

MISSISSIPPI HANDBOOK FOR POLITICAL PROGRAMS

COFO

1017 Lynch Street

Jackson, Mississippi

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Historical Background

In 1876 Rutherford B. Hayes, newly elected President of the United States, ordered the withdrawal of Federal troops from the South. That order, for all practical purposes, marked the end of Negro participation in Mississippi government. With the troops gone and Reconstruction in its death-throes, the white population of the state united with their brethren across the South to carry out the grand design of "Redemption." Redemption meant the restoration of absolute white rule, and it entailed, first and foremost, the disfranchisement of the Negro freedman. Before the blacks could be dealt with--returned to their place--they must be stripped of the power given them by the Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments; they must be driven away from the ballot box.

Mississippi and the white South accomplished this goal in less than twenty years. The method was simple terror: beatings, lynchings, arson, torture. It worked. Paralyzed by fear of the night-riding Klans, the Negro voter in Mississippi soon became all but extinct. The pattern was repeated in all the states of the late Confederacy, and in 1901 the last Southern Negro Congressman left the House of Representatives. If Mississippi's scourging of the black electorate seemed more brutal than that of the other ex-rebel states, it could be excused on the grounds that Mississippi had a far greater percentage of Negroes than any of them--and far more reason to fear. The means, in any case, was not important; the victory had been won. Mississippi was once more the undisputed realm of the American White Man.

The black body politic destroyed, the way was clear to build, under the wing of the state government, a society in which black "arrogance and aspiration" would be impossible. Jim Crow was born, and the Mississippi Negro came slowly to understand that certain "privileges" and facilities were "For White Only"--among them was the voting booth. The unwritten law of the new order (they called it Segregation) did not long remain unwritten. Lily-white legislatures passed bill after bill--enforcing the new system in every conceivable area of life, buttressing the wall, building higher, filling the chinks. By 1920 the Mississippi Negro had come to understand that everything he did was a privilege, everything he had was a gift--subject to revocation at the whim of the "white folks." The equation for the maintenance of this happy condition was simple: so long as the Negro could mount no power, he represented no threat to the system; so long as he had no vote he had no power. Keep him from voting. Negroes who objected either swallowed their objections, left for Chicago, or died objecting.

And so developed the lunatic non-politics of the Sovereign State of Mississippi. The state has always been too poor for economic issues to form the basis of any meaningful political conflict. The state has always been too preoccupied with the maintenance of its iron grip on the Negro to work toward eradicating its poverty. The status of the Negro has always been the one crucial, all-pervading issue: it has always been the one subject absolutely closed to controversy. Consensus on the subject of the Negro has been essential, and required consensus in one area has a way of spreading to other areas. Solidarity became the keynote of Mississippi politics, but behind the wall of solidarity there existed only a vacuum. The prize always went to the candidate who could shout longest and loudest the word "Nigger," who was most eloquent in his appeals for the maintenance of "Our Way of Life." Bizarre stunts replaced stands on issues as a means of gaining support. There was always, of course, the vague antipathy of the hill folk for the rich planters of the Delta, but any political movement could easily be quashed by raising the spectre of Negro power and calling

for all-important solidarity.

In 1954, with segregation at last under attack, white Mississippians began to organize and institutionalize the state's isolation; the White Citizens Councils were formed in Indianola. Under pressure from the Freedom Movement the Councils were to grow into a semi-official Committee of Public Safety, exercising something that looked very much like political rule over most of the state. Spreading from the Delta, the Councils organized all over Mississippi, loudly voiced their unswerving devotion to the principles of White Supremacy and State Sovereignty, and girded for the coming attack on Mississippi's Way of Life.

SNCC Enters State

The attack came in 1961, in the person of Robert Parrish Moses. With him came a handful of college students, and the first stirrings of Negro political resistance since the nineteenth century were begun. The Freedom Rides had shown graphically that assaults on segregation per se would not work in Mississippi as they had in the upper and seaboard southern states. All of Mississippi was hard-core. The power structure of the state, as embodied in the state government, was absolutely resistant to the idea of any change in race relations. The government itself could spearhead the heavy-handed attack on "freedom riders," secure in the knowledge that the more vigorous and brutal the attack, the better the chances for re-election. There existed no political base for negotiation, no sound reason for moderation. It was clear that the Freedom Movement would make no positive headway in Mississippi until the racial composition of the electorate was radically changed. Voter registration, therefore, was chosen as the prime focus of movement activities in the state. In comparison to the massive demonstrations taking place in the rest of the South, the program sounded mild. SNCC volunteers would be working under the legal umbrella of hundred-year-old Constitutional amendments with the outspoken approval of the President--there was certainly no national controversy over whether the Negroes had the right to vote.

There was no controversy in Mississippi either, the white population was unanimous in the belief that voting was a privilege, one for which the Negro was obviously unfit. Moses' McComb registration drive met with mob violence and registrars who stood fast for disfranchisement and White Womanhood. The balance of power in the registration books of Pike County did not change. In early 1962, SNCC workers moved north into the cotton counties of the Delta, and Greenwood became the focus of voter registration activity. Here again the spectacle of queues of would-be Negro registrants provoked the white community into vigilante action--this time with the added touch of Council organized economic freeze-outs. SNCC's Mississippi work force was steadily growing--the new recruits being for the most part native Mississippians, and CORE's task force had entered the state to begin projects in Canton and Meridian. COFO was in its formative stages. The Mississippi staff settled down to the long dull grind of spreading the gospel. Canvassing and persuasion took up most of their time; a good deal of it was spent in dilapidated county jails. There was always the risk of an occasional beating; lynch mobs and shootings were infrequent but never unlikely. It became apparent that this was going to take some time. Ongoing projects were established in Hattiesburg and Greenville.

In mid-1963 Negro registration stood at roughly three percent of all registered voters in the state; fewer than six percent of all eligible Negroes were registered. It was decided that no dramatic progress would be forthcoming in the actual registration of Mississippi

Negroes until the Federal Government saw fit to enforce the Constitution in the Sovereign State. Attempts at registration, however, were to continue. The pressure on Mississippi from within Mississippi--and with it pressure on Washington--would increase. Programs for the political education of the Mississippi Negro would be developed. Along with their regular voter registration activities field workers would be expected to organize communities and teach them the rudiments of Democracy. The Freedom Vote Campaign in the autumn of 1963 (in which large numbers of white volunteers participated for the first time) proved the basic soundness of this approach. Negroes in the state were eager for political activity; they wanted to register, they wanted to vote.

Civil Rights Act Employed

The U.S. Department of Justice in the meanwhile had not been completely inactive. The Civil Rights Act of 1960 had empowered the Department to institute suits against entire states as well as against individual registrars in cases where a "pattern or practice" of voter discrimination was found. Suits were brought against the registrars of Forrest and Madison counties, enjoining them from further interference with Negro applications. When Department investigators discovered "pattern and practice" in some sixty-odd of Mississippi's eighty-two counties, a suit was brought against the state itself, challenging the validity of the "constitutional interpretation" segment of the application form. An extremely important Circuit Court decision in the spring of 1964 ordered the registrar of Panola County to dispense with both the constitutional interpretation test and the "duties of a citizen" section of the form. At about the same time a constitutional amendment outlawed the stipulation of payment of poll tax as a requirement for voting in federal elections.

Summer Project Plans

By May of 1964, with the "invasion" of the Summer Project "Peace Corps" imminent, the focus of the COFO political staff had largely shifted to political education programs and state-wide community organization. A "Freedom Registration" campaign was conceived; field staff would be supplied with their own registration books, follow registration procedures similar to those in Northern states, and attempt to enroll as many as possible of Mississippi's four-hundred-odd thousand unregistered but "eligible" Negroes. The Freedom Registration rolls, like those of the state itself, would stay open year round. The final difference between the Freedom books and Mississippi's official books would serve as an indicator of the extent to which Mississippi Negroes were intimidated or discouraged from registering by official procedures.

In the June 2 Democratic primary of 1964, a black-belt miracle occurred. For the first time since Reconstruction four Negro candidates were in the running for national office, trying to take three Congressional seats and the Senate seat of John Stennis. No one really expected that Mrs. Gray, Mrs. Hamer, Mr. Houston, or Rev. Cameron stood a chance of victory, but their campaigns were valuable in terms of staff experience--and more important, they generated a good deal of political interest in the Negro community. The experience gained in their campaigns would be invaluable in the formation of the Freedom Democratic Party. At about the time the "Freedom" candidates announced themselves field workers were put on alert that they were responsible for aiding in the formation of an opposition party in Mississippi. The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party was to roughly parallel the Mississippi Democratic Party in structure, but its platform and statement of principles was to be in polar opposition to those of that racist body. The platform of the MFDP was, in fact, to coincide closely with that of the

National Democratic Party. Based on the fact that it has been several decades since the Mississippi Democrats, for all practical purposes, disassociated themselves from the National Democratic Party and its aims, an effort was to be made to unseat the "regular" Mississippi delegation to the Democratic National Convention and to replace it with the Freedom Party delegates. The new party was to be composed entirely of native Mississippians, and organizational efforts throughout the summer would be focused on the Atlantic City Convention in August.

This is roughly where we stand in the summer of 1964. The State Legislature is in a panic; it has just passed what is probably the biggest batch of clearly unconstitutional laws in the history of this country. The Citizens Council is stronger than it has ever been. The Klu Klux Klan has revived in the southwestern part of the state, and burning crosses are spreading eastward and northward. The Hederman papers have managed, in a few short months, to foster a climate of panic and fear in the white community that has spread throughout the state. It is in this climate that COFO political workers must continue and intensify present registration drives, begin as many new drives as our numbers will permit, and aid Negro communities in the formation of purposeful indigenous leadership. The danger now is greater than it ever has been--and so is our hope.

Voter Registration Summer Prospects

Voter registration, this summer as always, will form the backbone of COFO's efforts. Mississippi will not change until the distribution of power on the voting rolls is changed, and all the stopgap measures we can plan will not alter this fact. As the situation stands, we will probably not be able to actually register large numbers of Negroes this summer; what we can do is encourage large numbers of attempts. Every Negro who attempts to register represents a victory; every rejected application means another ounce of pressure on the State, another mandate for action for the Justice Department. The job of the voter registration worker is to get the people to try.

No one can give you specific instructions on what to do in your area this summer: do as much as you can. What is possible depends on the mood of the area, on the level of fear, on the intensity of white resistance. There is no set one way--fake it.

The stock work of ordinary voter registration is the simple day-to-day business of canvassing, informal teaching, and taking groups to the courthouses. The problem at this level is not the sheriff or the Ku Klux Klan, but the fear and apathy of the Negro community. Until a local leadership is developed, you, as the "outside agitator" are the leadership. You must become acquainted with the Negro community--develop a general feeling of trust and confidence in you. This is the first step toward developing the community's confidence in you. This is the first step toward developing the community's confidence in itself--toward the creation of a self-sustaining local movement. The worker must give the impression of being courageous but not foolhardy, competent but not all-knowing. Be yourself, do your job, preach Freedom, and the community will come. Keep in mind that you have just begun to tear down a set of attitudes that has taken three and a half centuries to build. Talk and keep talking; there are enough people anxious to shut you up without your own timidity interfering. Also keep listening, and remember that fear will often cause words to mask real responses and that you must learn to hear what is beneath the words.

Your job is communication. Find for yourself the best ways to spread the word. It may be best to work through a group of strong potential leaders; you may have to screen the whole community to find them. It may be that no local people are willing to step out and risk the special attentions of the white community; move those willing to move as a group until there is enough Negro solidarity to make "stepping out" feasible.

You will find in time that the simple process of delivering small groups of Negroes to the courthouse is not enough. The people become frustrated, discouraged. Weekly mass meetings pale when the community can see no absolute progress in registration--what's the use? The entire community must somehow be involved, a feeling of real movement must be restored. Calling a "Freedom Day" may revitalize the town as well as providing a probable basis for a Federal suit. The essence of a Freedom Day is that it gives the entire Negro community a sense of solid achievement--at the end of the day everyone participating feels that he has really done something--that the whole town has worked together to win a victory.

The Southern Christian Leadership Conference holds bi-weekly citizenship training sessions at Dorchester, Georgia. See if you can find local people with leadership potential who might benefit from such training. Most of the outstanding local leaders developed so far have been products of Dorchester. The trainee's travel expenses are paid by SCLC, and he returns from the session capable of conducting semi-formal citizenship classes. If and when you find a likeley candidate, contact Annette Ponder in Jackson.

Finally, keep in mind that weekly reports to the Jackson office are essential. One research-communications person on your project will have the assignment of sending in these reports. Your responsibility will be to keep track of the information he requests and to channel it to him. Some of the information that is crucial is contacts made, meetings held, white reactions. If this material is not filed in Jackson, we will lose the benefits of the work you have done when you leave the state.

Whatever you do, make every effort to carry it through to a finish of some sort; if any program must be dropped or abandoned, make sure to explain to the community why it must be. Maintain a feeling of motion, of purpose; when the community sings "We Shall Overcome" it should mean it, it should believe it.

The Freedom Democratic Party and the Challenge to the Seating of delegates at the National Democratic Convention

In addition to the regular voter registration drive a extensive voter education process is scheduled for this summer. This is the year of the presidential election and the national conventions. In conjunction with this activity COFO has outlined a program designed to bring Mississippi Negroes (both registered and unregistered) in closer contact with the political activity that can meaningfully affect their lives.

Mississippi Democratic Party

This summer as in the summer of every presidential year a convention is to be held to decide the Democratic nominees for President and Vice-President and to write a statement of party aims during the next few years. The Democratic convention this year will be held in Atlantic City, New Jersey, starting August 24th. Delegates from Mississippi are to take part in the convention.

It was decided at the last National Democratic Convention that each state's representation at the 1964 convention should be determined as: three times the number of electors allocated that state in the electoral college, plus one vote for each 100,000 votes cast for the Democratic party nominee in 1960, plus a bonus of ten votes for each state which cast all its electoral vote for the Democratic party nominee in 1960. Mississippi has 22 votes: 21 for its electors (the state has seven electors), and 1 vote for having cast over 100,000 votes for Kennedy in 1960 (Kennedy lost out to a slate of unpledged electors in the election, the electors voted for Sen. Byrd). The convention also gives a vote each to the national committeeman and committeewoman from each state. Thus Mississippi has a total of 24 votes at the convention. There are 2,316 votes at the convention.

Traditionally, each of the regular convention votes is split between two delegates, and each pair of delegates is accompanied by one alternate delegate. Mississippi, therefore, will send 44 regular delegates, each with one-half vote, and 22 alternates. Add to this the two members of the Democratic National Committee, and you find that 68 Mississippians will be seated in Convention Hall on August 24.

The Convention is managed by the Democratic National Committee, which is composed of one man and one woman from each of the fifty states (and the U.S.'s territories). These committeemen and committeewomen are entitled to one vote apiece at the national convention. The Democratic National Committee also draws up a temporary roll for the convention--this roll contains the names of the people who are expected to represent each state when the convention is held. Unless this list is challenged, either by the Credentials Committee or from the floor of the convention, these are the people who will represent the Democrats of Mississippi at the Convention.

Mississippi normally chooses its delegates to the National Convention at the Democratic District Conventions (or Caucuses) and at the State Democratic Convention. It is usually known beforehand who will be elected, the orders having come down from above, from the controlling state political machine. Actually there are a series of conventions in the state, of which the state convention is the last.

The Precinct Conventions are always held on a Tuesday, always at 10 a.m.--this year on June 16--all over the state. Every registered voter is eligible to participate in the meetings, though the voter must attend the convention of his own precinct. The County Democratic Executive Committee is to have supplied each precinct with a temporary Convention chairman and secretary (who have in their possession the proper number of delegates to be elected to the County

Convention and certification for that number of delegates). Precincts are allocated anywhere from one to six votes in the County Convention; any county which is unsure of its proper representation is to assume that it has only one vote. The registered voters assemble, vote a permanent chairman and secretary, then elect delegates to the County Convention. Two delegates (with one-half vote each) and two alternates are usually selected for each vote. Resolutions may also be adopted, though they are legally meaningless.

The County Convention normally meets a week or so after the Precinct Conventions. The delegates elected at the various precinct conventions assemble, with their certification, at the County Courthouse. They listen to a keynote address, then vote to select their delegates to the state convention (these delegates also attend the district convention). Each county is by law entitled to twice as many votes as it has representatives in the State legislature. Here again, the votes are split, and pairs of delegates are elected for each vote. Alternates are chosen for each half vote. This over with, the convention splits into five caucuses--by supervisor's districts--and nominates candidates to the County Democratic Executive Committee. Every county in the state is divided into five supervisor's districts (or beats); the beats are an administrative convenience and are a source of some patronage opportunities. Each beat nominates three candidates from their area to the committee. The nominations are usually ratified by the assembled convention on the floor, but new nominations may be made before voting. The County Convention is managed by the County Executive Committee.

The District Caucus follows the County meeting by about a week. The delegates from the county assemble by Congressional district and elect who will carry their District's three votes to the national Democratic Convention. The District Caucus also elects three members to the State Democratic Executive Committee and one candidate for Democratic Presidential elector.

A week or so after the last District Caucus is finished, the delegates from the counties meet all together in Jackson for the State Democratic Convention. The convention ratifies the earlier elections by the various District Conventions and proceeds to nominate and elect the remaining seven votes allocated Mississippi at the national convention. It chooses the national committeeman and committeewoman. It nominates two more candidates for the electoral college. The State Convention also adopts a party platform and statement of principles... which seldom agrees with the platform of the National Democratic Party.

Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party

Most Mississippi Negroes, because they are excluded from the rolls of registered voters, are not eligible to participate in selection of the Mississippi delegates to the national convention. COFO, however, has been instrumental in providing a framework for participation in this process for both registered and unregistered voters. In conjunction with a number of local groups around the state a political party has been organized. This party will attempt to seat its delegates at the national convention in place of those delegates chosen by the Democratic party in Mississippi.

This newly formed party is called the Freedom Democratic Party (FDP) or the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP). This party is open to citizens of all races and encourages political participation of all.

Registrars are being established in every county in the state; registrants will fill out a simplified voting form, the Freedom Registration form, based on the voting application used in several Northern states. The only requirement for registration is that the applicant be over 21 years of age and a resident of the state. Between 200,000

and 300,000 people will be registered before the national convention in August. Any citizen who is registered in this manner is eligible to vote in the Freedom Democratic Party conventions and to take part in the affairs of the party.

The Freedom Democratic Party was established in April of this year. At a meeting on April 26, approximately 200 delegates established a temporary State Executive Committee of the Freedom Democratic Party. The temporary State Executive Committee will be responsible for supervising the calling of meetings throughout the state, these meetings to parallel the meetings through which the Mississippi Democratic party selects its candidates to the National Convention. These meetings will follow the pattern stipulated in the Election Laws of Mississippi as closely as possible.

The election of the delegates and alternates of the Freedom Democratic Party will proceed as follows:

Precinct Meetings: These may be attended by anyone who has been registered on the Freedom Registration books, including persons who may or may not be registered on official books of the state of Mississippi. These meetings will take place from mid-June through July 21 throughout the state.

County Conventions: Any person may observe, but only the delegates from the precinct meetings may take part. In many places a county meeting may be held in conjunction with the precinct conventions, the county breaking down into precincts right at that time. The time schedule is the same as that for the precinct conventions.

District Caucuses: Scheduled for July 24.

State Convention: In Jackson July 26.

At each level the procedure is just the same as that of the Mississippi Democratic Party as far as the election of delegates and the selection of county and state executive committees. Any variations will be published as official notification by the Freedom Democratic Party Executive Committee.

The delegates and alternates so selected will attend the national Democratic Convention where they will challenge the credentials of the presently recognized Mississippi Democratic Party delegation. The Freedom Democratic Party delegation will consist of 46 delegates and 22 alternates--the number allotted to the state of Mississippi by the Democratic National Committee.

In order to test the Mississippi Democratic Party, Negroes will also attend precinct meetings of the Democratic party throughout the state. While they are likely to be admitted in some areas, they are not likely to be allowed to participate fully in the meetings. The discrimination that is sure to occur at these meetings on June 16, particularly in the "hard core" segregationist areas of the state, will be an additional basis for the convention challenge.

Basis for the Convention Challenge

A. The Mississippi Democratic Party discriminates against Negroes who wish to participate in the Party and in state political affairs.

The Mississippi Democratic Party has control of the state executive, legislative and judicial branches. All 49 Senators and all but one of the 122 representatives are Democrats. All state executive officials such as the governor, secretary of state and attorney general are Democrats.

The state legislature has consistently passed laws and set registration standards which exclude Negroes from the registration rolls.

The state executive was elected to office on the basis of a campaign which was largely directed to keeping Negroes from registering to vote.

The state judicial system does not give Negroes judicial relief in voting cases. Only cases carried to the federal courts have resulted in any measure of relief for Negro applicants.

County registrars are elected to office and all county registrars are Democrats. These registrars often refuse to register Negroes even though they are qualified by Mississippi registration standards.

Only the registered voters can vote in the Democratic primaries. Thus, exclusion from registration means exclusion from the Democratic Party.

- B. The Mississippi Democratic Party has consistently devoted itself to the perpetuation of segregation, racism, and the oppression of minorities. The Party has made it impossible for Negroes of the state or white people who consider all people to be citizens to find it in their interest to participate in the Democratic Party of the state as it is now constituted.
- C. Mississippi citizens who are in sympathy with the goals, platform and candidates of the National Democratic Party cannot support these goals, platform and candidates by becoming a part of the Mississippi Democratic Party. The Mississippi Democratic Party did not support the Kennedy-Johnson ticket in 1960 and shows indications of not supporting the national Democratic candidates in the coming election. The Johnson Journal, Vol. 3, Fall 1963, an organ of Governor Paul Johnson in last fall's statewide election campaign, printed the following headlines: "Landslide Eliminates National Democratic Influence," "Both National Parties Are Our Enemies." The article under them began: "The People of Mississippi have rejected decisively the influence of the Kennedy-dominated National Democratic Party. The Mississippi Democratic Party (is) completely free of both national parties, and (is) solely an instrument of the citizens of this state..."

Voter RegistrationSafety

1. Know all roads in and out of town.
2. Know location of sanctuaries and safe homes in the county.
3. Make arrangements for regular checks with the Jackson office and/or the county office.
4. Decide whether night or day work is preferable.

Canvassing

1. Take pencil and paper to record any information that seems pertinent.
2. Remember that you are asking people to take their time to listen to you. You should try to present yourself in a way that will make them want to talk with you.
3. If a person closes the door in your face or will not talk with you, try to find out selsewhere why he did it. Everybody can be approached, but it may take much time and patience to reach some people.
4. If a person talks but show obvious reluctance, don't force a long explanation on them. Come back another day to explain more. Soften them up through repeated exposure. This builds confidence and builds a relationship.
5. If a person invites you in but then doesn't listen to you, try asking questions to get their attention. Try talking about other things and eventually working back to your program.
6. If a person listens and seems interested, try to give them something to do to keep their interest up. Use them to help you contact other people. Use them to talk with the rest of their family.
7. If a person already knows what you are telling him, find out how he knows it. Perhaps there is already a group in existence that nothing is known about. Perhaps there are channels of communication that could be valuable in the future.
8. When canvassing try to have a single idea in mind, e.g. getting people out to a mass meeting that evening or setting up a workshop. Don't overwhelm a person with too much at any one time.

Workshops

1. Arrange any materials (pencils, paper, application blanks, etc) beforehand so that the workshop isn't hung up for lack of these fundamentals.
2. Emphasize that any question is a good question. Encourage people

(Voter Registration Continued)

to speak up, to ask questions, to bring out their own ideas.

3. Whenever possible, use the local residents to lead the workshops, to answer the questions, to take charge. Ultimately the people will be left alone, they can never start standing by themselves.

4. Go slowly enough to include everyone. Ask questions, get the people to call a halt--use any technique to judge whether your speed is correct.

5. Many times people like to open and close workshops with a song and a prayer.

6. Praise people freely. Compliment them for any small thing. This business is new for most people and they are easily intimidated.

Taking People to Courthouse

1. Arrange transportation when necessary.

2. Be prompt if a time is agreed on.

3. Encourage people to go at least by twos, there is strength in numbers.

4. Accompany people to the door of the registrar's office where possible. At least go as far as the local authorities will permit.

The one main purpose of worker involvement in a given location is to develop a community organization that will continue to work without any help from outside. From the beginning involve local people in all activities and in as many policy-making and organizational decisions as possible.

1. The church serves as a central social and inspirational purpose in the Mississippi Negro community. In virtually all cases you must and should make use of this church involvement. Contact the ministers even if they won't always lead; they are usually at least sympathetic enough to give names and to provide assistance in some way. The church building is a natural home of mass meetings and workshops.

2. In any community there are people who are looked up to and who are already recognized as leaders in some sense. Time spent with these people can be more profitable in the sense that the leaders in turn may have much greater leverage than you have; they can bring many of their people along with them.

3. On first contact in most areas there is a natural distrust and fear of any new person. It takes time to overcome this; the local people must know who you are and what you are before they will begin to open up. Just being seen day after day, making sure that local people are aware you are always around, may serve to relax some of the tension. Sometimes small talk helps. Use of any normal common bond is to be encouraged; by contrast, however, bizarre attention-getting stunts simply have no place in the movement.

4. Talking to children, small children particularly, may frighten parents. It is generally impossible to reach parents through children. Children, particularly teen-agers, are a valuable and workable part of the movement, but they are dealt with separately from their parents.

5. The community will be organized around a program such as voter registration. Keeping people involved with specific tasks and duties (e.g., providing transportation to the courthouse or teaching one workshop a week) will keep them with the movement and give them a sense of involvement.

6. Membership cards, buttons, T-shirts, stickers, decals, poster--any and all of these on a person or in a home or office serve to give people a sense of belonging, of taking part. These are not substitutes for participation in the program, but they are meaningful.

Time and Place

1. Use a regular county meeting that people are used to attending where possible.
2. If there is enough community organizations hold separate precinct meetings in each precinct, otherwise, just break a county meeting into precincts, and hold precinct and county meetings in the same place one right after the other.
3. Seek to hold the county meeting in the county courthouse--one's right as a citizen.
4. Canvassing, letters, telephones--all should be used to announce meetings and encourage attendance.
5. Anyone can attend the meeting. At the meeting people who are not already Freedom Registered should be registered before the meeting starts.

Content

1. Election of Delegates:

At precinct meetings you can elect up to 10 votes to go to the county meeting. You can split votes, using the same procedure as that used in regular Democratic party meetings.

You can secure the number of delegates and alternates to elect from county conventions by calling Jackson.

Election of good delegates is extremely important. People should be encouraged to nominate a strong delegation. The person nominated need not be present. An integrated delegation, where possible, is ideal.

2. Election of the County Executive Committee

This committee, composed of 15 people, can serve as a political education committee for the county. If we can get these committees elected in each county, they can serve as a unit of county organization for later party work. They normally control voting.

3. Passing Resolutions

This is a valuable experience, even though the resolutions have no binding effect. Resolutions on supporting National Democratic Party candidates, civil rights, or any others can be passed and brought to the state convention. You do not have to have resolutions.

4. Records

Keep careful records of who attended, what business was transacted, who were the delegates elected, any unusual occurrences. Send a copy of this information to Jackson and keep a copy for your files.

Organizing for Freedom Registration

The success of COFO's entire political program will to a great extent depend on how well the freedom registration campaign goes. A thorough explanation of the significance of this program will come later at the section meeting. What follows here will be a simple listing of the specific organizing jobs.

Freedom Registrars:

There will be 82 Freedom Registrars -- 1 in each county of the state. Each Freedom Registrar will have as many Deputy Registrars working under him as possible. The job of the Mississippi staff and summer volunteers will be first to recruit these Registrars and Deputy Registrars.

Freedom Registration Forms:

People who work on voter registration during the summer will also work on freedom registration. They will get people to fill out the freedom registration forms as they attempt to convince people to go down to the Courthouse to officially register.

Qualifications for Freedom Registration

1. Registrants must be over 21.
2. They do not have to be literate.
3. They must be able to answer questions as you read them and write the answers. (Illiterate people will sign "Xs" as you and others witness).
4. They must have lived in the state for at least 2 years and in the county for 1 year.
5. Both people who are registered and who are not registered on the "official" registration books are eligible to register on the freedom registration books.

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Provisional for Freedom Registration

The purpose of this act is to provide for the registration of persons who are not registered in the state. It is intended to provide for the registration of persons who are not registered in the state. It is intended to provide for the registration of persons who are not registered in the state.

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Qualifications for Freedom Registration

1. The person must be over 18.
2. They do not have to be citizens.
3. They must be able to answer questions as you read them.
4. They must have lived in the state for at least 3 years.
5. They must have lived in the state for at least 1 year.
6. They must have lived in the state for at least 1 year.
7. They must have lived in the state for at least 1 year.

First Congressional District

1. Lowdnes County

a. Columbus is the county seat. There has been relatively little activity there. Police harrassment has been minimal, but probably will increase as workers become more active. Negro leadership seems to be somewhat reticent to the COFO programs and the local community is somewhat afraid of us. However, the fear is not so intense that it cannot be broken with persistent effort. There are several strong students (high school).

The situation in most of the key cities in this part of the state are quite similar to that of Columbus.

Second Congressional District

1. Leflore County

a. Greenwood is the county seat, and SNCC maintains a two story office there, manned by approximately five people. Leflore County is generally considered a hard core resistance area. The two years of activity there has resulted in hundreds of registration attempts by Negroes, with less than 30 actually getting registered. Voter registration activity in Leflore County has been documented with shootings, beatings, bombings, arrests, and at least one incident of lynch-mob violence.

b. Itta Bena is about 15 miles west of Greenwood. The effort there was first met with bombings (tear gas) of the church where meetings were being held. In June of 1963, harrassment culminated with the arrest of 45 local people as they marched in protest of the lack of police protection. In spite of this there has been persistent activity there; but the results in terms of people actually getting registered has been negligible.

2. Sunflower County

a. Ruleville is the focal point of activity, some 23 miles from the courthouse in Indianola the county seat (which is the birthplace of the white citizens council), Senator J. Eastland maintains an office in downtown Ruleville, and has a plantation in nearby Doddsville. Ruleville also is considered to be a rural hard core resistance area, and activity there has been dotted with shootings, jailings, economic reprisal, and police harrassment and intimidation. Probably it will be one of the centers of resistance to the summer project. Local people are strong however and will stand up with the workers.

3. Holmes County

a. Mileston is about 12 miles from Lexington, the county seat. We have a core of good people in the Mileston area. The county has resisted actually registering Negroes, and early in the vote drive the home of one of the key local leaders was shot into and set afire with Molotov cocktails. Lately, harrassment has been minimal, but could increase with a real hard vote drive in the county.

4. Bolivar County

a. Cleveland is one of the county seats (the other being Rosedale). Activity there is comparatively recent, but it is the feeling of workers there that with increased activity there will be increased resistance, in terms of economic and physical reprisals. Cleveland has a history of police violence. Rosedale is a river town (Mississippi river) in the traditional rough and rowdy, depressed and violent sense.

b. Shaw is about 15 miles west of Cleveland and our activity there has been met with little resistance. It's a depressing little town physically, with virtually every Negro living in shacks. There has been a very good response to our programs. The town can be gotten to move.

Mound Bayou is an all Negro town about ten miles north of Cleveland. The Negro leadership there is conservative, and the town itself is generally hostile to whites. However in terms of programs, the leadership can be circumvented and the local people reached.

5. Washington County

a. Greenville is the county seat, and the center of our operations in the county. It is considered a liberal city. The editor of the local newspaper supports the voter registration effort. All city officials can be talked to at various levels. The Negro leadership is generally conservative (Greenville is the stronghold of black republicanism) and tends to articulate the white power structure line about "only the qualified" Negroes trying to vote. There has been some direct action (e.g. sit-ins, marches, pickets) in Greenville, and more is likely to occur this summer. Psychologically, Greenville is a difficult town to work (apathy as well as fear) but certainly there is plenty of mobility to work.

6. Issaquena County

a. Mayersville is the county seat (pop. 187) and no Negroes are registered to vote. In 1961 they weren't accepting poll taxes. There is a core of strong people in this very rural county (slightly over 3000 people). Activity has been sporadic in this county and as yet we have met with virtually no resistance.

7. Sharkey County

a. Rolling Fork is the County seat and when we have had activity there, we have met strong resistance from the local authorities. Fear is intense and at this point persons working the county will have to live outside of it. There are 3 Negroes registered. Workers should expect strong resistance from local whites.

8. Tallahatchie County

a. Charleston is one of the county seats (the other is Sumner) and there is a core of strong people ready to move. Workers should expect active resistance from local white and local authorities. The sheriff of this county is notorious for his violence to Negroes.

b. Swan Lake is a rural settlement a few miles southeast of Sumner¹⁹. Recently it has been the scene of mob violence and beatings apparently not connected to voter registration since we have had no project there. However in investigating this violence we have established some good contacts and are able to house workers there. Workers should expect constant harrassment and intimidation and personal violence.

9. Humphries County

a. Belzoni is the county seat and the scene of violence directed towards persons engaged in voter registration activities in the early fifties. A confederate flag flies before the county courthouse. There is intense fear in the adult Negro community, but a core of teenagers who can be mobilized. Persons working there should expect constant and extreme harrassment.

10. Marshall County

a. Holly Springs is the county seat, a relatively moderate city. There is a strong core of college students who are actively involved with COFO.

11. Panola County

a. Batesville and Sardis are the county seats. This is probably one of the most important counties in the state right now. The circuit clerk has been directed by court order to eliminate the use of the literacy test, aid all people attempting to register, and hire deputy registrars if necessary, over a one year period. This means that virtually every Negro who tries can actually get registered. There is a potential of 7000 new Negro voters within a year. There is strong local adult leadership, and a number of interested students who want to get actively involved. Harrassment so far has been minimal but could increase in light of the court order and our increased activity there. There has been one shooting into one of the churches used for meetings. One important thing about the local leadership is that it takes the initiative (e.g. sponsored their own freedom vote, and drew up their own petitions to send to the justice department).

Note: These eleven listed counties are all Delta counties, located in northwestern Mississippi. All of them are well over 50% Negro in population. It is also the area where we have met the most resistance to Negroes registering and voting -- the birthplace and stronghold of the white citizens council, dominated by the huge plantations. All of the delta counties have not been listed, but from areas such as Greenwood and Greenville, you can expect to operate also in adjacent counties.

Third Congressional District

1. Adams County

a. Natchez is the county seat, located on the Mississippi river. Our efforts there have been met with violence on the part of local whites (Natchez is one of the strongholds of the Klu Klux Klan) and harrassment by local officials. Workers can expect this to be constant during the summer.

2. Pike County

a. McComb is just a few miles from the county seat located in Magnolia. Some of SNCC's earliest work was begun in McComb, where student demonstrations were sparked. Here too workers can expect active resistance from local whites. Workers can also expect to be met with suspicion by local Negroes as they feel that SNCC deserted them in 1961.

3. Amite County

a. Liberty is the county seat. The county is rural and a stronghold for the Klan and a group called the Association for the Preservation of White Supremacy. SNCC also has historical roots in this county. Workers have been beaten and arrested. One local contact was shot and killed, and the witness to the killing has more recently been killed. At this point, Negroes are being systematically driven from the country, and white businesses are being forced to fire Negroes. Workers can expect extreme resistance to their activities at all levels. We have, however, a core of good strong contacts.

Note: These last three counties are located in southwestern Mississippi, at this point, probably the most dangerous area in the state. Workers can expect organized violence, harassment and intimidation directed towards them.

4. Warren County

a. Vicksburg is the county seat; comparatively urban and moderate in attitude. Workers can expect a degree of mobility. Harassment so far has been minimal. Local leadership tends to be conservative. With persistent work, however, a good strong project can be developed.

5. Hinds County

a. Jackson is the county seat and state capital. The leadership is conservative and dominated by the NAACP. Work in Jackson will have to be done within the context of building a community base to circumvent the established leadership after the summer. Workers should expect harassment from the police, and to a lesser degree, from the local whites. There will also be an undercurrent of resistance from the NAACP and local leadership which can be somewhat dealt with by developing a kind of political relationship with them. Expect frustrations.

Fourth Congressional District

1. Madison County

a. Canton is the county seat, an extremely strong Citizens Council town. Harassment is particularly intense from law enforcement (?) officials seemingly directed mostly at local citizens. There has been consistent use of economic reprisals; very severe. Strong local leadership has begun to emerge. Also there are very strong and very active young people.

2. Lauderdale County

a. Meridian is the county seat, second largest city in the state. It is a comparatively moderate city in terms of resistance to COFO programs. The community center there has been operating for 4 or 5

months, with no resistance from the local authorities. There were some arrests in connection with a boycott on one of the stores. However, the store gave in and hired a Negro, and now the workers are thinking of expanding the boycott. Meridian is also the base for operations in about five adjacent counties. Local leadership tends to be conservative and has generally ignored the project. There is a bi-racial committee (in existence for about 14 years) that is slow moving and has accomplished virtually nothing.

3. Leake County

a. Carthage is the county seat. A school desegregation suit is underway there, and there is strong and enthusiastic local leadership. Can be a swinging project.

Fifth Congressional District

1. Forest County

a. Hattiesburg is the county seat. The circuit clerk is under court order to cease discriminating against Negro applicants. Almost continually since January 22nd, local Negroes have been picketing the county courthouse. There have been arrests on a variety of charges. Intensity of police harassment seems dependent on the amount of activity taking place. There is a strong core of local leadership of both adults and students. The power structure seems to be keeping local white violence down. Workers should expect to operate in adjacent counties also. The community seems enthusiastic about the program. We expect Hattiesburg to be one of the key centers of activity this summer. Across the summer there should be mounting pressure focused at the circuit clerk who has failed to cease discriminating, and at the federal government for failing to take action against the circuit clerk (he should be in jail for civil and criminal contempt of court).

2. Jones County

a. Laurel is the county seat. It is one of the more moderate areas in the state, and harassment should be minimal. The city has a conservative Negro leadership and receptiveness to the COFO program has varied from lukewarm to cold. Two years ago there was a Laurel Nonviolent Movement affiliated with SNCC. Most of the students involved have since left or ceased to be involved. Community involvement will probably be slow at first, but can be built up across the summer.

3. The Gulf Coast

Harrison county is the key county, with Gulfport and Biloxi being the key cities. Gulfport is the county seat. Harassment will be minimal and workers can expect mobility. These cities are located on the gulf of Mexico where there are beautiful segregated beaches. Here, alcohol is sold freely, in a still prohibition state, and gambling is extensive. The Negro community forms a smaller percentage of the population than it does in other parts of the state. On the other hand, there has been more organization in this area (in the form of NAACP chapters) and as a result a high percentage of the Negro population is registered (somewhat better than 15%). Local citizens have been conducting wade-ins for a number of years, and probably there will be more this summer. These wade-ins have been punctuated with violence. Most violence on the coast

has come from local whites. There have been a couple of bombings. Assuming direct action takes place on the coast, workers can expect some violence from local whites to be directed at them. For the most part, however, the area is considered "liberal". Harrassment will be minimal and workers can expect mobility.

1. Harrison County

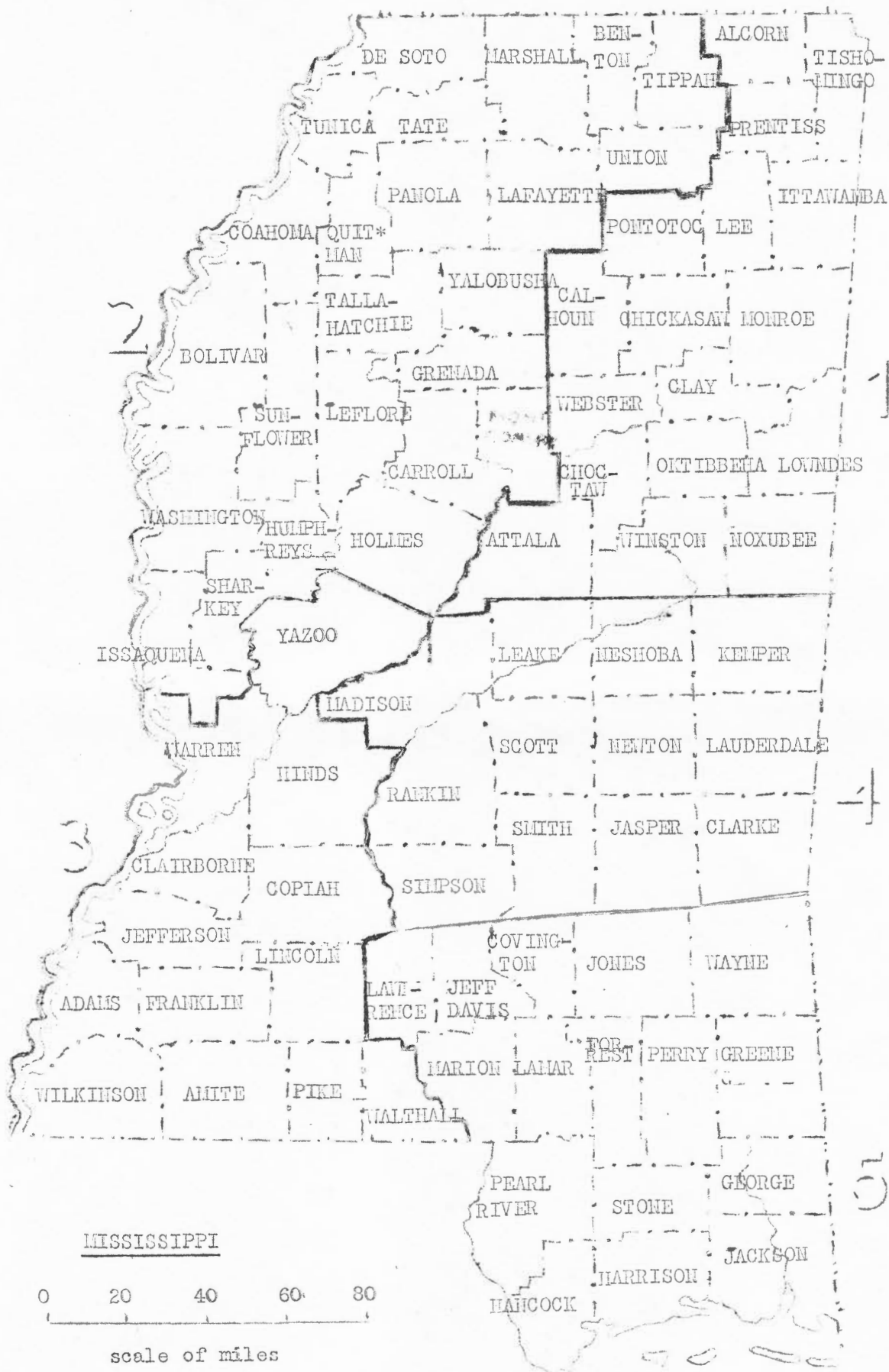
a. Gulfport is the county seat. Here, as in other coastal cities, the NAACP is strong and local leadership is generally conservative. But the summer program has won support and workers can expect a good response from the local community.

b. Biloxi has been the scene of considerable direct action in recent years (mostly at the beaches) and is now involved in a suit to desegregate the schools. The young people are anxious to engage in a broad assault on segregated public facilities, but local leadership is extremely cautious. Response to the summer project has been lukewarm and it is possible that only a limited program will be undertaken in this city.

2. Jackson County

a. Pascagoula - Moss Point are actually two cities, though they are only separated by a bridge. There is one NAACP chapter which serves for both cities. Moss Point community tends to be the more active of the two. The leadership has been extremely receptive to the summer program and have made extensive preparation to house people and to find facilities for Freedom Schools and Community Centers. Workers can expect excellent co-operation on every level.

Actually, Mississippi is oppressive everywhere, and when we speak of moderate of liberal (as in Greenville) we are talking about a lesser degree of oppressiveness. Any one of these areas is liable to tighten up and become a terror hole at any given time. It must be understood that the state is determined to perpetuate itself in its present form at all costs, and will use any method - no matter how extreme - it deems necessary.



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Number of Negroes Registered by County

The figures given here are from the 1961 U. S. Commission on Civil Rights Report on Voting. The figures are not exact, but they do indicate some of the trends and troubles in the state.

<u>County</u>	<u>No. Non-whites Eligible</u>	<u>No. Non-white Registered</u>	<u>% Non-white Registered</u>
Adams	9340	1050	11.2
Alcorn	1756	51	3.5
Amite	3560	1	0.03
Attala	4262	61	1.4
Benton	1419	136	9.6
Bolivar	15739	612	3.8
Calhoun	1761	0	0.0
Carroll	2704	6	0.22
Chickasaw	3054	0	0.0
Clairborne	3969	138	3.5
Clarke	2988	0	0.0
Clay	4444	10	0.23
Coahoma	14604	1960	13.4
Copiah	6407	20	0.31
Covington	2032	560	27.6
Desoto	6246	3	.05
Forrest	7495	12	.20
Franklin	1842	146	7.9
George	580	0	0.0
Grenada	4323	61	1.4
Harrison	9670	2000	20.7
Hinds	36138	5000	13.8
Holmes	8757	41	0.5
Humphreys	5561	2	0.04
Issaquena	1081	0	0.0
Itawamba	463	47	10.2
Jackson	5113	1400	27.4
Jasper	3675	6	0.20
Jefferson	3540	0	0.0
Jefferson- Davis	3222	96	3.0

<u>County</u>	<u>No. Non-whites Eligible</u>	<u>No. Non-whites Registered</u>	<u>% Non-whites Registered</u>
Lafayette	3239	134	4.1
Lamar	1071	0	0
Lauderdale	11,924	2000	16.8
Laurence	1720	356	20.7
Lee	5130	231	4.5
Leflore	13,567	472	3.5
Loundes	8362	63	0.8
Madison	10,366	607	5.9
Marion	3630	400	11.0
Marshall	7168	17	0.2
Monroe	5610	9	0.2
Montgomery	2627	11	0.4
Noxubee	5172	0	0
Oktibbeha	4952	107	2.2
Panola	7250	10	0.1
Pearl River	2473	0	0
Perry	1140	127	11.1
Pike	6936	207	3.0
Quitman	5673	316	5.6
Rankin	6944	43	0.6
Sharkey	3152	3	0.1
Smith	1293	24	1.9
Stone	868	39	4.5
Sunflower	13,524	161	1.2
Tallahatchie	6483	0	0
Tate	4326	0	0
Tippah	1281	176	13.7
Tishomingo	359	6	1.7
Tunica	5822	22	0.4
Union	1626	6	0.4
Walthall	2490	0	0
Warren	10,726	1910	17.8
Washington	20,619	2563	12.4
Wayne	2556	0	0
Webster	1174	2	0.2
Wilkinson	4210	110	2.7
Winston	3611	57	1.6
Yalobusha	2441	4	0.2
Yazoo	8719	179	2.1

Note: Not all counties are listed above. Some unlisted counties have more than 15% of the Negroes registered. For other counties there is simply a lack of data.

The Right to Vote:
Summary of Relevant Federal Powers
History of Federal Action in Mississippi

From the U.S. Constitution:

AMENDMENT FOURTEEN

Section 1. All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

AMENDMENT FIFTEEN

Section 1. The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.

Section 2. The Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

Civil Rights Act of 1957

This act, the first of its kind since 1875, established the United States Commission on Civil Rights. The Commission's functions, as outlined in its 1963 Report, include: investigation of complaints charging violations of the Fifteenth Amendment, the study of information concerning legal developments constituting denial of "equal protection," the appraisal of Federal laws and policies with respect to "equal protection," and the submission of interim reports on its activities to the Congress. The Act also authorized the Department of Justice to bring civil suits to end discriminatory voting practices.

Civil Rights Act of 1960

This act strengthened the 1957 act by providing that entire states, as well as individual registrars, could be sued. It also required the preservation of voting records for 22 months and permitted the appointment of Federal referees (to act as "registrars of appeal") in cases where there was a judicial finding of "pattern or practice" of discrimination.

Justice Department Actions in Mississippi

In 1961, the Civil Rights Commission found that "substantial numbers of Negro citizens had been denied the right to vote in 100 counties of 8 southern states." 38 of those 100 counties were in Mississippi, and, in the words of the 1963 Report, "subsequent investigation has indicated that this finding was conservative." Spurred in many instances by voter registration activities within the state, acting often on its own initiative, the Justice Department has brought 17 suits in Mississippi. Six of these involve police or private intimidation, ten are directed toward registrar discrimination, and one "attacks the entire system of registration in Mississippi as being inherently discriminatory."

Federal Litigation continued

Date Filed	County	Remarks
Jan 26, 1963	Sunflower	Discrimination in registration. Not tried.
July 16, 1963	Hinds	Discrimination in registration. Court held that closing of books was not discriminatory, but required that applicants be served on a first-come, first-served basis when books opened.
March 2, 1964	Madison	District Court refused to find "pattern or practice", but ordered registrar to equip to handle at least 4 applicants at a time; to register at least 50 applicants a day so long as his services were in demand. Court limited to 25 the number of potential applicants who could stand in line at once.

AFTERWORD

It is obvious to any disinterested observer that the entire system of registration in Mississippi is designed to discourage the Negro applicant. The "Constitutional interpretation (or "literacy") test" and the "duties of a citizen" sections of the application form give the individual registrar an incredibly broad discretion in the acceptance or rejection of applicants. The archaic and complicated poll-tax requirements (they are still legal in all state elections) form a further barrier to an equitable balance of power on the Mississippi registration books. Not until both these requirements are struck down as unconstitutional in fact will there be any hope of free elections in Mississippi. The Civil Rights Commission is considering requesting the appointment of Federal voting referees in every American county with less than fifteen percent of its Negro population registered. If enacted into law, this proposal would affect most of the Black-belt Deep South...it would affect all of Mississippi.

Justice Department litigation in Mississippi must begin in the hostile atmosphere of the Federal District Courts. The Judges who sit on the bench in the Northern and Southern Districts of Mississippi are Federal Judges, but they are also Mississippians - and staunch white supremacists. A truly fair and objective hearing from Judge Harold W. Cox (Northern District) is generally considered to be impossible. Judge Cox is a Mississippian born and bred, and he shares the feelings of most white Mississippians. It is the feeling of most civil rights workers that "equal justice under law" is a farce at any level beneath the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals.

Federal Litigation in Mississippi

Date Filed		
July 6, 1961	Clarke	Discrimination in registration. Injunction 2/5/63. Court (Southern Dist. Miss refused to order Negro reg. on same basis as prior white registration, refused finding of pattern or practice. Decision appealed to Fifth Circuit.
July 6, 1961	Forrest	Discrimination in reg. Court refused to issue injunction. Injunction issued by Circuit Court on appeal. Registrar cited for contempt, found guilty 7/13/1963. Registrar appealed, trial date as yet unset.
August 3, 1961	Jefferson Davis	Discrimination in reg. Court ordered monthly reports from registrar 1/4/63. Registrar applying standards strictly.
August 3, 1963	Walthall	Discrimination in reg. Court gave no decision, but ordered removal from rolls of illiterate white voters called by gov't. 3 Negroes have registered.
Oct. 26, 1961	<u>Panola</u> :	Discrimination in reg. District Court found against the gov't. on all issues. Appealed to 5th Circuit, favorable decision 5/22/64. Court ordered registrar to dispense with interpretation section of application form.
Nov. 17, 1961	Tallahatchie	Refusal to accept poll tax payments and discrimination in reg. District Court refused to issue injunction. 5th Circuit reversed District decision 1/28/63. Issued injunction. Registrar appealed, no trial date set as yet. 5 - 10 Negroes registered.
April 13, 1962	George	Discrimination in reg. Temp. restraining order April 24. Gov't. requested tightened injunction April '63. Court giving registrar opportunity to reconsider rejected applicants before issuing new injunction. 5 Negroes registered since filing of suit.
Aug. 28, 1962	State of Mississippi plus Amite, Clairborne, Coahoma, Leflore, Lowndes and Pike.	Challenge on Constitutional grounds of 2 amendments to State Constitution and 5 statutes dealing with registration procedures plus discrimination by six registrars. The case is still in the discovery stage.