

NEGRO WOMAN QUALIFIES FOR MISSISSIPPI
SENATE SEAT

HATTIESBURG, MISSISSIPPI - The first Negro woman to run for the United States Senate from Mississippi has qualified to challenge Senator John C. Stennis (D-Miss.) of Dekalb in the June 2 Democratic primary.

Mrs. Victoria Jackson Gray, 37, of Hattiesburg, filed her notice of candidacy at the Secretary of State's office in Jackson April 3.

According to Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) worker Sandford Leigh, who accompanied Mrs. Gray, Mississippi Secretary of State Herbert Ladner accepted her papers, saying "Well, things are in order so I guess I'll have to accept."

Mrs. Gray, 37, has instructed voter registration and citizenship classes in the Hattiesburg area for over three years. She has been active in SNCC's 5th Congressional District drive since SNCC workers first entered the area. Her campaign will center on issues of education in Mississippi, Leigh said.

Mrs. Gray is the mother of three children. Her husband, a plumber, has not been licensed by the city, allegedly because of his race.

In opposing Stennis, Mrs. Gray will challenge "the whole seniority system," SNCC workers said. Stennis was elected to the Senate in 1947. He was reelected in 1952 and 1962, and in 1968 was reelected without opposition. He is a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, Armed Services Committee, Aeronautics and Space Sciences Committee, and chairman of the Preparedness Investigating Committee of the Senate.

If she is not nominated, Mrs Gray plans to challenge Stennis' right to nomination. Mrs Gray claims that Stennis does not represent the "people" of the state, and that his record does not show allegiance to the U.S. Constitution.

According to Government figures, there are 400,000 Negroes eligible to register to vote in Mississippi, but only 20,000 are actually registered.