

NEWS RELEASE
STUDENT NONVIOLENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE
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#28
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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RUSSELL CHALLENGED ON VOTE FRAUD

AMERICUS, GEORGIA - The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) has asked Senator Richard Russell (D-Ga.) to speak out on the floor of the U.S. Senate denouncing vote interference in his own state.

In a letter to Senator Russell, March 24, 1964, a SNCC spokesman reported that the director of SNCC's southwest Georgia vote drive had been "pushed, shoved, pounded and kicked" by Americus and Sumter Co. law officials.

Donald Harris, 23, who was held for 85 days under the death penalty here last fall, was accosted by lawmen as he waited outside the polls of the Sumter Co. primary election. When he refused to "move on," a city policeman and deputy sheriff, aided by an unidentified white man, "roughed up" Harris.

Russell was informed of reports from SNCC workers in Americus that Negro cars and taxicabs were not allowed to discharge passengers in front of the polls, or park where white voters parked at the Chamber of Commerce building.

SNCC workers also charged that separate lines and voting rooms were used for whites and Negroes.

According to SNCC chairman John Lewis - in Americus for the vote drive - large numbers of Negroes were turned away from the polls March 24, when they were told a six month waiting period had not elapsed. Lewis and Harris maintain that testimony and affidavits are available to show that many of those turned away had completed registration procedures before mid-October.

SNCC urged Russell to request the presence of federal marshals in Americus for future voting days.

SNCC began its southwest Georgia vote project in 1961. SNCC efforts have recently expanded to include Randolph and Worth Counties, according to project head Harris.