

# Voting Rights Act Materials

## Reader's Note

The following pages include historical artifacts, such as news articles, quotes, and published letters from the 1960s about the events leading up to the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. They were originally published as part of the Secretary of State's 2015-2016 Legislative Manual, or "Blue Book."

As readers will see, the language used and printed fifty years ago to describe the struggles faced by African-Americans and other communities of color is considerably different than today. The Secretary of State's Office, in consultation with the Saint Paul

NAACP, felt it was important for Minnesotans to read these sources of information as they were written in 1965, not only for historical context but so Minnesotans can better understand how far we've come and how far we have yet to go.

Steve Simon

Minnesota Secretary of State

Jeffry Martin

Saint Paul NAACP, President



*St. Paul Pioneer Press, March 16, 1965*

## Key Events and Legislative Dates

- ◆ March 7 – March 25, 1965: Voting rights marches in Selma, Alabama
- ◆ March 15, 1965: President Johnson addresses Congress and calls for voting rights legislation
- ◆ March 17, 1965: Voting Rights Act introduced in the Senate as S. 1564
- ◆ May 26, 1965: Passed the United States Senate (77-19)
- ◆ July 9, 1965: Passed the United States House of Representatives with amendment (333-85)
- ◆ July 29, 1965: Reported by the joint conference committee
- ◆ August 3, 1965: Agreed to by the United States House of Representatives (328-74)
- ◆ August 4, 1965: Agreed to by the United States Senate (79-18)
- ◆ August 6, 1965: Signed into law by United States President Lyndon B. Johnson

# Mondale Calls for Voting Bill

Three days before Bloody Sunday in Selma, Ala., *The Minneapolis Spokesman* highlighted Senator Walter Mondale's call for voting rights legislation. The story, published on March 4, 1965, was placed in the upper-right corner of the front page, indicating it was the most important story in that week's issue.

## Mondale says Congress Must Enact Legislature Insuring Voting Rights

*Minneapolis Spokesman, March 4, 1965*

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Senator Walter Mondale said Saturday that “Congress must adopt legislation this session to permit Negroes full participation in the American political process.”

In an address to the Metropolitan Washington Chapter of Americans for Democratic Action, the Minnesota Senator said “legislation must be adopted that will remove the last remnant of restrictions on Negro voting rights in both federal and local elections. Literacy tests can no longer be permitted to deny Negroes their voting rights,” Mondale said.

“Voter registration cannot be left in the hostile hands of persons whose very jobs depend on the continued frustration of the Negroes’ right to vote. And we can no longer justify the token registration of a few Negroes through the tedious process of case-by-case ‘trial by combat’ through the courts.”

“Who are we—we who enjoy all of our rights—to tell the Negro to be patient or to set time-tables for the exercise of his Constitutional rights. The time for patience is past. The insistent demands for Freedom Now require action now—action by an effective federal instrumentality.

“Other Constitutional and human rights cannot effectively be secured where the right to vote is denied—where political power is absent,” Mondale said. “For in the last analysis, it is the local elected official—not the federal marshal or federal judge—who daily dispenses justice or injustice to the Negro. It is the local Sheriff, the local Chief of Police, the local School Board members, the local voting registrar who set the pace in closing the glaring gap between the federal ‘right’ and the local ‘practice’ under which the right is desired.”

Mondale, who succeeded Vice President Hubert Humphrey in the United States Senate, said Congress must adopt legislation to:

- ♦ extend voting guarantees to all elections—local, state and federal;
- ♦ correct abuses in the administration of literacy tests, especially where prior education has been so discriminatory that literacy tests are per se unreasonable, or where such tests are newly-installed and do not apply equally to already-registered whites;
- ♦ and authorize temporary federal registrars to step in and register voters in cases where it is established that the local registrar has deliberately frustrated the registration of qualified Negroes.

“Our objective is not to move a massive federal apparatus into the South, but to provide a remedy in those areas where abuses exist.”



# Selma and Bloody Sunday

*On March 9, 1965, two days after Bloody Sunday in Selma, Alabama, Congressman Joseph E. Karth, who represented Minnesota's 4th District, wrote a letter to the U.S. Attorney General urging him "to launch immediately a full investigation."*

The Honorable Nicholas deB. Katzenbach  
The Attorney General  
Department of Justice  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Sir:

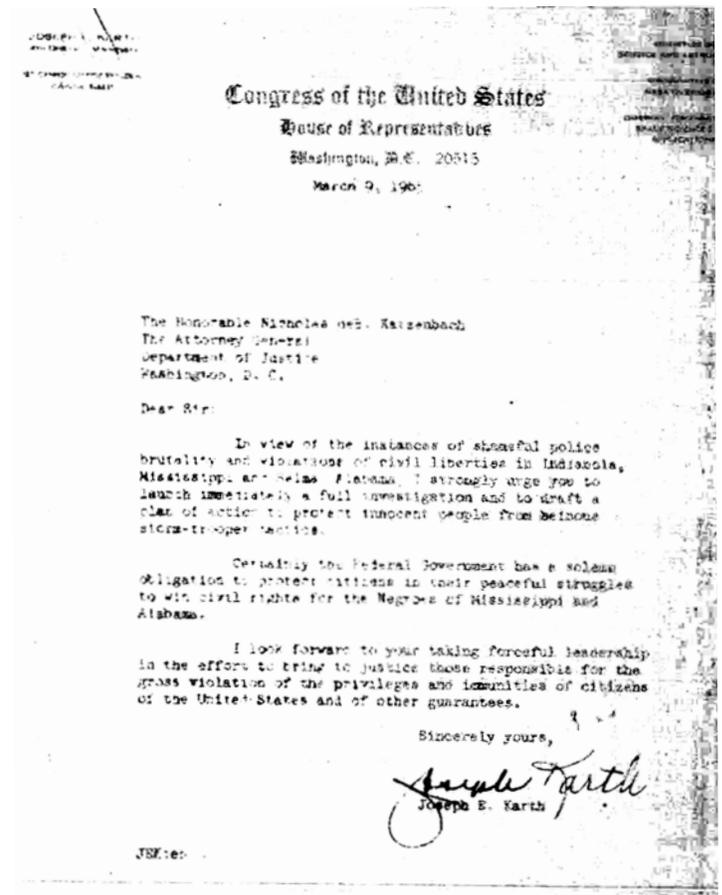
In view of the instances of shameful police brutality and violations of civil liberties in Indianola, Mississippi and Selma, Alabama, I strongly urge you to launch immediately a full investigation and to draft a plan of action to protect innocent people from heinous storm-trooper tactics.

Certainly the Federal Government has a solemn obligation to protect citizens in their peaceful struggles to win civil rights for the Negroes of Mississippi and Alabama.

I look forward to your taking forceful leadership in the effort to bring to justice those responsible for the gross violation of the privileges and immunities of citizens of the United States and of other guarantees.

Sincerely yours,

Joseph E. Karth



# Reactions to Selma

*In 1965, the Minnesota Republican Party chair, Robert Forsythe, traveled to Alabama for a “two-day observation trip.” Upon his return to Minnesota, Forsythe held a press conference, which was covered in the Minneapolis Tribune on March 16, 1965.*

## **LBJ Alabama Policy Backed by Forsythe**

*Minneapolis Tribune, March 16, 1965*

President Johnson’s “middle of the road” response to Negro voting rights demonstrations in Alabama was commended Monday by Robert Forsythe, Minnesota Republican chairman.

Forsythe, who returned Sunday from a two-day observation trip to Alabama, told a press conference yesterday that he thought the Democratic President had acted “wisely and prudently.”

Instead of doing nothing, on one hand, or rushing in immediately with federal troops, on the other, Mr. Johnson chose to move cautiously by sending in FBI agents to investigate reports of violence and federal civil rights officials to try to mediate between Negroes and whites in Selma, Forsythe said.

This, he said, seemed to be the goal of federal officials who were working to calm the situation until Congress can adopt federal legislation assuring Negroes the right to register to vote.

Noting that only 600 of 15,000 Negroes are registered in Dallas County, where Selma is situated, Forsythe said it is obvious that “something is wrong” with Alabama’s voting procedures.

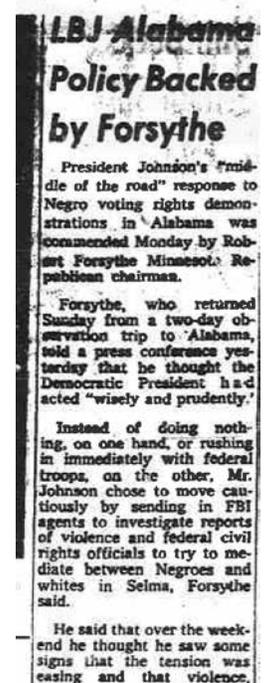
He said that, for example, registrars are required to be open for business only two days a month. In addition, he said, state law requires that prospective applicants not only meet all voting requirements but also must bring along a registered voter to vouch for their character and identity.

Both laws, he said, have been used to prevent Negroes from registering.

He called the Negro demonstrations of the past two weeks “one of the proper ways” for citizens to obtain their constitutional rights.

He predicted Congress will expeditiously approve voting rights legislation with support from the Republican minority.

He said he planned to report on his trip to Minnesota’s four Republican congressman – Reps. Albert Quie, Archer Nelson, Clark MacGregor and Odin Langen.



# Minnesotans Head to Selma

*In 1965, many Minnesotans made trips to Selma, Alabama to “see for themselves” the reports in the news and to help with voting rights efforts. The article below was published in the Minneapolis Star on March 19, 1965.*

## 14 Volunteers for Selma Trip

*Minneapolis Star, March 19, 1965*

Eight college students and six adults so far have volunteered for a trip to Selma, Ala., to “see for themselves” what’s happening in the civil rights movement.

The trip is being sponsored by a group of University of Minnesota students, and trip – planning headquarters are at the home of Jack Mogelson, 3152 Florida Av., St. Louis Park.

Mogelson said the group is also trying to raise funds to help pay trip expenses. The group plans to leave here sometime Sunday morning and return next Friday. He said it was hoped the number of volunteers for the bus trip would be 35.

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*In 1965, the president of St. Thomas College in Minnesota traveled to Selma, Alabama to speak at the memorial service of civil rights activist Reverend James J. Reeb, who was a St. Olaf graduate and killed during the civil rights marches in Selma. His trip was covered in the St. Paul Dispatch on March 16, 1965.*

## Msgr. Shannon Returns Here

*St. Paul Dispatch, March 16, 1965.*

Msgr. James Shannon, president of St. Thomas college, returned here today from Selma, Ala., saying that he was “greatly encouraged” by what he saw there.

Msgr. Shannon spoke in appreciation of the Rev. James J. Reeb at a memorial service conducted Monday in Selma for the slain Unitarian minister.

The highest ranking Catholic clergyman at the memorial service, Msgr. Shannon, will be consecrated a bishop March 31 in the St. Paul Cathedral.

He was one of a number of clergyman of both Protestant and Catholic faiths who went to Selma Sunday to be present there at the services Monday.

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# Olaf Alum Murdered in Selma

*Civil rights activist Reverend James J. Reeb was killed during the civil rights marches in Selma, Alabama. He died on March 11, 1965. Rev. Reeb was a graduate of St. Olaf College in Minnesota. Following his death, St. Olaf announced a lecture series in his honor, as reported by the St. Paul Dispatch on March 16, 1965.*

## St. Olaf's Announces Reeb Lecture Series

*St. Paul Dispatch, March 16, 1965*

NORTHFIELD—The president of St. Olaf college today announced the establishment of the James J. Reeb Memorial lecture series in honor of the clergyman killed in the cause of civil rights in Selma last week.

President Sidney Rand made the announcement at a memorial service at 9 a.m. today in the college chapel. The Rev. Mr. Reeb was a graduate of St. Olaf in the class of 1950.

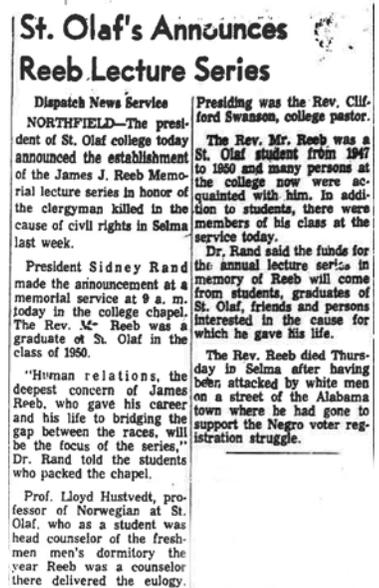
“Human relations, the deepest concern of James Reeb, who gave his career and his life to bridging the gap between the races, will be the focus of the series,” Dr. Rand told the students who packed the chapel.

Prof. Lloyd Hustvedt, professor of Norwegian at St. Olaf, who as a student was head counselor of the freshmen men's dormitory the year Reeb was a counselor there delivered his eulogy. Presiding was the Rev. Clifford Swanson, college pastor.

The Rev. Mr. Reeb was a St. Olaf student from 1947 to 1950 and many persons at the college now were acquainted with him. In addition to students, there were members of his class at the service today.

Dr. Rand said the funds for the annual lecture series in memory of Reeb will come from students, graduates of St. Olaf, friends and persons interested in the cause for which he gave his life.

The Rev. Reeb died Thursday in Selma after having been attacked by white men on a street of the Alabama town where he had gone to support the Negro voter registration struggle.



# Local Leaders Speak Out

*During the civil rights marches in Selma and after President Lyndon B. Johnson addressed a joint session of Congress and called on them to pass a voting rights bill, local elected and party officials spoke out. St. Paul Mayor George Vavoulis sent telegrams to Minnesota's congressional delegation and the Hennepin County DFL passed a resolution supporting voting rights for all citizens, according to articles in the St. Paul Dispatch and Minneapolis Spokesman on March 16 and March 18, 1965, respectively.*

## Vavoulis Supports Right-to-Vote

*St. Paul Dispatch, March 16, 1965*

Mayor George Vavoulis sent telegrams today to Minnesota members of congress urging them all to support the federal administration's right-to-vote program. A short time later his move was approved by the City Council. The mayor wired:

"America's future and confirming symbol of a free and democratic society can only be maintained by all Americans being able to exercise their inalienable right to vote. "I respectfully urge you to let Americans know that the citizens of St. Paul and Minnesota demand that the right to vote shall be guaranteed." The message did not specifically mention President Johnson's Monday night speech and proposals for a right-to-vote bill.

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## Alabama Hit By Hennepin County DFL Convention Resolution

*Minneapolis Spokesman, March 18, 1965*

The Hennepin County DFL Convention meeting in Minneapolis Saturday responded to a resolution deploring the injustice and denial of rights in Selma, Ala., by staging a demonstration of support for voting rights for all citizens.

Merle Kruschke, candidate for Alderman in the Eighth Ward, introduced the resolution which was seconded by Sam Richardson, vice-chairman of the Minneapolis Branch NAACP and by State Representative Robert Latz. Leading the demonstration and the singing of the civil rights anthem, "We Shall Overcome" were Kruschke, Richardson and Minneapolis Mayor Arthur Naftalin.

The demonstration, one of the highlights of the day long convention, consisted of delegates and public DFL officials carrying placards and singing as they marched several times around the convention hall.

The convention also passed a resolution requesting Congress to provide for federal voting registrars in those areas where citizens are being denied the right to vote. Candidate Kruschke had previously dedicated his campaign efforts for election to the Minneapolis City Council to the "brotherhood of man and the enjoyment of equal opportunity for all—not only in the area of voting rights but also in the total conduct of our public and private lives."

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Prior to the demonstration, several speakers including Mayor Naftalin, Congressman Donald Fraser, State DFL chairman George Farr and retiring Hennepin County DFL chairman Steve Nebotska called upon the convention delegates to respond to Selma, Alabama, by "marching, writing, speaking and passing resolutions."  
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# Johnson's Speech to Congress

*After President Lyndon B. Johnson called on Congress to pass a voting rights bill, the Minneapolis Spokesman published an editorial on March 18, 1965 praising the President for "perhaps the greatest speech a Chief Executive of this great Nation ever made..."*

## A President's Finest Hour

*Minneapolis Spokesman, March 18, 1965*

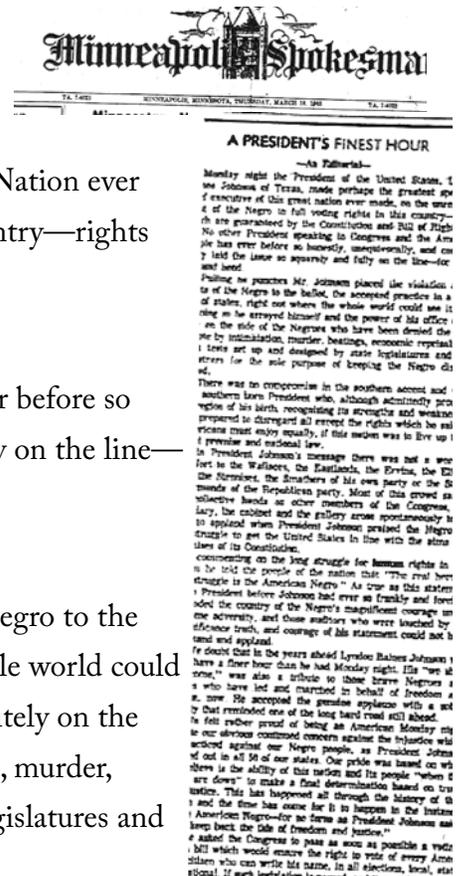
Monday night the President of the United States, Lyndon Baines Johnson of Texas, made perhaps the greatest speech a Chief Executive of this great Nation ever made, on the unresolved right of the Negro to full voting rights in this country—rights which are guaranteed by the Constitution and Bill of Rights.

No other President speaking to Congress and the American people has ever before so honestly, unequivocally, and courageously laid the issue so squarely and fully on the line—for all to see and heed.

Pulling no punches, Mr. Johnson placed the violation of the rights of the Negro to the ballot, the accepted practice in a number of States, right out where the whole world could see it. And in doing so, he arrayed himself and the power of his office definitely on the side of the Negroes who have been denied the right to vote by intimidation, murder, beatings, economic reprisals, and trick tests set up and designed by State legislatures and vote registrars for the sole purpose of keeping the Negro disfranchised.

There was no compromise in the southern accent and voice of a southern born President who, although admittedly proud of the region of his birth, recognizing its strengths and weaknesses, was prepared to disregard all except the rights which he said all Americans must enjoy equally, if this Nation was to live up to its great promise and national law.

In President Johnson's message there was not a word of comfort to the Wallaces, the Eastlands, the Ervins, the Ellenders, the Stennises, the Smathers of his own part or the Strom Thurmonds of the Republican Party. Most of this crowd sat on its collective hands as other Members of the Congress, the judiciary, the Cabinet, and the gallery arose spontaneously to its feet to applaud when President Johnson praised the Negro for his struggle to get the United States in line with the aims and promises of its Constitution.



# Johnson's Speech to Congress

In commenting on the long struggle for human rights in this Nation he told the people of the Nation that, "The real hero of this struggle is the American Negro." As true as this statement is, no President before Johnson had ever so frankly and forcibly reminded the country of the Negro's magnificent courage under extreme adversity, and those auditors who were touched by the magnificent truth, and courage of his statement could not help but stand and applaud.

We doubt that in the years ahead Lyndon Baines Johnson will ever have a finer hour than he had Monday night. His "we shall overcome," was also a tribute to those brave Negroes and whites who have led and marched in behalf of freedom and justice, now. He accepted the genuine applause with a sober dignity that reminded one of the long hard road still ahead.

We felt rather proud of being an American Monday night despite our obvious continued concern against the injustice which is practiced against our Negro people, as President Johnson pointed out in all 50 of our States. Our pride was based on what we believe is the ability of this Nation and its people "when the chips are down" to make a final determination based on truth and justice. This has happened all through the history of this Nation and the time has come for it to happen in the instance of the American Negro—for no force as President Johnson said, "can keep back the tide of freedom and justice."

He asked the Congress to pass as soon as possible a voting rights bill which would insure the right to vote of every American citizen who can write his name, in all elections; local, State, and National. If such legislation is passed, and it must be enacted, the final barriers to full citizenship will have been pushed aside to allow every qualified American man and woman of voting age to participate in the selection of public officials. This will greatly affect the peace, harmony, and unity of the country which has long been divided by the denial of constitutional rights, to part of the country's citizenry.

The Nation owes a debt of gratitude to President Johnson and the aroused public opinion which convinced him that he had to take a strong position and promised him the support which made his Monday night speech such a great document of true statesmanship. -CECIL NEWMAN.

# Letters to the Editor

*During the civil rights marches in Selma, Alabama, Minnesotans submitted letters to their local newspapers. Below are two examples of letters that ran in the Minneapolis Star on March 19 and March 20, 1965.*

## Why Civil Rights Laws?

To the editor: The March 12 Star carried the headline, "Jet Sent for Mr. Reeb's Family." The article stated that Selma's public safety director said four Selma men had been arrested and charged with murder. They were released later under \$25,000 bond each. He said Alabama law permits bonds on a murder charge if there is indication that a jury will not return the death penalty.

How on earth do they know the death penalty will not be asked for by a jury before the facts are presented to the jury? It certainly looks cut and dried, and not good for the people or laws of Alabama. I would never in my life believe the majority of people in Alabama sanction the things going on at this time in Alabama.

Why do we need civil rights and voting legislation for Negroes when they are natural born citizens of the United States? The 14th Amendment, adopted in 1868, states that everyone born in the United States is a citizen and is entitled to full citizen's rights and that's that. All we need is law enforcement. Why do we have to spell it out? – Kenneth J. Dumas, Hopkins

## Coercion of Voters

To the Editor: Some of the civil rights proponents have about as much concern for the individual's rights as the "War on Poverty" has for helping the poor. Most everyone agrees that it is wrong to interfere with voting rights, but what about use of the "pork barrel" to intimidate voters?

Sen. Mondale displayed emotional concern over voting rights when speaking to the gathering at the state capitol; but where was his concern when an official on government payroll told the citizens at Fridley that the way to get a new post office was to elect a Democrat?

What about the vote irregularities the big city Democratic machines indulge in? What about the coercion that goes on throughout the union monopoly?

Mondale aligns himself with those who promise to amend the Taft-Hartley law to give labor leaders more power over the individual. – I. Nalewaja, Monticello, Minn.

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Monticello, Minn.

—I. Nalewaja.

# St. Paul Pastors Jailed in Selma

*Six Minnesotans were arrested in Selma, Alabama while "praying and picketing" at the home of Selma Mayor Joseph Smitherman. The Minnesotans were among more than 300 civil rights demonstrators arrested that day. The article below was published in the St. Paul Pioneer Press on March 21, 1965.*

## 4 St. Paul Pastors Go to Jail in Selma

*St. Paul Pioneer Press, March 21, 1965.*

Six Minnesotans, including four St. Paul clergymen, were among the more than 300 civil rights demonstrators arrested in Selma, Ala., the Associated Press reported Saturday. They were in a group praying and picketing at the home of Mayor Joseph Smitherman of Selma when they were taken into custody.

They are the Rev. David W. Benson, assistant pastor at St. John the Evangelist Episcopal church; the Rev. John Metzger, pastor of Hamline Methodist church; the Rev. Richard Tice, associate minister of Central Park Methodist church, and the Rev. Thomas Payne, pastor of Arlington Hills Methodist church. Also arrested were Mrs. Ann Goodwin, Crystal, and the Rev. Rollin Norris, vicar of Christ Episcopal Mission, Spring Lake Park.

Mrs. Goodwin is devotional chairman for the Episcopal Church Women of Minnesota.

Wilson Baker, Selma public safety director, told the demonstrators, "We have had trouble with you folks before, and we are taking you into custody to protect you."

Those arrested were held about 3 hours and spent the night in a community center behind the city hall.

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# Senate Passes Voting Rights Act

On May 26, 1965, the United State Senate passed the Voting Rights Act, 77 to 19, with support from both of Minnesota's U.S. Senators, Eugene McCarthy and Walter Mondale. The Senate's passage of the bill made the front pages of the Minneapolis Tribune and St. Paul Pioneer Press on May 27, 1965.



## Voting Right Bill Passed By Senate

1 KILLED, 24 INJURED

### More Tornadoes Batter Midwest

Pioneer Press Wire Services  
More than 40 tornadoes and vicious winds raked sections of nine central states Wednesday, injuring at least 24 persons and killing one.  
More than 30 funnel clouds were spotted in and around Grand Rapids, Mich., and at least five tornadoes slammed through the Chicago area. The weather onslaught hit parts of Oklahoma, Kansas, Missouri, Illinois, Iowa, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin.

### Cloture Rule Chokes Off Opposition

Pioneer Press Wire Services  
WASHINGTON — An overpowering coalition of Democratic and Republican senators passed President Johnson's far-reaching voting rights bill Wednesday, 77 to 19. Southern opposition was

St. Paul Pioneer Press

Twins Take First Place  
Defeat Boston, 8-7, as Chicago Loses

## Senate Passes Voting Rights Bill, 77 to 19

(DETAILS in Sports Section)



**John John's Class** John F. Kennedy, circled, 4-year-old son of the late president, is a member of the nursery class at St. David's School, New York City, operated by Roman Catholic laymen. A school official said, "He's a great kid and likes school very much."

### Southerners Overridden by Coalition

WASHINGTON, D.C. — (UPI)—An overpowering coalition of Democratic and Republican senators passed President Johnson's far-reaching voting rights bill Wednesday, 77 to 19. Southern opposition was routed under a cloture rule that choked off debate.

The vote sending the precedent-setting measure to the House came after five weeks of Senate debate. A similar but somewhat stronger bill already has been approved by the House Judiciary Committee. Congressional approval this session seems certain.

Upon becoming law, the bill would provide federal guarantees of Negro rights to register and vote in Southern states if it is established that such requirements as literacy tests have been used to discriminate.

IT WOULD BE the first federal legislation to nullify state qualifications for voters in state and local elections.

On the final Senate passage, 47 Democrats and 30 Republicans voted for the legislation, which had the backing of both party leaders. The "no" votes were

Minneapolis Tribune

# Letters to Members of Congress

*During the debate over the Voting Rights Act of 1965, it was common for Minnesotans to write to members of Congress. A Duluth resident sent a letter to Congressman John A. Blatnik, who represented Minnesota's 8th District, urging him to support voting rights for all Americans. Below is Congressman Blatnik's response, which was sent on July 8, 1965, one day before the United States House of Representatives passed the Voting Rights Act, 333-85.*

Dear Mr. Chagnon:

Thank you for your recent communication concerning the voting rights of Americans. Certainly this is a cherished privilege of every American and one that must be zealously protected. The Mississippi situation has focused attention on this vital matter.

CHAGNON, Raymond  
Jud-rights

We in Congress are charged with the responsibility of insuring our citizens the privilege of voting. Please know that I will be restless until this responsibility is fully discharged.

July 8, 1965

Mr. Raymond Chagnon  
2811 E. Superior Street  
Duluth, Minnesota #55812

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We in Congress are charged with the responsibility of insuring our citizens the privilege of voting. Please know that I will be restless until this responsibility is fully discharged.

The current voting rights legislation is presently being considered on the floor of the House where I have been giving it my full support. A total of 13 days of public hearings have been held on this subject and a total of 121 bills were introduced on voting rights. I remain hopeful of early enactment of the strongest possible voting rights legislation.

Thank you again for expressing your interest in this most important matter. As you know, the Senate on May 26th passed a voting rights bill by a 77-19 margin.

With warm personal regards.

Sincerely yours,

John A. Blatnik, M. C.

JAB:ac

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John A. Blatnik, M. C.

# John Lewis Visits Minnesota

*On August 2, 1965, thousands of Minnesotans (teenagers, college students, ministers, etc.) attended a voting rights rally at the College of St. Thomas, St. Paul, to hear 25-year-old John Lewis, national chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, speak. The event was previewed that day in the Minneapolis Star.*

*Lewis, who has been a member of Congress since 1987, said at the rally that after three days of traveling in Minnesota that "this is perhaps the only state in the country that is dramatizing in a massive way its concern for the people in the South," according to a St. Paul Pioneer Press article that ran the following day. The rally launched a three-day statewide sales campaign for brotherhood buttons, which pictured a "black and white handclasp...intended as symbols for racial understanding."*

## MINNESOTA TASK FORCE Civil Rights Rally Tonight

An estimated 3,000 persons, primarily teenagers, are expected to attend a Minnesota Task Force orientation rally at 8 p.m. today in the athletic stadium at the College of St. Thomas, St. Paul.

The rally will launch a three-day state-wide sale of "brotherhood buttons" to current civil rights activities in the South. Freedom activities in the South and songs will be led by folk singer Cyril Paul.

Also scheduled to appear are Bishop James Shannon, St. Thomas president; the Rev. Roland Robinson of Calvary Methodist Church; Rabbi Marc Reibhaber of Tifereth Jacob Congregation, and the Rev. Mordeau Williams of St. James A.M.E. Church.

## RALLY AT ST. THOMAS

### Orientation Held By Rights Group

By JERRY MONTGOMERY  
Staff Writer

The only thing Thursday night's thundershower dampened at the Minnesota Task Force civil rights rally at the College of St. Thomas was the lawn.

Nearly a thousand teenagers, college students, ministers, teachers, nuns and politicians gathered in the St. Thomas gymnasium to sing civil rights songs and listen to John Lewis, 25, national chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).

The occasion was billed as an orientation rally for the Task Force before launching a statewide sales campaign for brotherhood buttons. They hope to raise \$32,000 through the efforts of 3,000 young people and adults in 75 Minnesota communities to support civil rights projects in the South.

After three days of traveling in Minnesota, Lewis said "this is perhaps the only state in the country that is dramatizing in a massive way its concern for the people in the South."

"What you do in Minnesota by participating in the Brotherhood button drive is to give the Negroes of the South a sense of hope," he said.

"The Negroes of the South are saying now they want to register and vote, to participate in the democratic process," Lewis said. "Nothing can stop the movement because people have made up their minds to have freedom now."

"We have come a long way," he said, "but it will ..."

# Final Bill Passage and Signing

On August 6, 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act of 1965 into law surrounded by Congressional and civil rights leaders, such as Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rosa Parks. On August 7, the Department of Justice filed suit in Mississippi to strike down the state's poll tax. On August 10, the Department of Justice filed suits in Texas, Alabama, and Virginia.



Yoichi R. Okamoto / Lyndon B. Johnson Library

## Johnson to Sign Vote Bill Tomorrow

Picture on Page 2A  
By EDMOND LEBRETON  
WASHINGTON, D.C.—(AP)—President Johnson will go to the Capitol Friday to sign into law his Negro voting rights bill.  
Press Secretary Bill D. Moyers announced today that Mr. Johnson will sign the bill at noon with his cabinet on a ceremony in which President Abraham Lincoln signed at the Capitol a bill giving freedom to slaves employed by Confederates in carrying out the Civil War.  
Mr. Johnson says "the bill brings within our immediate vision the day when every American can enter a polling booth without fear or hindrance."  
President went to the Capitol to extend congratulations in person.  
Mr. Johnson, in a formal statement, thanked on behalf of the country the members of Congress of both parties who voted for the measure.  
"Their action honors them as much as it perfects our country," he said, and later

## Minneapolis Star, August 5, 1965

THE MINNEAPOLIS **STAR**  
Two Sections 28 PAGES \*  
Telephone 375-4141 Single Copy Price 10c Lower Price for Carrier Delivery

### U.S. Filing Suits to Enforce New Negro Vote Law

LBJ Presses Polling Machinery; Long Road to Ballot for Negroes; Page 2A  
By MARTHA COLE  
WASHINGTON, D. C.—(AP)—The Department of Justice presses the button today to start enforcement of the new law against obstacles to Negro voting.  
The department was to go into court at Jackson, Miss., to challenge that state's poll tax. Federal voting registration machinery

it is now possible for a good many thousand Negro citizens to be registered by the end of the year.  
Joe T. Patterson, Mississippi's attorney general, said he was surprised by the speed of the Justice Department suit.  
He said the voting rights bill and the planned suit could affect the outcome of an Aug. 17 referendum on a state constitutional amendment easing voter registration

## Minneapolis Star, August 7, 1965

## LBJ Picks Capitol for Vote Signing

Enforcing Vote Rights Act Planned; King Sees 900,000 Negroes Registering; Page 2A

WASHINGTON, D.C.—(AP)—President Johnson went to the Capitol to sign the voting rights bill today and said that with this action "we strike away the last major shackles of those fierce and ancient bonds" of the Negroes.

Mr. Johnson announced that at 1 p.m. Saturday at his direction, Atty. Gen. Nicholas Katzenbach will file a law suit challenging the constitutionality of the Mississippi poll tax.

"This," he said, "will begin the legal process which, I confidently believe, will very soon prohibit any state from requiring the payment of

## Minneapolis Star, August 6, 1965