

STUDENT NONVIOLENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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MISSISSIPPI LEGISLATURE CURES RIGHTS
PICKETING

JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI, APRIL 2, 1964 - The Mississippi State Legislature has passed "an emergency bill" intended to curb civil rights activity throughout the state.

The State Senate unanimously passed, as did the House, an "act to prohibit unlawful picketing of state buildings, courthouses, public streets and sidewalks" on April 2.

According to the Jackson Daily News, April 2, State Senator E. K. Collins of Laurel told the Senate the bill was "an emergency bill for Greenwood." The bill is "designed to outlaw activity by civil rights groups" the Associated Press said.

The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) has conducted intensive voter registration drives in Greenwood since August, 1962 and throughout the state since 1961. Daily picketing of the Leflore County Courthouse in Greenwood resulted in the arrest of 14 SNCC workers March 31. The arrests were protested to Representative Jamie Whitten (D-Miss.) Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy and the United States Department of Justice.

SNCC Chairman John Lewis said the new bill was "proof Mississippi is truly a police state." Lewis wired Mississippi Governor Paul Johnson asking that "in the interest of democracy" he send back with his objections this "repressive legislation, which denies the existence of the First Amendment."

The bill would make it a misdemeanor to picket "any public premises," city halls, courthouses, office buildings or any other state property or building. Conviction would be punishable by six months or \$500 fine or both.

The bill was introduced in the House on March 25 - the same day as Greenwood's Freedom Day - by a representative from Forrest County, where a Freedom Day was held January 22.