

STUDENT NONVIOLENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE
SNCC NEWS SERVICE
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Selma, Alabama--Nearly 100 Negroes across this state's Black Belt will enter politics for the first time May 3.

85 Negroes are candidates for office in the Democratic primary May 3. The others will be chosen at special conventions held at county courthouses that same day.

The candidates--and prospective candidates--live in Autauga, Barbour, Bullock, Choctaw, Dallas, Greene, Hale Jefferson, Montgomery, Mobile, Perry, Sumpter and Wilcox Counties and will be aiming at offices ranging from a seat in Alabama's Senate and House of Representatives to positions as sheriffs, tax collectors and assessors and coroners.

In nearly all cases, the Negroes running are the first of their race to try for office in their county since Reconstruction.

The most historic races will take place in Dallas and Lowdnes Counties, both the site of racial demonstrations and racial deaths and concentrated voter registration drives.

Before January, 1965, there were no Negroes registered to vote in Lowdnes County. Negroes there now have a majority of the registered voters, despite a white registration of 113% of the eligible voters.

Registration in Dallas County-Selma is the county seat--has increased from 300 in 1965 to nearly 3,500 today.

The Atlanta-based Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) began its first Alabama vote campaign in Selma in January, 1963. Since then SNCC workers have conducted similar campaigns in most of the other Black Belt counties in Southern Alabama.

The newly formed Dallas County Freedom Organization (DCFO) will nominate a slate of officers in conventions at the county courthouse May 3. The DCFO has been conducting political workshops throughout the county and intends to nominate a full slate of candidates. Their nominee for sheriff will face either incumbent James Clark, whose billy club wielding posse-men beat back Negro demonstrators last year, or Selma Police Captain Wilson Baker, who argued with Clark over the handling of racial protests here. Four Dallas County Negroes are running in the Democratic Primary.

There are no Negro Democratic candidates in Lowdnes County, but the county-wide Lowdnes County Freedom Organization (LCFO) will nominate candidates in convention on May 3. The Freedom Organization here has become a model for Negroes in other nearby counties.

In an obvious attempt to halt Negro Democratic primary candidates, Robert Dickson Jr., Chairman of the local party executive Committee raised qualifying fees 900%. Dickson is a defendant in a Federal suit in the county, charging that him with evicting Negroes from his property after they registered to vote.

Civil rights workers in this area of Alabama have predicted difficulty for May 3.

"In most counties, Negroes will be voting for the first time in over 50 years. In few, they will be meeting in convention and nominating their own candidates, in opposition to the all-white Democratic party structure, which controls county courthouses and police forces across rural Alabama," SMCC Chairman John Lewis said. "We anticipate that there are white men in these areas who will do anything to stop Negroes from exercising their rights, especially their right to political expression."

