

MISSISSIPPI FREEDOM DEMOCRATIC PARTY
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July 14, 1965

Urgent Memo to SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS

FROM: Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party
WASHINGTON OFFICE

As you know, our Challenge brief was officially served on the Clerk of the House June 30th and is now being distributed to every member of Congress.

This Brief is undoubtedly a historic document--the legal and moral arguments for the first unseating of Congressmen, based on the exclusion of Negro voters, since the turn of the century. Summarized is the overwhelming precedent for such contests, the evidence given in depositions by Mississippians earlier this year, and the various findings of systematic state enforced disenfranchisement of Negroes in Mississippi by the U. S. Commission on Civil Rights, the Justice Department and the Federal Courts. In short, the brief shows without a doubt that Congress has the power and the obligation to vacate the seats of the five Mississippi Congressmen.

The Brief gives supporters a real opportunity to help meet two very basic needs of the MFDP Challenge: one, to carry information, and secondly to help raise funds. The moral argument of our Challenge has rarely been questioned; now by orienting fund raising activities around the brief, support groups can emphasize the real strength of our legal case.

Through the strength and courage of MFDP members in Mississippi, and the dedication of supporters throughout the country, such as the 150 lawyers who went to Mississippi to take depositions and prepare the legal case, our Challenge has now reached its final stage. Shortly all the evidence will be before the Southern dominated Sub-Committee on Elections. At that point, sometime between mid and end August, 1,000 Mississippians will come to Washington to stand vigil until the House acts on the matter. The funds needed to focus public attention on the Challenge, which is the major way we shall get it out of Committee, are just not available; and unless they can be raised, the monumental job done to date could become another good issue pigeonholed by the seniority system of Congress.

Originally, we had said that copies of the brief could be obtained for \$2.50. That doesn't even cover the printing and shipping costs, not to mention the numbers of copies that must be distributed free (like those to the Members of Congress). We still intend to make a limited number of copies available at that price so as not to exclude any friends who truly cannot pay more.

But we feel the majority of the briefs can be sold at \$10 or more at various sorts of fund-raising events. For example, meetings or programs where there are MFDP speakers or entertainers would provide a fine opportunity to give the brief to those who make substantial contributions. House parties would also be ideal for raising money with the brief as the basis for the event.

Another way in which the brief may be used to raise funds would be to sell it to supporting organizations as a means for them to contribute to the Challenge. As an example, the Commission on Race and Religion is considering buying sixty copies to distribute to the Commission members. Possibly the local NCC, ACLU, ADA, lawyers' committees, or labor unions might do the same. The slant of a fund-raising campaign using the brief may vary from locality to locality, or even with the groups approached to buy it.

With thanks - let us hear from you with questions and orders.

A copy of the brief, for use in your office, is being sent under separate cover.

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