736	7,600	400	86	54	32
Chilton	26,922	12,888	2,027	11,661	342	91	17	74
Choctaw	19,152	4,914	4,822	5,228	172	100	4	96
Clarke	26,548	7,832	6,434	7,200	450	92	7	85
Clay	13,929	6,934	1,011	6,800	200	98	20	78
Cleburne	11,904	6,058	380	5,742	58	95	15	80
Coffee	30,720	13,516	3,114	11,357	1,375	84	44	40
Colbert	39,561	18,063	4,519	12,800	3,200	71	71	0
Conneaut	21,776	6,734	4,435	5,550	650	82	15	67
Coosa	11,766	4,734	1,828	4,413	550	93	30	63
Covington	40,373	19,986	3,157	16,500	500	83	16	67
Crenshaw	18,981	7,604	2,801	6,947	500	91	18	73
Cullman	49,046	26,538	249	17,825	100	67	40	27
Dale	20,828	9,418	2,454	8,450	300	90	12	78
Dallas	56,270	12,597	18,145	7,480	275	59	2	57
DeKalb	45,048	24,601	443	19,300	300	79	68	11
Elmore	31,649	12,247	5,543	11,300	300	92	5	87
Escambia	31,443	11,767	5,425	11,000	1,000	94	18	76
Etowah	93,892	47,217	7,672	33,005	2,100	70	27	43
Fayette	19,388	9,279	1,497	8,359	750	90	50	40
Franklin	25,705	13,460	700	11,150	350	83	50	33
Geneva	25,899	12,660	1,686	7,490	82	59	5	54
Greene	16,482	1,820	6,628	1,566	174	86	3	83
Hale	20,832	3,680	7,041	3,050	150	83	2	81
Henry	18,674	5,646	4,029	4,751	393	84	10	74
Houston	46,522	19,698	7,211	13,249	2,250	67	31	36
Jackson	38,998	19,381	1,242	12,919	675	67	54	13
Jefferson	558,928	226,280	121,667	119,000	12,000	53	9	44
Lamar	16,441	8,141	1,204	7,925	175	97	15	82
Lauderdale	54,179	26,831	4,022	13,600	3,400	51	85	34
Lawrence	27,128	10,905	3,010	9,200	800	84	27	67
Lee	45,073	16,207	8,954	8,375	625	52	7	45
Limestone	35,766	14,937	4,013	9,585	500	64	13	51
Lowndes	18,018	2,057	6,512	2,306	0	100	0	100
Macon	30,561	3,081	14,539	3,102	1,100	100	8	92
Madison	72,903	30,662	10,333	18,691	3,285	61	32	29
Marengo	29,494	5,456	10,226	5,392	132	99	1	98
Marion	27,264	14,271	384	12,074	219	85	57	28
Marshall	45,090	24,740	604	19,294	37	80	6	74
Mobile	231,105	93,506	45,493	47,560	10,440	51	23	28
Monroe	25,732	7,184	5,914	5,815	160	81	3	78
Montgomery	138,965	51,869	34,079	25,520	2,800	49	8	41
Morgan	52,924	26,602	4,641	14,025	2,475	53	53	0
Perry	20,439	3,757	6,351	4,050	250	100	4	96
Pickens	24,394	7,324	5,547	5,750	550	79	10	69
Pike	30,608	10,062	6,866	7,850	750	78	11	67
Randolph	22,513	9,860	2,728	9,994	306	100	11	89
Russell	40,364	11,860	10,135	8,006	500	68	5	63
St. Clair	26,687	12,125	2,363	8,054	696	66	30	36
Shelby	30,362	13,255	3,356	9,625	875	73	26	47
Sumter	23,610	3,600	8,700	2,875	425	80	5	75
Talladega	63,639	24,317	9,318	14,500	3,500	60	38	22
Tallapoosa	35,074	15,015	5,083	13,400	600	89	12	77
Tuscaloosa	95,092	42,200	14,157	24,151	2,680	57	19	38
Walker	63,769	30,852	3,850	23,240	2,580	75	67	8
Washington	15,612	4,929	2,835	4,850	750	98	27	71
Wilcox	23,476	3,056	8,218	3,040	0	100	0	100
Winston	18,250	9,484	63	8,208	11	87	18	69
Total	3,061,743	1,231,514	516,245	828,946	74,779	67	15	52