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1965 CONGRESSIONAL CHALLENGE

ORGANIZATIONAL MANUAL #1 FOR CHICAGO

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# MISSISSIPPI

## Freedom Democratic Party

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November 30, 1964

Dear Chicago Friend of Freedom:

The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, which challenged the seating of the segregationist "traditional" Mississippi Democratic delegation to the Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City last August, is now planning its next step in the fight to end racist government in Mississippi. We are challenging the seating of the four members of the Mississippi Democratic Party and the one Republican who claim to have been elected to Congress in the November 3rd election. We are doing this on the basis of the fact that Negroes were systematically excluded from participation in this election. We are asking that the House of Representatives not seat these men because their election was unrepresentative of the people of the State and therefore unconstitutional.

In order to mobilize support for the Congressional Challenge across the North, we are taking steps to establish ad hoc committees in major cities. These committees would act to support the work of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party in the Challenge by pressuring their local congressmen for support in Congress and by other means. In Chicago therefore we have secured the services of James E.H. Bolton, who worked for COFO in Mississippi this summer, to be our official representative. His task is to make arrangements for the establishment of an ad hoc committee of interested individuals and groups to work on the Chicago aspect of the Challenge. James E.H. Bolton is responsible for directing the administration of the Committee and we expect that he shall make arrangements for office space and call the first meeting of the ad hoc committee within the next few days. He is responsible to us for seeing to successful fulfillment of the task of bringing maximum pressure on Chicago congressmen and for publicizing the Challenge. It is essential that all Chicago efforts for the Challenge be planned and coordinated by the ad hoc committee.

Because your help is urgently needed, I urge that you commit yourself to working actively with the Chicago ad hoc committee for the Congressional Challenge. The implications of the Challenge are most meaningful for the Freedom Movement both in Mississippi and across the country.

Yours for Change,

*Lawrence Guyot*  
Lawrence Guyot  
Chairman

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ORGANIZATION OBJECTIVES FOR THE FREEDOM DEMOCRATIC PARTY CHALLENGE

The challenge of the seating of the Representatives from Mississippi will follow the sequence set forth in the statute covering this kind of challenge (Title 2, USC 201 - 226). This process requires the reinforcement of widespread popular and community support to insure that the purely legal process is undergirded by an outside force, independent of the internal politics of the Congress. This is going to require a high degree of organization in strategic areas which will have as its goal:

1. To disseminate to as wide an audience as possible the real issues and conditions that are at issue in the challenge.
2. To create the kind of home-town interest which will influence congressmen to support the challenge at the various points where this kind of support will be necessary in Congress.
3. To build closer relationships between MFDP and northern community groups particularly the Negro community, trade unions, liberal and civic organizations.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

The first stage of activity will center around making certain that as large a number of house members as possible are educated to the nature of the challenge and are committed to its support. Towards this end certain specific jobs will have to be done within the next four weeks.

a. A committee should be formed in the local community to support the challenge really very quickly, certainly within two weeks of this meeting. It should be composed of people willing to devote time and energy to working for objectives necessary to the challenge. These committees are not envisioned as letterhead or token groups consisting of prestige names and little else. Individuals who hold memberships in civil rights groups, trade unions and other organizations will probably constitute an important segment of the community, but the committee should not be viewed as a coalition of organizations but as a separate organizing committee of individuals.

The First tasks of the committee will be:

1. To contact the congressmen from their area and informing them of the challenge and their interest before December 15.
2. To organize a delegation to visit the Congressman at home urging that he support the challenge or the attached resolution publicly before Congress reconvenes on January 4th. An appropriate form for publicizing this support must be devised.
3. To develop a campaign of letter writing, petitions expressing support for the challenge to the Congressmen and to the House Committee on Elections, of the Administration committee and organizing public meetings and rallies designed to demonstrate community support for the project. If your congressman supports the challenge you may want to invite him to speak at a mass meeting.

SECOND STAGE - (After Jan. 4th)

Other valuable organizing devices might be employed depending on the resources, and individual support, that the committee is able to muster.

A. Statements from prominent local leaders in Churches and unions for example should be procured as part of the campaign within the community. Most of these people will not participate in direct forms of pressure but may be persuaded to support the challenge in the press, letters to their constituents, or in public meetings.

B. A major fundraising activity should be planned in support of the challenge .

C. Arrange speaking engagements for members of the MFDP to important local organizations. A speaker will be available for mass meetings, union and civil rights affairs provided transportation and expenses are available from the sponsors. (This may vary).

D. Contacting the local press and acting as a liaison for placing press statements in local papers concerning the development of the challenge.

The challenge is not a short term campaign ending on January 4th with the convening of the Congress. Up until that date the major focus will be on the sending of delegations to the local Congressman, individual contact by his constituents and at least one large public function.

The permanent committee may need a program of more varied and prolonged activity after January 4th if the local Congressman is not willing to take a position before the initial battle on opening day of Congress.

The MFDP seeks its own relationship with northern and other southern  
-based community organizations. Literature concerning the challenge  
will be provided for use in local communities. After January 4th, another  
conference will be called to evaluate experiences and to discuss  
strategy for the next stage of the challenge.

Please maintain contact with the FDP - Chicago Office.

(This document was originally prepared for the meeting called by the  
MFDP in Washington, D.C. on Nov. 28, 1964 to discuss Northern support  
for the challenge...minor revisions have been made)

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APPENDIX A. THE TABLE OF THE STATUTORY CHALLENGE

The challenges to the contested Congressmen will be filed in accordance with a formal statute of Congress which outlines the exact steps which was followed when ever the right to hold a seat in the House of Representatives is challenged. This statute is Title 2 of the United States Code, Section 201. This is a formal law of Congress and is not a part of the rules or precedents of the House which could be subject to change.

STEP ONE (Dec. 2nd to Jan. 3rd)

The formal challenges must be filed within 30 days after the certification of the results of the elections. The challenges will be served on the contested representatives personally and by mail. They will be in written form and will set forth in full the reasons why the challenges are made outlining why the Mississippi elections and political system are in total violation of the Federal constitution. The formal challenges will be served during the week of Dec. 2nd. This will be the first public announcement of the challenge.

The challenged members then are requested to answer the charges within thirty days. Their answer will be due about Jan. 2nd. They must send their formal answers to the challengers.

STEP TWO - OPENING DAY OF CONGRESS (Jan. 4th)

Any Congressman on the opening day of Congress may formally challenge the right of the Miss. representatives to be sworn in and take their seat. The Congressmen can also be present to make their claim. A group of

Congressmen can also at that moment introduce a resolution asking that the contested representatives not be allowed to take their seats until the entire period of time of the statutory challenge is gone through. Regardless of the action of Congress on the resolution the statutory challenge continues through all its prescribed steps culminating in a final decision by the House of Representatives in the late Spring or Summer. (See following steps).

STEP THREE (Jan. 2nd to Feb. 10th)

After the challenged men have answered the challenges in writing, the law provides that the contestants have a period of forty days within which to use federal subpoena power to take testimony throughout the state of Miss. to support the charges in the challenges. They will seek to prove that the Mississippi elections violated the Constitution and occurred in an atmosphere of terror and coercion. This testimony will be taken in open public hearings throughout the State. If local federal judges refuse to issue these subpoenas, immediate emergency appeals can be taken to the higher Federal Courts. The subpoenas must be obeyed under penalty of contempt of court. This period of time for full public testimony throughout Miss. would run until approximately february 10th.

STEP FOUR (Feb. 10th to March 20th)

The challenged representatives then have forty days to take whatever testimony they want. They may or may not use this time. If they do this takes the period until approximately March 20th.

STEP FIVE (March 20th to March 30th)

The challengers then have 10 days to take rebuttal testimony. At the conclusion of this period all the evidence is formally mailed to the Clerk

of the House of Representatives. The challengers and challenged individuals are personally summoned to appear before the Clerk. Decision is then made as to how much of this record will be printed by the public printer. This period of time will probably run until about May 1st. The printed briefs are then distributed to the House Committee on elections and privileges.

STEP SIX (May 1st to July 1st)

The contestants have 30 days to file their brief and the challenged parties have 30 days to answer. This period runs until about July 1st.

STEP SEVEN (July 1st to ?)

At this point the entire challenge is placed before the Subcommittee on elections and privileges of the House of Representatives which has jurisdiction over the controversy. This committee then must make the decision as to whether formal public hearings will be held before the Committee. The Committee will then vote on its position and present this in a resolution to the House of Representatives. These political decisions by the Subcommittee and the House would probably come to a head sometime during July, 1965.

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CHICAGO CONGRESSMEN WHO MAY SUPPORT  
THE 1965 CONGRESSIONAL CHALLENGE

DISTRICT	CONGRESSMAN	ADDRESS	NEGRO POP.	%
1	Wm. L. Dawson	3725 S. Lake Pk.	346,249	87
2	Barrott O'Hara	7242 Crandon	81,415	22
3	Wm. T. Murphy	6617 Harvard	86,036	20
*6	Daniel J. Ronan	4928 Washington	128,077	46
*7	Frank Annunzio	400 E. Randolph	126,528	32
9	Sidney R. Yates	3500 Lake Shore Dr.	25,075	6
11	Roman Puchinski	6200 Milwaukee	1,431	1

\* Daniel J. Ronan replaced the deceased Thomas O'Brien.  
Frank Annunzio defeated former Congressman Libonati.

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CONGRESSIONAL CHALLENGE

WHAT YOU SHOULD ASK YOUR CONGRESSMAN TO DO

1. To support the Challenge of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party.
2. To co-author a Fairness Resolution reading as follows:  
"Be it resolved that pending the final decision of the House in the contest and challenge to the seats from Mississippi, no person claiming those seats shall be allowed to take oath until this contest or challenge is decided by the House.
3. To vote for the Resolution in "2" above.
4. To vote to request a roll call vote on all issues concerning the challenge including the Fairness resolution and the final vote on the Challenge.

It is possible that your congressman will not be willing to do all four of these things. They are listed in the probable order of greatest support for the challenge. In other words, if your congressman is willing to agree to "1" then it follows that he should be willing to agree to all four. On the other hand, a congressman may not be willing to support the Challenge until all the evidence is in, may not be willing to either co-author or vote for the Fairness Resolution, but yet he may be willing to request a roll call vote on all issues. Other combinations are possible.

Be sure to keep a careful report of your interviews, noting those points your congressman does or does not support, and exactly what he has committed himself to do. Also note questions which you were not able to answer so that our MFDP representatives in Washington can follow-up. After your interview reports should be sent immediately to the Chicago Office of the MISSISSIPPI FREEDOM DEMOCRATIC PARTY, 765 E. Oakwood Suite 211 to be forwarded to Washington.