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FOCUS

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Toward a Diverse But United America

As we approach the threshold of a new century, we are taking with us this disturbing baggage: the deep persistent problems of racism, now joined by the growing strains of a new era of ethnic intolerance. Equally disturbing, we seem to be shedding much of the positive, optimistic spirit and the policies that contributed to three decades of progress in race relations. There is little doubt that accommodating racial and ethnic diversity is now one of the principal challenges facing American society and that the challenge will grow considerably in the years ahead.

I am concerned that, as a society, we have given too little serious thought to these matters. We have clung to the classic themes and old cliches about our rich and unique history of diversity. While we proudly espouse the core values of the American creed, we have been reluctant to take specific actions to reduce racial and ethnic conflict, ensure equal opportunity, and build support for diversity as a genuinely positive attribute of a strong, united America.

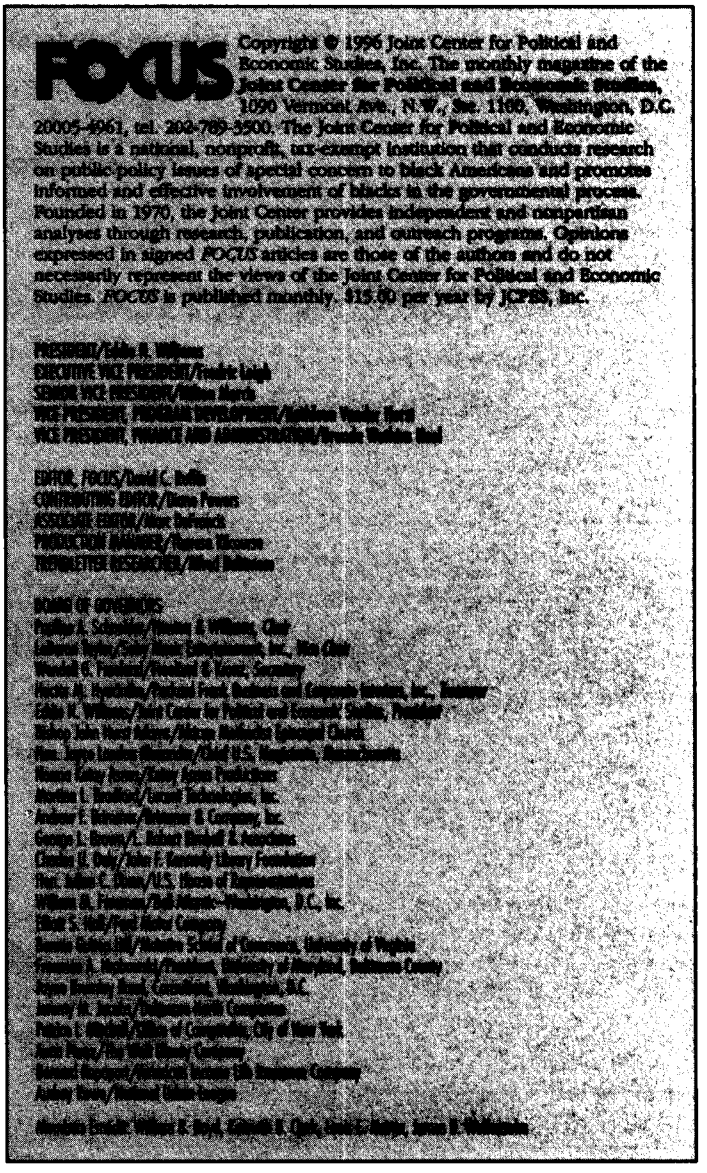
It is imperative that we, as a nation, move swiftly and boldly to address the growing challenges to the very source of our nation—its strong pluralist values. It is essential that we consider specifically how we proceed as a society and as individuals to make that vision come true. I do not have full or even adequate answers to this challenge, but let me suggest four steps that might be worth considering:

1. We must find new ways to reaffirm and reinforce our society's commitment to diversity. It is not enough to simply adhere to the values underlying our diversity, we must work to ensure that those values are widely shared across the society and across the generations.
2. We need to maintain a high level of realism about the challenge of diversity and our progress with it. We need to be realistic about the great successes we have achieved as well as the great deal that still remains to be done. It is our successes that give us confidence about future possibilities.
3. We need to redouble our efforts to foster effective communication across racial and ethnic lines to build bridges of trust and understanding. It is remarkable that while we are in the midst of a revolution in communications technology, we are experiencing increasing difficulty in communicating with each other.
4. We need to create new public and private institutions to help lead the effort to strengthen and enhance our progress with diversity. When this nation is convinced of the importance of an objective, it organizes to pursue it. Today, we have a few fading structures for meeting the growing needs associated with the pursuit of diversity, none really suited to the changing character and context of the challenge we face. Why not, for example, urge the creation of a new generation of diversity institutions to reinforce the U.S. Civil Rights Commission? Why not have a statutory "National Council on Diversity" with similar state and local institutions?

I think that the great promise of a new age of dramatic technological advances, diminished ideological conflicts, and a smaller and more integrated world beckons us. As Americans, we have both the opportunity and the responsibility for global leadership in the new century. Let us resolve to make every effort to lead the way by encouraging the creation of a model of diversity for the world to follow and for our children to inherit. ■



PRESIDENT



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The Search for Fairness in Testing Continues

In Too Many Cases, Standardized Tests Are Used to Deny Access to Education and Employment to Minorities and the Poor

by William H. Gray III

In recent American history, standardized tests have been used to expand opportunity in the workplace and academia by helping to shift criteria for job recruitment and for admission to educational institutions away from privilege and personal connections toward a merit-based process. But during the past three decades, the validity and reliability of standardized tests have been questioned. Two criticisms stand out: the cultural bias of the content of tests and the use of the tests to discriminate against minorities and poor people.

Yet, each year, more than 1 million students take the Scholastic Assessment Tests (SATs) and nearly the same number take the American College Testing (ACT) as requirements for admission to the nation's colleges and universities. In addition, children in practically every school undergo some form of standards-based assessment or standardized tests to determine whether they will be promoted from one grade to the next. Tests are also used to evaluate teacher performance and establish faculty merit-pay increases or to comply with education regulations imposed by the government. Standardized tests also are commonly used as tools for hiring and promotions in private- and public-sector jobs.

Despite concerns that many standardized tests are flawed by cultural bias, lack job-relevant material, fail to predict job or academic performance, and are used inappropriately, courts often have sided with the testing industry. They have upheld tests that reduce opportunities for employment, college admissions, and scholarships, and ultimately, progress toward social and economic equality.

Affirmative Action and Testing

Municipal public safety agencies are a prominent arena in which tests have limited opportunities for minorities. For example, evidence is mounting that the use of tests for hiring and promotions has led to the appointment of too few African Americans and Hispanics in Chicago's police and fire departments. Of 26,000 applicants who took the entry firefighters' examination last July, more than 14,000, or 54 percent, were black or Hispanic. Yet only 356, or 20 percent, of the 1,782 individuals who achieved a passing score were black or Hispanic. Similarly, last year the Chicago Police Department, which is 40 percent black and Hispanic, promoted 54 officers to detective on the basis of their test scores. But only three of the 54 new detectives were minorities—one African American and two Hispanics. Thus, the test scores operated to deny promotions to many talented African American and Hispanic police officers who had demonstrated exemplary service to the force. These tests have been challenged in the courts, and a special commission was established by the city to find alternatives to the tests.

Countermeasures by some institutions and agencies to limit the deleterious impact of standardized tests on minorities have become the targets of lawsuits. Indeed, some tests have been used to attack affirmative action. A minority admissions program administered by the University of Texas Law School to achieve more diversity in incoming classes was challenged in *Hopwood* v. *State of Texas*. In a lawsuit filed in September, 1992, Cheryl Hopwood and three other white plaintiffs who were turned down for admission to the law school charged that they were discriminated against on the basis of race. They objected to the law school's separate admissions committees for African Americans and Mexican Americans and contended that minority applicants were admitted to the law school with Texas Index scores lower than theirs (Texas Index scores are based on Law School Admission Test scores and college grades). Hopwood had a higher Texas Index score than 63 of the 90 African American and Mexican American law students who entered last year, but she also had a higher score than 109 white students who were admitted. She chose, however, to focus her attack on the minority admissions process but didn't protest the admission of the 109 white students with lower scores than hers.

The law school stated its goal was to admit a class of 10 percent Mexican Americans and 5 percent blacks, percentages roughly comparable to those of blacks and Mexican Americans graduating from Texas colleges and universities. The plaintiffs argued that to have the Texas Index of the black and Mexican American applicants ranked in a separate process was discriminatory.

In addition to its decision that the separate admissions committees were illegal, the Fifth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that white students may not be rejected by the University of Texas Law School if their scores on the Texas Index exceed those of blacks and Mexican Americans who are being admitted—perhaps the most damaging aspect of the *Hopwood* case. The Fifth Circuit's ruling was upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court in July 1996. One of the results of the lawsuit has been to reinforce the impression that the plaintiffs were higher achievers than *all* the minority students, perpetuating a racist stereotype that

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Mr. Gray is president and CEO of the United Negro College Fund and a former member of the U.S. House of Representatives.

Testing

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minorities are academically less qualified than their white counterparts.

In the final analysis, test scores were not a reliable predictor of success in the law school. According to the Law School Admissions Council, African Americans admitted to the law school with lower test scores before the *Hopwood* case and the Fifth Circuit Court ruling had rates of graduating and passing the Texas Bar Examination similar to their white law school colleagues.

In the 1970s, Mississippi established an admissions policy requiring higher minimum composite scores on the ACT for the five historically white institutions than for the three historically black institutions in the state higher education system. The state recently altered its policy by establishing a uniform minimum cut-off score of 16 on the ACT test for admission to all of its universities.

This new policy raises concern that it may substantially reduce access to the state's universities for the state's poor black students, who are among the population with the most to gain from a college education. When Mississippi implements this policy, more than one-half of the African Americans who have been entering these institutions each year will fail to meet minimum admissions requirements. There is no evidence that the cut-off scores will improve the quality of Mississippi's colleges and universities, however, and many capable students may be unfairly and unnecessarily denied a college education.

Public attacks on policies to limit the negative effects of standardized tests, especially by political figures, are designed to induce fear and negative public perceptions of African Americans, as the Willie Horton ads did during the 1988 presidential election.

Poor Family = Poor Test Results

The problems of educational testing pertaining to blacks are also problems for poor people, as witnessed in the high correlation between family income and test scores. Standardized tests are not only barriers, at times, to racial inclusion, they may also operate to maintain socioeconomic class divisions. Individuals from families with annual incomes of $70,000 or more who took the SAT in 1995 had a combined score of 1004 compared with a combined score of 813 for those from families with incomes of less than $20,000.

In California, students receive bonus points in their grade point average (GPA) calculations just for taking advanced placement courses. Inflated GPAs provide middle- and upper-class applicants for college admissions an edge over disadvantaged applicants. Few low-income students, through no fault of their own, have access to the variety of advanced placement courses available to their more affluent peers. Furthermore, low-income and minority students seldom have the opportunity to enhance their SAT scores by taking costly preparatory courses.

The conflict over testing has deepened the chasm between social classes. The fear among America's privileged class is that special treatment granted to the nation's poor and minorities in the name of equal opportunity or affirmative action reduces the quality of the institutions they attend and threatens to erode the privileges that have been the exclusive province of the nation's wealthier citizens. The fear among the poor and minorities is that the expanded use of educational tests will reduce their opportunities for upward social and economic mobility and their ability to share in the American dream.

Given the present will of some of our government leaders, the courts, and many colleges and universities to use tests to deny access, it rests upon the shoulders of those of you in the testing community to take on more of the responsibility for ensuring that your testing instruments are designed to ensure fairness and do not close the door to access and opportunity for the neediest segment of the American population. ■

SAT and ACT Performance by Race and Ethnic Group, 1995

Race/Ethnic Group	SAT Composite Score	ACT Composite Score
Asian/Asian American/Pacific Islander	956	21.6
White	946	21.5
American Indian/Alaskan Native	850	18.6
Hispanic Latino:		
Mexican/Mexican American	802	18.6
Puerto Rican	783	18.7
Black/African American	744	17.1

Sources: *College Bound Seniors: 1995 Profile of SAT Program Test Takers;* American College Testing Program, Inc.

SAT Performance by Income, 1995

Income	Number	Percent	Mean Verbal Score	Mean Math Score
Less than $10,000	47,396	5	354	415
$10,000 – $19,999	88,696	10	380	433
$20,000 – $29,999	111,774	13	405	454
$30,000 – $39,999	133,976	15	420	468
$40,000 – $49,999	108,921	12	431	482
$50,000 – $59,999	99,552	11	440	493
$60,000 – $69,999	75,918	9	448	502
$70,000 or more	220,394	25	471	533

Source: *College Bound Seniors: 1995 Profile of SAT Program Test Takers*

JUNE / JULY 1996

TRENDLETTER

POLITICAL REPORT

Yes or No for Congressional Dynasty In Memphis

Declaring that "It's time for a new vision and a new generation," eleven-term Rep. **HAROLD FORD SR.**, 51, (D–Tenn.) is stepping down from Congress at the end of this session and backing his son, **HAROLD FORD, JR.**, to replace him as the representative of Tennessee's majority-black 9th congressional district in Memphis.

Congressman Ford is the first and only African American from Tennessee elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. When the Democrats held a majority in Congress, Ford chaired the House Ways and Means Human Resources subcommittee, a panel that was at the center of the welfare reform debate. The 9th district, which consists of most of Memphis and part of its suburbs, is 59 percent black and solidly Democratic.

Ford's hope to pass his seat on to his son has not been universally embraced. The field of contenders for the August 1 primary has been jammed with 20 other candidates. In all, six Democrats, six Republicans, and nine Independents have filed for the primary. Prominent among them are Harold the younger, and Democratic state legislators **RUFUS JONES** and **STEVE COHEN.**

Harold Jr., 26, who graduated from the University of Michigan Law School in May, has never held elected office. He has worked summer jobs at the Democratic National Committee, the U.S. Senate Budget Committee, in law firms in Washington, and as a fellow at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

He vowed continued support for social programs long backed by his father, such as Head Start, as well as support for primary health care. He opposes current plans for massive construction of new prisons and rejects the idea, popular in Congress today, that environmental protection and economic growth are antithetical.

Rufus Jones, 55, a black member of the Tennessee House of Representatives for seven terms, has been the owner of a small supermarket chain and has served on the boards of the Memphis Urban League, NAACP, National Business League, and the Memphis Boys Club. Jones is running on a platform of eliminating gang violence, promoting economic growth, reforming welfare through job training, controlling government spending, and protecting social security.

As a legislator, Jones has sponsored measures to create a Tennessee Department of Minority Business Enterprise and a minority business development revolving loan fund and to establish a Tennessee Teaching Scholarship Act. Jones also supported the use of the state's Rainy Day Fund to provide financial support for hospitals that care for large numbers of indigent patients.

Three-term state senator and attorney Steve Cohen, one of the white candidates in the race, represents a midtown Memphis district. In 1994, Cohen was an unsuccessful candidate for governor in the Democratic primary. Prior to establishing his private legal practice in 1978, he served as a legal advisor to the Memphis Police Department. Cohen, who led all the candidates in a recent opinion poll, strongly opposes what he considers to be Ford's attempt to form a family dynasty in Congress. "It is simply foreign to our system and our nature to anoint someone for office. In our country, there is no birthright for office," he said.

Georgia Blacks Win In New Districts

On July 9, black Democratic members of Congress **CYNTHIA McKINNEY** and **SANFORD BISHOP** of Georgia both won their primaries even though their districts were redrawn to dramatically reduce the percentages of black voters in them. Running in the newly formed 4th congressional district, McKinney surprised many with her resounding defeat of three white male contenders with 68 percent of the vote. Located in DeKalb County, east of

Atlanta, the 4th district is only 32 percent black, half the concentration of her former district, the 11th (60 percent black). Attorney **COMER YATES** came in a distant second with 23 percent of the vote, followed by **RON SLOTIN** who had resigned his state legislative seat to run for Congress and received only 8 percent of the vote, and attorney **DAVID HUGHES**, who received 2 percent.

Pundits had declared their skepticism of McKinney's chances of winning in a majority-white district. After her victory, she said: "My goal in Georgia and Washington is to bring people together, black and white, young and old, urban and rural." In November, she will face Republican attorney **JOHN MITNICK** who prevailed over two other contenders for the GOP nomination.

Garnering 59 percent of the vote in his reconfigured 2nd district, Sanford Bishop fared about as well as McKinney did in the primary. The 2nd district, which includes southern Georgia cities Albany and Valdosta, had previously had a 48-percent black voting-age population, but this has now been reduced to 35 percent. Bishop beat white opponents **W.T. GAMBLE III** and **WALTER H. LEWIS**. Gamble, an attorney and former field representative in one of Bishop's district offices, received 33 percent of the vote, and Lewis, a businessman, got 8 percent. Bishop will take on Republican nominee **DARREL EALUM**, an Albany rental property manager, in the fall.

McKinney and Bishop, both of whom expect a difficult race in November, were elected to Congress in 1992 when their majority-black congressional districts were created after the 1990 census and reapportionment. Both of their districts were redrawn last year after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned them as racially gerrymandered. Majority-minority districts in Florida, Louisiana, North Carolina, and Texas have also been ruled unconstitutional by federal courts, which charge that race had been the primary factor in drawing the districts.

The other black member of the Georgia delegation in the U.S. House of Representatives is five-term Democratic Congressman **JOHN LEWIS** from Atlanta. All the other members of the 11-member delegation are white male Republicans.

Denver's Black, White, and Brown Congressional Race

When Denver Democratic Rep. **PATRICIA SCHROEDER** announced her retirement from Congress this year after 12 terms in office, her 1st congressional district seat became the focus of a hot election. Among the contenders for the seat are a 32-year-old black attorney, **JOE ROGERS**, the Republican nominee, and two candidates vying for the Democratic nomination in the August 13 primary, white state representative **DIANA DeGETTE** and Hispanic telecommunications executive **TIM SANDOS**.

Rogers is a man of humble beginnings who grew up in a black and Hispanic working-class neighborhood in northeast Denver. His family had received food stamps and welfare benefits for eight years during his childhood. An outstanding student, Rogers graduated from Arizona State University College of Law in 1989, served as an aide to Republican Colorado Sen. **HANK BROWN** in Washington from 1993 to 1995, and has worked in a Denver law firm. He provided pro bono legal services in a rural southeastern county of Colorado for six months in 1992.

Despite the fact that his family once needed welfare assistance, Rogers says, "the future isn't about the next social program." He is running on a platform that supports "family values" and business development, job creation, reducing the taxes, and increasing the wages of Americans. He says he "doesn't want to see a repeat of 1994 where, in one day, black Americans lost every ounce of political power in Congress because they had all their eggs in the Democratic basket."

Although he's a Republican, Rogers insists he is independent claiming that 40 percent of his campaign supporters are Democrats. He has reached out to black pastors who have traditionally backed Democratic candidates, and has criticized GOP presidential nominee-apparent **BOB DOLE**'s failure to address the NAACP's annual convention. "I'm a pragmatic person who seeks to solve problems—I don't care if it's a Democratic idea or a Republican idea," he says, "I just want to support ideas that will work." If elected, he says he will fight for a greater voice for African Americans in the GOP.

Diana DeGette and Tim Sandos will oppose each other for the Democratic nomination in the August 13 primary. DeGette, 39, is a civil rights and employment attorney who, after just two terms, was named assistant minority leader of the Colorado House of Representatives. Sandos, 38, is a regional director of government affairs for TCI Communications Inc. In 1991, he was elected to a four-year at-large seat on the Denver City Council. He previously served as education and family issues advisor to former Denver Mayor **FEDERICO PENA**. The winner of the Democratic primary will face Rogers in November. ■

ECONOMIC REPORT

A Minimum Wage Increase Will Help Millions

The proposed increase in the federal minimum wage is viewed by many economists as a hopeful step that could be particularly helpful to blacks. Today, 3.66 million American workers earn at or below the current minimum wage of $4.25 per hour. The proposed increase—to $5.15 per hour—would raise the incomes of at least 10 million American workers. In testimony before the Government Reform and Oversight Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives, Dr. **EDWARD MONTGOMERY**, a Joint Center senior research associate, noted that the increase would be especially helpful to African American men and women, who as a group are overrepresented among the lowest-paid workers in the country. According to Montgomery, the proposed increase would give 1.5 million blacks a pay hike.

Opponents of the increase claim that it would lead to substantial job loss among minimum wage workers. Nevertheless, when adjusted for inflation, the real value of the minimum wage is almost 30 percent lower today than it was in 1979. In fact, its adjusted value has fallen by nearly 50 cents just since the last increase in 1991. During this period, the employment of low-wage workers did not increase, supporting studies that show the employment rate of low and minimum wage workers is not very sensitive to small changes in the minimum wage's value. So there is no reason to expect that the proposed modest increase would harm employment significantly.

By contrast, the benefits of increasing family incomes through an increase in the minimum wage would be crucial, since almost 40 percent of minimum-wage workers today are the sole source of income for their families. Even in households with more than one earner, the average minimum-wage worker contributes 51 percent of the household's weekly earnings. When the wage was last increased in 1991, almost 33 percent of those receiving it lived in households near or below the poverty line. Research suggests that the proposed increase in the minimum wage to $5.15, when combined with other government programs like the Earned Income Tax Credit, would lift more than 300,000 people—100,000 of them children—out of poverty.

Opponents of the wage increase in the minimum wage also argue that since some minimum wage workers are teenagers from middle- or upper-class families, an increase would give a pay hike to those who do not "need" it. While a significant portion of minimum wage workers are teenagers, two-thirds are adults. Moreover, the majority of teenagers at this wage level come from low- or middle-income families whose economic standing is directly affected by their contributions (and this is especially true among African Americans).

Proposed Federal Guidelines for Minority Contracting Release

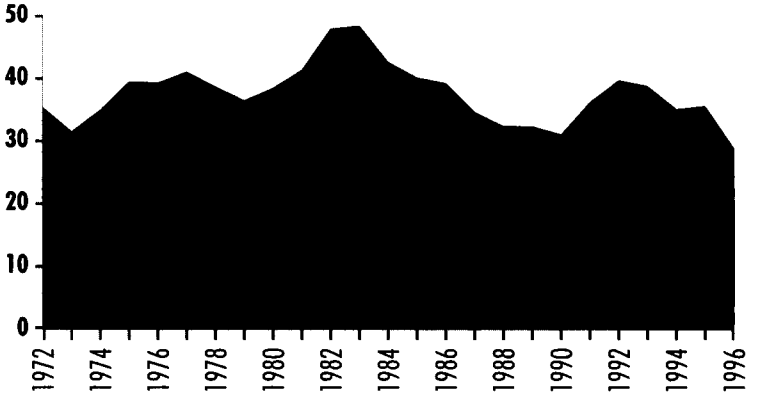
On May 23, the U.S. Department of Justice published its proposed reform of affirmative action policies in federal procurement. The proposal is designed to ensure compliance with the new standards set by the U.S. Supreme Court's June 1995 ruling in *Adarand Constructors, Inc.* v. *Pena.*

A key feature of the proposal is the requirement that the U.S. Department of Commerce set "benchmarks" for potential federal contracting with minority companies. If the government was found to be underutilizing minority firms within a given industry, federal agencies would be permitted to use race-conscious strategies to increase their contracting with these firms. If an agency reached or exceeded the benchmark and was expected to remain at that procure-

Black Unemployment Declines: A 20-Year Low

Unemployment rates of black population, by age: 1972–96

Adults 20 years and over and teens 16–19 years old



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Surveys.
Note: Figures for 1972 through 1995 are annual averages, those for 1996 are May figures only.

Economic Report *continued*

ment level, race-conscious efforts would be reduced.

Determining the benchmarks will, of course, be a crucial and somewhat complex job. According to the *Federal Register* announcement, each benchmark would "represent the level of minority contracting that one could reasonably expect to find in a market absent discrimination or its effects." Once market areas are identified, the system would use federal data, primarily from the Census Bureau's Survey of Minority-Owned Business Enterprises (SMOBE), to determine the "capacity" of minority firms available for government contracting.

Capacity would be determined both by the number of firms in the industry and whether these firms were qualified to do government business. To rate as qualified, firms would have to meet various criteria of size, both in number of employees and amount of revenue, relative to the smallest firm in the same industry that had won a government contract in the preceding three years. Capacity would then be compared with actual government contracts awarded to minority firms in the prior three years to determine whether the population of qualified minority firms had been fully utilized or underutilized.

Dr. **MARGARET SIMMS**, director of research programs at the Joint Center, believes that if the source of benchmarking data is to be the SMOBE survey, it is imperative that the government improve this database. At present, SMOBE uses administrative data that exclude regular corporations, in effect excluding many large minority-owned companies capable of doing government work. With additional funds, Simms argues, the Census Bureau could include these firms.

A full description of the proposed reforms appears in the *Federal Register* (Volume 61, Number 101, pages 26041-26063) which can be obtained from the U.S. Department of Justice or through the Internet at http://www.access.gpo.gov.

Toward a Full Count in Census 2000

Although the next decennial census will not take place for nearly four more years, controversy has already begun to heat up over the new procedures that will be used to avoid recurring problems that were very evident in the last (1990) census. The problems include a declining response rate, a differential undercount of minorities, and court battles over count accuracy.

The decennial census has a major impact on how minorities share political power and benefit from government programs. It is used not only for the apportionment of congressional seats among the states and the drawing of political boundaries for legislative districts at all levels, but also for the allocation of federal funds. Having accurate numbers on the size and characteristics (such as poverty rates) of the population will be even more important as "devolution" moves the federal government toward providing funds on a formula basis, with programs increasingly designed at the state level. Accuracy is of special concern to minorities because they have been disproportionately undercounted in past censuses. In the 1990 Census, 5.7 percent of the black population went uncounted.

To avoid these problems in the future, Census Director **MARTHA RICHE** says, the Bureau proposes a four-pronged strategy for Census 2000. The most controversial part of the strategy is the aggressive use of sampling, the focus of congressional debate. In its initial plans, the Census Bureau proposed to rely on direct enumeration—mail surveys and telephone and personal follow-up to obtain responses from 90 percent of the households in each county. For the remaining 10 percent, the Bureau would switch to a sampling approach—using aggressive, door-to-door measures to obtain responses from at least one out of every ten remaining households in the county.

The concern among some analysts and politicians is that a county often covers such a large and diverse population, census enumerators could reach their 90 percent goal in a county's white suburbs while still disproportionately undercounting its central-city or minority neighborhoods. Consequently, on May 30, Congresswoman **CARRIE MEEK** (D–Fla.) introduced a bill that would replace the county-level approach with one based on much smaller Census "tracts" (with roughly 2,000 to 8,000 people each). Her legislation, the "Decennial Census Improvement Act of 1996" (HR 3558), requires the Census Bureau to obtain a 90 percent response rate at this smaller census level before shifting to sampling.

While the Bureau was pondering the implications of Meek's bill, Rep. **TOM PETRI** (R–Wisc.) introduced HR 3559, which would prevent the use of sampling or other statistical procedures for purposes of apportionment. If passed, the Bureau could be prohibited from using any approach other than direct enumeration, practically ensuring another differential undercount.

Census recently released *The Black Population in the U.S.: March 1996.* Look for an analysis of the economic data in an upcoming issue of *FOCUS.* ■

African Americans and the GOP in 1996

Despite Hopes of Attracting Blacks to Their Party, Republicans Have Little to Show for Their Efforts, According to the Latest Statistics

by David Bositis

When Colin Powell announced in late 1995 that he was a Republican, it was speculated that his declaration might catalyze a movement among blacks back toward the Party of Lincoln. Such a shift, were it to take place, would reverse a century-long trend. The timing for renewed black voter interest in the GOP seemed right.

Since the Republican majority took over in the U.S. Congress in January 1995, an unprecedented amount of time has been devoted to examining and discussing the relationship between African Americans and the Republican party. It was not only the Republicans' 1994 election triumph that ignited this interest, but the election of a second black Republican to Congress, J.C. Watts of Oklahoma, and two other black Republicans to statewide offices: Ken Blackwell as state treasurer in Ohio and Vikki Buckley as secretary of state in Colorado. Further, with the newly energized and important Republican and conservative majorities (not only in Congress, but in many more state legislatures as well), black Republicans as well as black conservative writers, academics, and political commentators were in greater demand than ever before.

Public opinion soundings also suggested to some that among African Americans there has been an underlying conservatism on many issues of public policy—a conservatism that some people argued had not previously been recognized. Surveys showed that on issues ranging from crime to housing policy to welfare, black public opinion was neither as liberal nor as uniform as observers in the press, politics, and academia had thought.

These developments prompted the question of whether more than one in ten black Americans (the Republicans' share of partisan allegiance since the Great Society era of the 1960s) were now prepared to become Republicans. What follows is an examination of that very question.

Black Republicans in Office

One hundred years ago, in 1896, black Republican George W. White was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives from North Carolina. He was the last of the nineteenth century black Republicans to serve in the U.S. House, and when he left office in 1901 it was 28 years before the next black Republican served, Oscar DePriest from Illinois. An additional 32 years would pass between DePriest's departure and the arrival of the next black Republican in Congress, Senator Ed Brooke of Massachusetts. Meanwhile, the House went without a black Republican voting member for 56 years, ending with the arrival of Representative Gary Franks of Connecticut.

While those 1994 victories were certainly impressive, they do not constitute sufficient evidence of a trend toward an increase in the number of black elected Republicans. The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies has been tracking black elected officials in the United States since 1970, and black elected Republicans remain something of an anomaly. At the present time, with over 8,000 black elected officials in the United States, fewer than 80 are Republicans elected to partisan office (many public offices in the United States are nonpartisan, and thus while additional black elected officials might be Republicans, they were not elected on Republican ballot lines). State legislatures are a good gauge for partisanship, since all state legislative elections except Nebraska's are partisan: There are presently 550 black state legislators in the country, of whom just 10 are Republicans (including one party switcher from North Carolina).

In 1990, there had been only 11 black Republican nominees to the U.S. House of Representatives. After increasing modestly to 15 in 1992, the number jumped in 1994 to a record 24, more than doubling in four years. While the success rate of these candidates was not particularly good, the fact that two candidates did win was significant—there had not been two black Republicans in Congress for over a century.

The Republican party also appeared to be encouraging this development in a number of ways. The National Republican Campaign Committee (NRCC) provided funds to many of these black candidates. Rep. Bill Paxton, chairman of the NRCC, arranged for black Republican hopefuls and nominees to come to Washington for candidate training, and several Republican party "stars," including Phil Gramm and Jack Kemp, campaigned and raised money for many of these candidates. A political action committee (PAC), Americans for a Brighter Future, was also formed with the aim of electing more minority Republican candidates to Congress.

However, what appeared to many as a sudden promising trend seems to have dissipated almost immediately. Not only will the number of black Republican congressional nominees in 1996 fall substantially below 1994's record level, it is not inconceivable that the number could fall to the 1990 level. As of this writing (July 1996), only nine black Republican nominees for Congress are certain. Although two districts that had white Republican nominees

Dr. Bositis is a senior research associate at the Joint Center.

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Blacks and the GOP

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in 1994 have black Republican nominees this year, 11 other districts that had black Republican nominees in 1994 will not have them this year. Further, in some districts where the nomination is as yet undetermined and where the 1994 nominee was black, the GOP is likely to end up with a white nominee before November.

Unless more black Republicans win nomination to Congress in 1996, it appears that 1994 will be viewed in retrospect as an anomaly.

Participation in Party Organizations

The level of participation of African Americans in Republican party organizations has never been strong, and the prospects for improvement appear dim. Except for the Ripon Society and some independent black Republican organizations such as the Council of 100 and the Freedom Republicans, black involvement in internal party affairs has been very limited.

Of the 153 members on the Republican National Committee (RNC), just one member is black—Harry Singleton, the national committeeman from the District of Columbia. While the black auxiliary organization, the National Black Republican Council (NBRC), and its president Fred Brown, participate in RNC affairs, they are nonvoting members.

The likelihood of any significant increase in black membership on the RNC or as delegates to the Republican National Conventions is small. The Freedom Republicans' 1992 suit against the Federal Election Commission to deny the RNC convention funding, while successful in federal district court, was overturned on appeal, and the U.S. Supreme Court was unwilling to take up the case. The Freedom Republicans sued to force the RNC to give blacks a bigger voice in the party.

The number of black delegates to the 1996 Republican National Convention in San Diego is down substantially from the 107 black delegates in Houston in 1992, the highest number of black delegates at any Republican convention since 1912. It is notable that since Dwight Eisenhower was nominated in 1952, there has been a cyclical pattern in black representation at Republican National Conventions, with very low numbers of black delegates in those years when the Republican nomination was contested, and an approximate doubling of numbers in years when an incumbent Republican president was seeking renomination. In fact the black delegate count at this year's convention in San Diego, 52 delegates, is almost identical to the count in 1980 (55 delegates) when the GOP chose Ronald Reagan after a contested nomination campaign.

In sum, there has been no significant change in the role of African Americans in internal Republican party affairs, and absent any rules changes there is little reason to expect any change.

Black Voters and the '96 Election

Identification with the Republican party among black voters is weak and has remained unchanged since 1992. In January 1996, in a Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies national opinion survey of African Americans, 8.7 percent identified themselves as either Republicans (4 percent) or leaning toward the Republican party (4.7 percent). This was unchanged from 1992.

A larger proportion of young African Americans than of their elders has identified with the Republican party, according to Joint Center surveys since 1984, but the trend is less encouraging for the GOP than it might at first appear. In 1996, 13.8 percent of those 18-29 years old identified with (or leaned toward) the Republican party (with leaners outnumbering strong identifiers two-to-one). This is down from the level in 1990 of 16.3 percent (with equal numbers of leaners and strong identifiers). Cohort analysis from Joint Center surveys shows that the relatively greater support among young blacks is not translating over time into increasing support among the overall black population. Instead, it appears that some young African Americans "try on" a Republican identity while they are young, but as they move through their twenties and into their thirties, they move toward the Democratic party.

The Republican share of the black presidential (and congressional) vote this election year will depend upon a number of factors. Obviously, the conduct of the campaign and the issues and images that dominate the debate will be important. In elections for the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, the size of the black vote in the relevant constituencies (state or U.S. House district), the platforms of the candidates, and the candidates' relationships with their black constituencies are all important.

The size of the black vote in 1996 will be critical to the outcome of the presidential race as well as congressional and state races. President Clinton and the Democrats are obviously hoping for a large black turnout in 1996, and will probably do all in their power to increase black turnout. Robert Dole, and Republicans generally, have to view a large black turnout with some concern. If past patterns hold, this is true for two reasons. First, with a larger black turnout, given current trends, more votes will go to Clinton and other Democratic candidates. Second, the smaller the black turnout, the larger the share of black votes going to Republicans. This is a consequence of the fact that black Republicans constitute the most reliable and consistent black voters, though they are small in number.

The black Republican vote for president has hovered around 10 percent since 1980. Ronald Reagan received a smaller black vote the second time around (9 vs. 12 percent) in contrast to George Bush, who ran better with black voters the second time (11 vs. 10 percent). There has been much more variability in the black vote for the U.S. House since 1980, in part because of substantial fluctuations in black turnout. The black Republican vote for Congress has ranged from a low of 8 percent in 1984 to a high of 21 percent in 1990. The high figure for 1990 is largely an artifact of a very low black voter turnout that year.

In statewide races, the black vote is especially susceptible to the factors identified above. While black Republi-

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More People Will Vote If Asked

A League of Women Voters Survey of Voters and Nonvoters Reveals Some Causes of Low Voter Turnout

by Rielle Montague

Contrary to popular notion, alienation from the political process and cynicism towards government have not been the chief contributors to the low voter turnout in recent elections, according to a new survey sponsored by the League of Women Voters. The survey, released May 30 in Washington, D.C., found that people most likely to turn out at the polls are those who feel connected with their communities and have close associations with others who value voting.

In an effort to understand the reasons behind declining political participation, the League commissioned two research firms, the Mellman Group and Wirthlin Worldwide, to study voting behavior among voters and nonvoters. Between March 13 and 20, 1996, the survey polled 601 voters and 603 nonvoters across the country through telephone interviews. Voters were defined as those who had registered and cast ballots in either the November 1992 or November 1994 elections, or both. Nonvoters included both unregistered and registered adults who did not vote in either election.

The demographic profile of those most likely to vote shows that they are married, well educated, white, and over age 45. The survey also found that nonvoters are less likely than voters to grasp the impact elections have on important issues, more likely to perceive the voting process as complicated, intimidating, and time-consuming, and less likely to have been contacted by organizations encouraging them to vote. People from the Northeast and Midwest are more likely to vote than those from the South and West. League president Becky Cain said, "The findings tell us who doesn't vote, suggests why they don't vote, and shows how they might be persuaded to vote." Following are some of the key findings from the survey.

Alienation is not a key factor in nonvoting. The results of the survey debunk the theory that growing cynicism and mistrust of government have led to declining voter participation: voters and nonvoters alike have nearly identical levels of mistrust in the government. Both groups also showed equal levels of cynicism toward the people running the government along with equal levels of political alienation.

When asked how much of the time they think they can trust the government in Washington to do what is right, only 3 percent of voters and 3 percent of nonvoters responded "just about always," while 69 percent of voters and 65 percent of nonvoters answered "only some of the time." Similarly, 69 percent of voters and 73 percent of nonvoters felt that government is run by a few big interests rather than for the benefit of all people.

Socially integrated individuals are more likely to vote. The survey results suggest that several social factors influence one's likelihood to vote. For example, voters are more likely than nonvoters to belong to more than one community organization (e.g., labor unions, churches and synagogues, PTAs, social clubs, or political, business, or civic organizations). Indeed, people who belong to four or more such organizations were more than twice as likely to vote as others (26% to 12%). Twenty-one percent of nonvoters compared to just 9 percent of voters do not belong to any community groups. And 51 percent of voters, compared to 25 percent of nonvoters, said voting "makes them feel connected to their community."

Personal values and relationships also influence the probability of voter participation. Forty-nine percent of voters reported that their family and close friends gave them "high encouragement" to vote, whereas 45 percent of nonvoters said their family and friends gave them "low encouragement" to vote.

Perceived impact of election outcome is important. Nonvoters are less likely to believe that their vote would have an impact on election outcomes, with only 17 percent of them believing their vote would make "a great deal" of difference, compared with 30 percent of voters. In addition, 42 percent of voters felt that voting "is the way to change government," while only 29 percent of nonvoters felt this way.

Direct contact increases voter participation. When people are asked to vote, they are more likely to do so. Direct contacts from candidates, political parties, and organizations interested in getting people to vote seem to play an important role. Voters are much more likely to be contacted by groups encouraging them to vote than are nonvoters. A majority of voters, 79 percent, reported receiving some contact from candidate campaigns, while less than half of nonvoters (42 percent) did. The disparity was even greater between those voters and nonvoters who received more than one contact.

"Voting in this country is a two-step process," says Cain. "First you register, then you vote. With the passage in 1993 of the National Voter Registration Act, we've made the first step a lot easier. Now we need to address the second step—getting people to the polls." Cain plans to use the results of the survey to improve the League's outreach and devise more effective strategies to increase turnout. ■

Ms. Montague, a senior at Stanford University, is an intern at the Joint Center.

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can identification stands at 8.7 percent, and the black Republican vote for president and Congress has hovered around 10 percent, individual Republican candidates have received a substantially greater share of the black vote than that. Some of these candidates were genuinely popular with many black voters in their states, and either have had relevant experiences (e.g., as big-city mayors) or have reached out to the black community in some way. Richard Lugar (Indianapolis), George Voinovich (Cleveland), and Pete Wilson (San Diego), who have all been big-city mayors, exhibit an appreciation for urban problems that is uncommon among Republicans.

Former senators John Danforth of Missouri and John Heinz of Pennsylvania, as well as current Senator Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania, all consciously reached out to African Americans for support. On the other hand, some Republican candidates have benefited from low black turnout (Christine Todd Whitman in 1993 and George Voinovich in 1994) and others from weak Democratic opponents (Phil Gramm in 1990 and Kay Bailey Hutchison in 1994) in obtaining a higher than ordinary share of the black vote.

Conclusions

At least since George Bush's election in 1988, there has been a seemingly fitful dance between African Americans and the Republican party. At times it appeared as though there were real and tangible prospects that the barriers between the two sides could be breached and that reconciliation and growth in black support for the GOP were plausible. During the same period there have also been times when the political conflict between African Americans and the Republican party appeared even more severe: the aftermath of George Bush's Willie Horton campaign ads in 1988, the Clarence Thomas Supreme Court nomination, and recurring Republican attacks on affirmative action are all instances.

The only clear conclusion that can be drawn for now is that little has changed in the last decade or so in the fundamental relationship between blacks and the GOP, and the 1996 elections do not promise to yield the party any substantial new black support. ■

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