

EDITORIAL AND OPINION PAGE

"We cannot know where we are going if we do not know where we have been."



AN EDITORIAL EXPRESSION

House of Representatives passed the Voting Rights

Support for the Voting Rights Act in both the Senate and the Reagan Administration is on shaky ground.

Act by an overwhelming 389 to 64 vote. The House version kept most of the Act intact but amended Section 5, the Justice Dept. pre-clearance provision. The amendment makes it easier for local governments covered by the provision to get out from under special regulations if they have established a 10 year record of non-discrimination. The future of the Voting Rights Act now lies in the decision of the Senate and the attitudes and pressures in the Reagan Administration.

Support for the Voting Rights Act in both the Senate and the Reagan Administration is on shaky ground. Sen. Strom Thurmond, an ardent opponent of the Act, is chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee which is scheduled to take up the Act in January 1982 and decide on a proposal to go to the Senate floor. President Reagan has pub-

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licly supported the Act under the condition that more amendments are added to it. The effect of changes being discussed by the Reagan Administration include: making it easier for states and counties to gain exemption from certain provisions; making it harder to challenge local voting laws by requiring proof of an intent to discriminate as well as actual discriminatory practices; making it harder to enforce Federal review of election law changes by expanding the Act to cover the entire nation; and refusing to extend the requirement for bi-lingual ballots in certain areas where provisions are due to expire in 1985.

These suggested changes in the Voting Rights Act raise an important question: How much can the Voting Rights Act be changed before the democratic principles it seeks to uphold and protect are lost or rendered powerless by new regulations? The House version recently passed has already made it easier for local and state governments to bail out of the Voting Rights Act with a good record. Estimates by the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights are that 200 of the 800 counties now under the pre-clearance provision could gain exemption from the Act in 1984.

The necessity of proving the intent of local and state officials to discriminate will only add to government and private costs, cause additional delays, and intensify local conflict and harassment in an already lengthy and difficult procedure. Evidence from the Justice Department shows that voting discrimination is not a nationwide problem and does not merit a burdensome, nationwide expansion of the pre-clearance provision. Where they are severely needed, bi-lingual ballots provide crucial assistance in the voting process.

The Voting Rights Act is now in serious danger of going the way of other legislation - so many amendments and changes might be added to it that the original intent and effectiveness of the Act will be lost. We face a situation today where President Reagan and members of the Congress are able to say that they are in favor of the extension of the

Voting Rights Act at the same time that they reject the basic principles and protection necessary for an effective Voting Rights Bill.

There is a tremendous amount of resistance in the U.S. to accepting the hard truth that equality does not come by right of birth and that if a democracy is going to be a democracy, freedom must be protected and insured by law. So often, those who are first to cry for law and order are also the first to weaken or remove laws which protect basic freedoms. For those who press for strong laws as a deterrent to crime, the need for the Voting Rights Act should be very evident as a deterrent to discrimination. These same people are often the first to cry out for more control at the state level (states' rights), whereby states would become exempt from enforcement of some important federal regulations. If we learned anything from the War Between the States, it was that freedom is a national concern and cannot be left for separate areas to decide which freedoms to deny and which freedoms to protect. The message of freedom cannot be a mixed message.

Today, the major practices which deny full voter protection under the law for all citizens are more subtle than ever before. These include:

1. redistricting voting lines in ways that break up minority voting blocks or limit minority representation by combining several minority districts into one larger one.
2. annexing select populations that dilute minority voting strength in a given district or precinct.
3. holding at-large elections in which everyone votes for all seats instead of holding elections by districts or precincts. This practice dilutes the minority vote which usually holds a majority in certain precincts but not in an entire town or county.
4. holding run-offs if no candidate receives a majority of the votes instead of giving the seat to the candidate with the highest number of votes. A minority candidate who actually wins an election by receiving the most votes will usually lose a run-off election against a member of the majority race.
5. changing the place to vote without public notice. After arriving at an empty voting place, voters are sometimes too discouraged to go somewhere else to vote.
6. and failing to get pre-clearance from the Justice Department before changing voting procedures. This practice, whether intentional or unintentional is happening at an increasing rate in direct violation of Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act.

We must never forget that the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was only passed after a great sacrifice of time, energy and lives. There would probably be no Voting Rights Act today if it were not for the commitment of the leaders and participants of the Civil Rights Movement of the early 1960's.

The very least that concerned citizens can do today is to sit down and write a letter to their Senators and President Reagan expressing their support for the renewal of the Voting Rights Act in the form approved so overwhelmingly by members of the House of Representatives. The House version is not the best we could do. But, in light of the on-going attempts to severely harm the effectiveness of the Act, it is the best we can hope for in 1982. It is the responsibility of all citizens to protect the rights of all citizens. If we lose the Voting Rights Act in its solid form, we all will have lost a taste of justice the next time we visit the ballot box.

Urgent Action

The Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Constitution (chaired by Senator Hatch of Utah) has scheduled hearings beginning in mid-January and ending late in February. After that, we anticipate efforts by the Act's opponents to stall it as part of their plan to let the legislation lapse in August of 1982.

Please contact the senator in your state. Ask him/her to:

1. support the House-passed (HR 3112) and
2. encourage the Judiciary Committee to report the Voting Rights Act extension promptly.

CALC REPORT

January 1982

"Truth, when witty, is the wittiest of all things."
Julius Charles Hare

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR Wants Indian Pen Pals

Dear Sir,
I am interested in Native American cultural heritage. I'm writing you hoping that through your newspaper I might get to write to young people and anybody else who truly has his heart in his heritage and who in general would like corresponding with me. I am 21 years old. I would be very grateful if you could assist me in my request.

Yours sincerely,
Raymond Frost
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P.O. Linkhills 3652
Hillcrest
Natal
Rep. South Africa

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In order to acquaint your readers with our organization we are offering 5 brochures prepared by us absolutely free and postpaid to anyone who might be interested. There is absolutely no obligation on their part to buy anything at present or in the future from us.

The 5 brochures being offered free of charge are: (1) How to Layout a Garden (2) Preparing the Soil for Your Garden (3) Irrigating Your Garden (4) Controlling Weeds the Easy Way and (5) How to Can Fruits and Vegetables.

We feel these brochures will be of great benefit to your readers, and hopefully you, also. Please have all readers interested respond to:

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Morrison, TN 37357

Thank You,
G.L. Stephens
President

Saddletree Jaycettes Salute 'Jaycee Week'

Whereas, the United States Jaycees and Jaycettes provide leadership training and personal development to young men and women between the ages of 18 and 35; and

Whereas, Jaycees and Jaycettes believe that "Service to Humanity is the best work of life," and

Whereas, Jaycees and Jaycettes strive to make their communities better places in which to live; and

Whereas, Jaycees and Jaycettes feel that "enough is enough" and that governmental awareness is essential; and

Whereas, Jaycettes recognize that Jaycees have contributed substantially to the progress of America;

Therefore, be it resolved that the United States Jaycettes commend the United States Jaycees for their many accomplishments across America and salute the Saddletree Jaycees during United States Jaycees Week January 17-23, 1982.

Signed by
Saddletree Jaycettes

Pharmacist
Howard Brooks
Pembroke Drug Center
Odom and W. 3rd, Pembroke, NC

Preserve those choir voices

Attention choir members, announcers, and anyone who may need to preserve your voice! Avoid singing or shouting, as the case may be, whenever your voice sounds abnormal - whether this be due to illness or to medication.

Permanent hoarseness could result. You see, certain pharmacy drugs, such as antihistamines and anti-depressants, tend to dry up the mucus glands responsible for moistening your vocal cords. Consequently, over-use of the voice under these conditions could permanently thicken your dried out vocal cords and cause irreversible hoarseness.

Health is priceless. Look after it!

Your Dr. Dial 621-4805



The future of the 1965 Voting Rights Act is of paramount interest to all of us. Many of the positive changes in Robeson County are directly because of the Voting Rights Act. Robeson County is one of forty counties in North Carolina subject to the act because of demon-

strated racial discriminations against the mostly Black and Indian populace.
Rev. Mac Legerton is an informed source, and I am honored to have him as a guest columnist this week. He is affiliated with the Robeson County Clergy and Laity Concerned. He's a good man with good instincts.

Justice at the Ballot Box — The Future of the Voting Rights Act

By Rev. Mac Legerton
Robeson County CALC

When the Voting Rights Act was signed into law on August 6, 1965, it brought a taste of justice into many communities and counties in the United States. The Act banned literacy tests and racial discrimination in voting across the nation. It also required specific state and local governments (9 states and parts of 14 others) with a history of discriminatory voter registration and election laws to submit all changes in election procedures for prior approval to the U.S. Dept of Justice.

The results of the Voting Rights Act have made democracy more of a reality in the U.S. and have earned it the title of "the most important human rights legislation in the U.S. during the 20th Century". For instance, in 1964 there were only 300 elected Black officials in the entire country and in 1980 there were 4,912 Black officials in office. Provisions were added to the Act in 1975 to protect voters whose primary language is not English and who are not literate in English. These additions have brought about major increases in voter registration and participation among Spanish speaking citizens. The rights of Native American people, particularly those not living on reservations, have also been supported and protected by the Voting Rights Act.

Key provisions of the Act, including the reviews of proposed election changes by the Dept. of Justice, are due to expire in August 1982, unless Congress renews them. On October 6, 1981, the

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