

A PROGRAM FOR A STATEWIDE VOTER REGISTRATION  
CAMPAIGN IN MISSISSIPPI

Submitted by the COUNCIL OF FEDERATED ORGANIZATIONS:  
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I. Aims and Goals

A. Voting and Economics:

We do feel that the basic aim of the program should be more than the mere registration of the large majority of Negroes in the state, for there is evidence that unless some degree of economic independence is achieved along with the ballot, the lot of the majority of the state's Negroes will not be greatly improved.

We feel it will be necessary for the Council, therefore, to articulate the needs of the Negro in the areas of Labor, Education, Housing, Justice, and Voting. More than articulation is needed, however, and the Council will have to lobby for specific programs at all levels of government, through its state office, or its member organizations.

B. County Organizations:

Since the fundamental political unit in the state is the county unit, one of the goals of the program should be the development of leadership at this level to ensure an on-going program in voter registration and to press for progress at the county level. Local conditions should determine the type of organization developed at this level.

II. Organization and Scope:

A. We propose to partition the state into twenty districts. (See attached maps and table.) Each district would be manned by a full time paid field secretary. These field workers would meet bi-weekly in Jackson and other cities to evaluate the program.

B. Priorities:

Following the political outline of the state and the concentration of Negroes, it seems natural to give priority to the second, third, and fourth congressional districts, where the Negroes comprise 50%, 66%, and 45%, respectively, of the population. Cities where Negroes are free to vote without fear of economic reprisals would also receive priority.

C. Summer program:

We envision the use of 100 students to work this summer in the rural areas and the towns where the adult leadership is unable, for some reason, to conduct the program,

These students would live in rural areas bringing with them an educational, political, cultural program. We hope to include white students.

These students would be recruited across the spring semester and all subjected to an intense week-long conference before taking the field for the summer. They would include specialty groups such as gospel quartets and folk dance teachers who would travel across the state.

### III. Timetable

The following steps may be profitable taken now, even before further developments with the directors of the South-wide program.

1. The establishment of a date for a meeting of representatives from Urban areas to discuss the mechanics and operation of a city voter registration office.
2. Organizing regional meetings across the state to prepare for the total program. Bob Moses, of the S.N.C.C. and James Bevel of the S.C.L.C. are available for leg work in setting up these meetings. A representative of the executive committee of the Council should be present at each meeting.
3. A search began for field workers and students.
4. The Council should designate persons to solicit the support and cooperation of ministers and professional people at the local and state level; liberal white persons should also be contacted and their assistance solicited.

### IV. Table of proposed working districts:

District 1:	Hinds, Madison and Rankin Counties
Headquarters:	<u>Jackson, Mississippi</u>
District 2:	Warren, Claiborne, Copiah and Jefferson Counties
Headquarters:	<u>Vicksburg, Mississippi</u>
District 3:	Adams, Amite, Franklin and Wilkinson Counties
Headquarters:	<u>Natchez, Mississippi</u>
District 4:	Pike, Walthall, Lawrence and Lincoln Counties
Headquarters:	<u>McComb, Mississippi</u>
District 5:	Forrest, Marion, Lamar, Perry and Green Counties
Headquarters:	<u>Hattiesburg, Mississippi</u>
District 6:	Harrison, Pearl River, Hancock, Jackson, George and Stone Counties
Headquarters:	<u>Gulfport, Mississippi</u>
District 7:	Jones, Jefferson Davis, Covington, Wayne and Simpson Counties
Headquarters:	<u>Laurel, Mississippi</u>
District 8:	Lauderdale, Newton, Scott, Smith, Jasper and Clarke Counties.
Headquarters:	<u>Meridian, Mississippi</u>
District 9:	Attala, Leake, Neshoba and Kemper Counties
Headquarters:	<u>Kosciusko, Mississippi</u>
District 10:	Oktibbeha, Choctaw, Winston, and Noxubee Counties
Headquarters:	<u>Starkville, Mississippi</u>
District 11:	Lowdens, Clay, Monroe, Chickasaw, Calhoun and Webster Counties
Headquarters:	<u>Columbus, Mississippi</u>
District 12:	Lee, Itawamba, Tishomingo, Prentiss, Alcorn and Pontotoc Counties
Headquarters:	<u>Tupelo, Mississippi</u>
District 13:	Marshall, Benton, Tippah and Union Counties
Headquarters:	<u>Holly Springs, Mississippi</u>
District 14:	Grenada, Yallobusha and Lafayette Counties
Headquarters:	<u>Grenada, Mississippi</u>

District 15: Washington, Issaquena, and Sharkey Counties  
Headquarters: Greenville, Mississippi

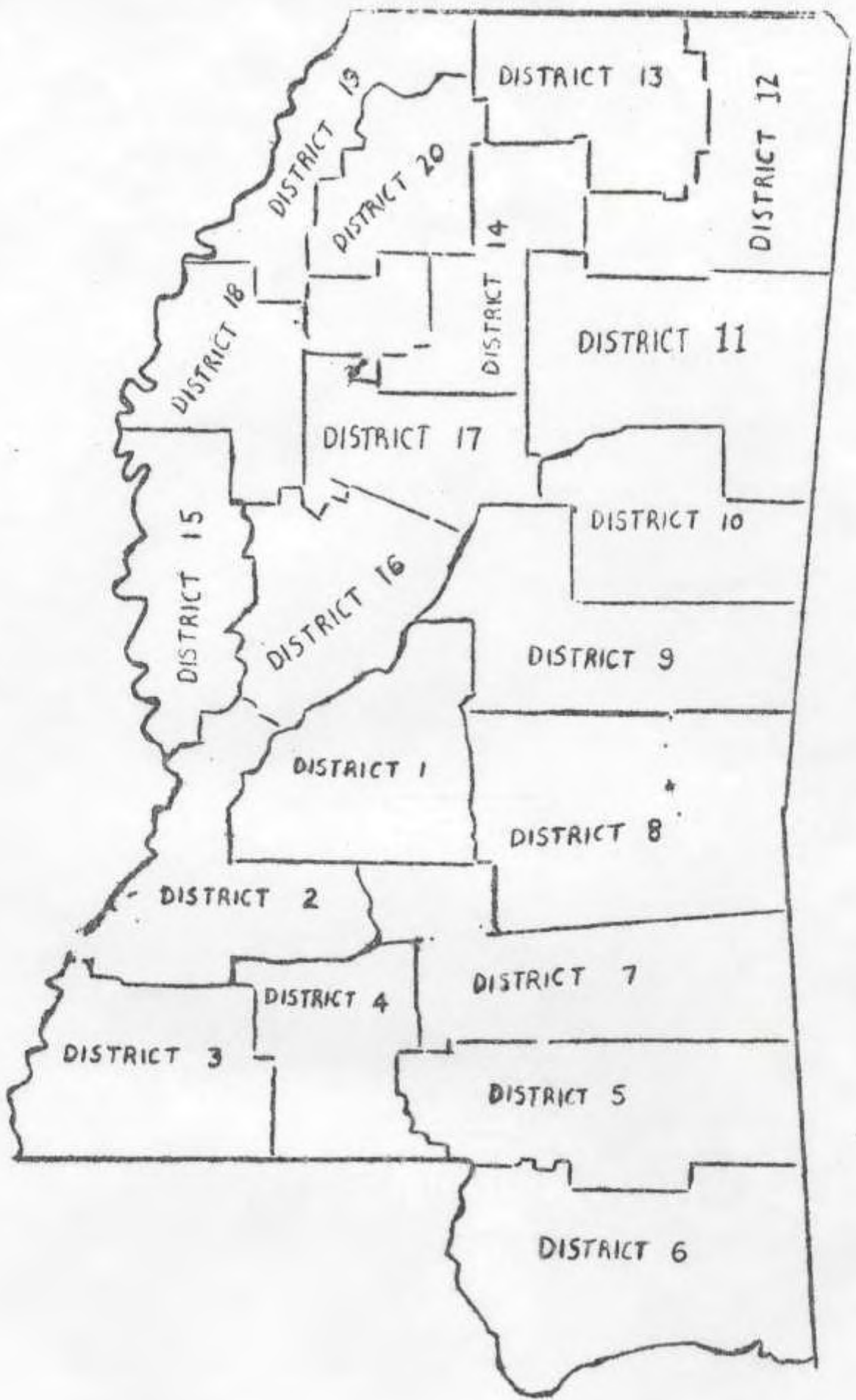
District 16: Yazoo, Humphreys and Holmes Counties  
Headquarters: Yazoo City, Mississippi

District 17: Leflore, Carroll and Montgomery Counties  
Headquarters: Greenwood, Mississippi

District 18: Bolivar, Sunflower and Tallahatchie Counties  
Headquarters: Cleveland, Mississippi

District 19: Coahoma, Tunica and DeSoto Counties  
Headquarters: Clarksdale, Mississippi

District 20: Quitman, Panola and Tate Counties  
Headquarters: Marks, Mississippi



## Breakdown on the 3rd Congressional District

Note: If the redistricting plan now before the Mississippi legislature goes into effect, it will create a third Congressional district in the South-west corner of Mississippi, with eleven counties, with a white voting age population of 117,122 and a Negro voting age population of 78,452.

County	Voting age population				
	White NO.	NO.	nonwhite NO. registered	% reg.	% of County
Adams	10,888	9,340	1,050	11.2	46.2
Amite	4,449	3,560	1	.03	44.4
Claiborne	1,688	3,969	138	3.5	70.2
Copiah	8,153	6,407	20	.31	44.0
Franklin	3,403	1,842	146	7.9	35.1
Hinds	67,836	36,148	5,000	13.8	34.8
Jefferson	1,666	3,540	0	.0	62.8
Lincoln	statistics not available				
Pike	12,163	6,936	207	3.0	36.3
Walthall	4,536	2,490	0	.0	35.4
Wilkinson	<u>2,340</u>	<u>4,120</u>	<u>110</u>	<u>2.7</u>	<u>63.8</u>
Total:	117,122	78,452	6,672	40.0	3.0

### Analysis of statistics:

There are two counties in the district, Hinds and Adams, in which Negroes may vote without fear of economic reprisals and physical violence, and may register if they persist in their efforts.

Analysis of the above statistics reveal that these two counties have a total of 45,488 Negroes of voting age, or 57% of all the Negroes and 38% of all the people of voting age in the district. If we launched a program which successfully registered 60%, or 27,292 of these people, we would have 23% of the voting age population in the district on the books.

Further, these are areas of increasing population and will become more important as the years pass: Hinds county increased its population by 31.6% and Jackson, the county seat and state capital, by 47.0%, in the years 1950-1960. Adams county experienced a 17.0 increase and Natchez, its county seat, a 4.6% increase, in these same years. (cf. "United States Census Population, 1960")

### II. Proposed Industrial Basin.

The new four lane thru-way from New Orleans to Chicago will parallel highway 51 through the south-west portion of Mississippi. Several small cities along this highway deserve separate attention Crystal Springs, Hazelhurst, Brookhaven and McComb. They are all increasing their population in an area which is otherwise decreasing. They reflect the Southwide trend of movement from rural to urban areas, and are located in a basin designed for ex-

tensive industrial expansion.

Statistics:

City	Population	% increase '50 - '60	% non-white
Crystal Springs	4,496	22.3	34.6
Hazelhurst	3,400	0.1	51.6
Brookhaven	9,885	26.7	37.4
McComb	12,020	15.6	28.4

In these cities and counties (Copiah, Lincoln and Pike), local leadership will probably not lend their name in public to a voting program though they will push it in the Negro community by word of mouth and through the churches. The publicity and projection of the program should be carefully worked out with these Leaders.

We anticipate in these areas covert white resistance, taking the form of economic reprisals and whisper campaigns. It is not likely that physical violence will erupt over voting in these counties. (Note: This is so, even though a man was shot and killed on the courthouse lawn of Brookhaven a few years ago in a case connected in the people's minds with voting. Recently, however, several people have been registered in Brookhaven and the registrar was not hostile, nor was there any other trouble).

We have contacts in two of these cities, McComb and Brookhaven, who are interested in voting registration drives and McComb is ready to receive a group of student and adult workers. We hope to make sufficient preparations across the spring to enable similar groups to work in Brookhaven, Hazelhurst and Crystal Springs.

III. The remaining counties, Walthall, Arite, Wilkinson, Franklin, Jefferson and Claiborne are rural, without any urban areas at all. The chief institution in the rural community in which we may find leadership and support will be the Church. The chief leaders, however, will not be ministers, since, in most cases, they do not live in the community and only offer service once a month, their active support is, however, indispensable.

In these areas any sustained voting drive successful in getting Negroes to attempt to register, is likely to be marked by physical violence, as well as economic reprisals. It is these areas of Mississippi which are accurately described by the following section of a report on voting issued by the Southern Regional Conference:

All forms of violence, intimidation, and discrimination reported from other states were found here. Where other sections usually rely on one or two means of limiting Negro registration, Mississippi, home of the White Citizens Council, apparently uses them all. As a result, the state which has the highest percentage of Negroes in the country has the lowest percentage registered.

It is in these areas that the questions of accompanying persons to the registrar's office and continuing a drive in the face of terrific tension built by white resistance and threats and acts of violence, should be carefully thrashed out.

We have made contacts in every rural county, except Wilkinson and Franklin.

We have started classes in Arite, Claiborne & Jefferson and anticipate using the spring to establish personal contact in the communities and locate areas where students will be able to live during part of the summer & conduct voter registration classes.