VOL. 6, NO. 10 NOVEMBER 1978

FOCUS



BLACK VOTER PARTICIPATION

Joint Center for Political Studies

Perspective

Rapidly on the heels of passage of the Humphrey-Hawkins full employment bill, the Carter Administration began enlisting black leaders in the fight against inflation. It is an important fight for minorities and low income consumers whose limited purchasing power is disproportionately eroded by rising prices.

But there is equally urgent need for minorities and the poor to be concerned about another pernicious type of erosion: the erosion of their political power and influence. A look at black political participation is instructive.

Throughout the year, FOCUS provides insight into the state of black politics. An article in this issue deals with the decline of voter participation. Last month FOCUS reported that the number of black elected officials in the United States continues to increase, but at a declining rate. What the research shows in both cases is that many of the more than 15 million blacks who are eligible to vote are passing up a unique opportunity to have greater influence in selecting political leaders and shaping the public policies of our country, including anti-inflation measures. This lost opportunity is a direct outgrowth of their failure, for whatever reason, to take the time to register and to vote.

Much has been written about why the rate of black voter participation consistently lags behind the white rate. We know, for example, that there are continuing political and economic barriers, especially in the South, and that there is a national disenchantment with politics and politicians— black and white. We even grudgingly concede, sometimes, that black apathy and indifference also are major contributing factors. However, these obstacles pale in significance when compared to the absence of a national campaign to educate blacks to register and to vote. A substantial amount of black voter potential is lost due to the failure of black leadership to mount and sustain such a crusade.

Since passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, there has emerged only one fulltime voter participation program, the Voter Education Project, which works exclusively in the South and which, in recent years, has been handicapped by a shortage of funds.

Other efforts have been either token, sporadic, limited geographically, or hamstrung by lack of funds. No attempt has been made to forge these splintered activities into a massive, national campaign to educate and register all black voters. The result is not good.

In 1976, only 58.5 percent of all eligible black voters were registered and only 48.7 percent actually voted. This is about the same rate of participation as was reported in 1972, and is six percentage points lower than the rate reported in 1968 and 1964.

Particularly disturbing is the low participation rate of the 3.4 million blacks between the ages of 18 and 24. Among this group, which represents 23 percent of all eligible black voters, only 38 percent were registered in 1976 and only 26 percent voted.

If we are honest with ourselves, we would accept the responsibility for being too unimaginative, too unconcerned, or too busy to find a way to cause a dramatic increase in black registration and voting. Political empowerment is too important to be taken for granted. Our votes are too great an asset to waste.

What we need today is a nationwide crusade, led by our civil rights and political leaders, to increase black registration by 20 percent in each of the next two years. If it succeeds, by the time of the 1980 elections there will be 12.5 million registered black voters, about 83 percent of the black voting age population.

Assuming that 85 percent of all registered black voters actually vote in 1980 (82.6 percent voted in 1976), this would mean that 10.6 million black votes would be cast— 3.3 million more than in 1976.

What is needed today is dynamic leadership and some good old-fashioned consciousness-raising in the voter participation field. We must try to reach the minds and souls of black people as a prelude to reaching their votes.

Eddie N. Williams
President

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Energy and Taxes

by Ellis Cose

Ellis Cose is a senior fellow at the Joint Center.

In passing a National energy bill, the 95th Congress managed a feat in some ways comparable to the crossing of the Atlantic in a hot air balloon. Such a policy — like the shore — always seemed just out of reach. Ever since the OPEC oil embargo of 1973-74 the nation has groped for an energy policy. The 95th Congress, with a strong boost from the President, changed that.

The bill that finally passed, however, is radically different from the bill that President Carter proposed in April of 1977. And some of the differences have clear implications for minorities and the poor.

Energy, however, was not the only major concern of the 95th Congress. It also voted a tax cut. Tax reform was a centerpiece of the Carter legislative program. And ironically, as with energy, the bill that finally passed was substantially different from the bill the President had proposed. There were many reasons for the differences (in both energy and taxes), but one of the primary reasons was a feeling by Congress that middle-class Americans were not willing to bear any more costs than necessary.

In the case of the energy legislation, there were several other important factors involved as well. Most importantly, perhaps, was a growing doubt that the dire predictions made to justify the original energy bill would ever come to pass. There has been a marked change from the atmosphere of crisis in which the mass of taxes, incentives and regulations were brought forth.

In a dramatic speech to the nation, the President revealed a Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) analysis which purported to show potentially dangerous energy shortfalls in the mid-1980s. One administration spokesman after another painted a picture of an America brought to the edge of chaos by petroleum shortages that would cripple the economy and threaten national security.

In the interim, however, a number of experts have suggested that the CIA analysis greatly overstated the problem. In addition, enough oil has begun to flow from the Alaskan pipeline to help create an oil glut on the nation's West coast. Also, the oil reserves from Mexico were largely underestimated. The potential contribution from solar energy was probably underestimated as well.

Changing View on Energy

Some other factors have also contributed to a change in the way the nation and Congress view energy. The original plan was predicated on an assumption that, in the absence of a national policy, energy consumption and the gross national product would continue to grow at approximately the same rate. It is becoming increasingly clear that that assumption was probably wrong. Last year energy consumption in the United States grew about half as quickly as did the gross national product. And though few experts expect that ratio to continue, they do think that energy consumption will continue to grow less rapidly than the national economy.

There was yet another crucial assumption in the Administration's original proposal which was that conservation could be brought about through higher taxes.

The problem, however, was that no one could predict with any precision exactly how much of a price increase would bring about the desired level of conservation which was to hold the increase in consumption to a little over two percent compared to the four percent increase of previous years. It was also difficult to predict the effect of such increases on the national economy. In a time of Proposition 13's, Congress was very reluctant to vote more taxes on anything—including energy—especially when it was impossible to spell out the benefits.

So what did Congress finally do on energy? It voted for a phased de-regulation of natural gas. What that means is that the price of natural gas will rise more rapidly than the prices of other fuels. The regulation of natural gas in the interstate market has kept its cost much lower than the cost of most other forms of energy. Partially because of such lower costs, the demand for energy has risen. The energy bill aims to curtail demand as well as to increase supply, and to lessen the differences between the costs for natural gas and other fuels, as well as to change a situation in which consumers in energy producing states must often pay more than those in energy consuming states.

The effects will obviously be felt by all users of natural gas. But, as pointed out in earlier articles here, (see FOCUS September 1978), the poor will feel the costs more so than others — largely because the poor spend a much larger proportion of their income on energy than do the affluent.

Tax on Gasoline and Crude Oil

The Administration lost its fight to tax gasoline, and to tax crude oil. The President did get a tax, though much smaller than he had hoped for, on gas guzzling automobiles. The tax will begin with 1980 models and provides for increases every year. It will also seek to tighten fuel efficiency standards.

Those cars getting a high mileage would not be taxed. The effect, however, could likely be to increase the costs of all automobiles. For the tax will be on the automobile manufacturer—not directly on the automobile purchaser. Manufacturers have been reluctant to develop the small auto market at the expense of the large auto market. In short, they may attempt to spread the costs of the taxes around.

In killing the crude oil equalization tax and the gasoline tax, and in watering down the gas guzzler tax, Congress also eliminated the need for the massive rebate program originally proposed by the President. The rebate program was the main Administration claim to equity in its energy policy. Though the taxes would have raised prices of all forms of energy for everyone, the Administration proposed to rebate those costs in such a fashion that those who were poorest would have some of the costs alleviated. The bill passed by Congress makes no real attempt to force those most able to pay to bear the brunt of the increases. The

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Black Voter Participation

If a Martian looked at the voter participation rate of black Americans, it might well conclude that blacks don't really give a damn whether they are counted in or counted out of the political process. We know that we want to be counted in. But if we are honest, we might suspect that we have been too unimaginative, too unconcerned, or too busy to find a way to cause a dramatic increase in black registration and voting.

One thing we must do is to stop pampering black voters. We tend to come up with various reasons why blacks do not vote. Many are valid; apathy is not. If we are to overcome the obstacles, including our own apathy, it is time to be more honest and to point a finger at those who are not doing their share to strengthen our political muscle.

Various programs have been developed over the years to increase black registration and voting. Some have succeeded; many have failed. None, in recent years, has made a dramatic difference in the rate of black voter participation. It is time to try a new tack.

Following is an outline of a program designed to capture the attention of potential voters and to convince them that massive political participation is in the interest of black people and that registration and voting are "in."

"Register Now—Vote Later"

Given the fact that those blacks who are registered turn out at a rate not unlike the white rate, the starting point of our crusade should be an all out effort in 1979 to assure that a high percentage of blacks are registered. Thus, our theme for 1979 might be "Register Now — Vote Later."

But this phase must consist of more than slogans. In 1979, every black leader and every black organization should hammer away at the idea of getting our people registered.

The voter registration theme should be incorporated in our speeches, sermons, and rhetoric. It should be heard in our conferences, in the media, in our schools, churches and homes. It should become popular in private clubs as well as in pool halls and on street corners. "Register Now—Vote Later" should become a theme as powerful, as persuasive, as fashionable, and as symbolic as "We Shall Overcome: and "Black is Beautiful."

1980 — The Year of The Ballot

Voter registration is the first step. But registration only records our potential; voting on November 4, 1980, will record our power. So, 1980 must see not only a continuation of our voter registration efforts, but must be proclaimed as "The Year of the Ballot" for all black folks. An all out attempt must be made to show that the influence blacks wielded in 1976 was not just a fluke, but that we are in the political arena to stay.

Voter participation campaigns in the past have been regional and periodic and have relied heavily on the traditional methods of local canvassing, special appeals, and various gimmicks. The success of the proposed national crusade will depend, in large measure, upon our ability to psych ourselves up to accomplish a specific objective. It will depend upon our ability to appeal to black idealism and to race pride. Canvassing and other traditional get-out-the-vote techniques are extremely important and must be continued and expanded, but something must be done to motivate our people to ***want*** to be canvassed and counted in.

I do not want to oversimplify the problem. The journey ahead will require money, manpower, organization, and leadership.

The picture I am trying to paint is one of pulling out all the stops, forgetting all the excuses, in order to launch a concerted single-purpose drive to register and turn out the black vote. This non-partisan effort should be in concert with, rather than in conflict with, the non-partisan voter participation efforts of such groups as the Voter Education Project (VEP), NAACP, National Urban League (NUL), and PUSH.

Once we accept this idea of a crusade and make the required commitment, it will be necessary for a planning body to be established to formulate a program to achieve our objectives. It is recommended that this committee be selected by the heads of the Black Leadership Roundtable and the Black Leadership Forum. The planning group should complete its work later this year, and phase one of the "Register Now—Vote Later" crusade should be launched as early as possible in 1979 — perhaps on New Year's Day.

The planning group must also come to grips with the question of how we are going to finance this crusade. I think that it should be paid for by black people. If each of the 15 million eligible black voters contributed just $1.00 a year to this enterprise, its success would be assured. Fifteen million dollars would not only support a lot of programs, but would provide the most convincing evidence that we mean business. It would be a fatal mistake to rely on the benevolence of others.

Another aspect of the voter participation strategy involves targeting people and places for maximum effect. The statistical profile, following this article, suggests where our potential lies and where our participation rates are low. The profile also details the socio-economic characteristics of those persons we want to reach.

Once target groups and areas have been identified, we must develop a delivery system, a process to pull the national network together and to make it work, and means of spinning off self-contained (perhaps independent) local voter crusade activities.

Whatever organization is developed it must be structured to fulfill other needs of the black community. For even while we are creating networks and mounting new efforts to get blacks to the polls in 1980, we must lay the groundwork for the future so that the crusade does not stop on November 4, 1980, but continues in pursuit of black political empowerment.

1981—And Beyond

What we should look for in 1981, therefore, is the creation of a National League of Black Voters (or some other name) to impact on the political and public policy processes. There is much we can learn from the activities of Common Cause, the League of Women Voters, and the labor movement. Such an organization, borne of the momentum created by the crusade for black voter registration and nurtured by the success of our efforts in 1980, would be, in effect, a mass citizens' organization. It would be financially and programatically independent, deriving its support and direction from within the black community.

To the extent that problems are different today than they were in the 1960's, we need new strategies and new struc-

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FACULTY

Lucia Edmonds, Ph.D., Director of Training and Technical Assistance for the Joint Center is a specialist in public finance, housing and economic development. A former Rouse Company employee, she worked on the physical, social and economic redevelopment of the City of Hartford, Connecticut.

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tures. We have for too long been the victims of divide and conquer strategies—even within our own ranks. A mass citizens' lobby appears to be an idea whose time has come. It offers us the opportunity to give all black people a chance to participate. It is an idea which can be implemented without conflicting with the programs of existing organizations. On the contrary, it would provide a much needed direct-action supplement to what we are already trying to do.

A Profile of the Black Vote

The 15 million blacks of voting age represent 10 percent of the national electorate. On the whole, they are located in major metropolitan centers in states with large blocks of electoral votes. Blacks are at least 10 percent of the Voting Age Population (VAP) in 18 states; at least 20 percent of the VAP in 64 Congressional Districts; at least 20 percent of the VAP in 89 cities with a population of 50,000 or more persons; and 50 percent or more of the VAP in 103 counties, mainly in the South.

What these data suggest is that in key elections at all levels of government, blacks have the potential to exert enormous ballot box power. They also suggest that a high registration rate would influence political candidates to take black views into account.

History and experience indicate that in the absence of a high registration rate, black vote potential is diminished and black views are all too often ignored.

Two other characteristics of the black vote should be noted: blacks tend to vote in a bloc and a relatively high percentage of those blacks who are registered actually go out to vote.

In 1976, 58.5 percent of eligible black voters were registered and 48.7 percent actually voted. This is about the same as it was in 1972, but six percentage points lower than it was in 1968 and 1964. Among whites, the rates in 1976 were 68.3 percent registered and 60.9 percent voted.

The most significant black political clout was wielded in 1976 by those in the 34-54 age bracket. There are nearly 5 million eligible voters in this age group—a third of the total black voting age population. In 1976, 67 percent were registered and 65 percent voted.

The least significant political clout was wielded by blacks in the 18 to 24 age group. These 3.4 million eligible voters represent 23 percent of the black voting age population (BVAP). In 1976, only 38 percent were registered and only 26 percent voted.

Regionally, the largest bloc of eligible black voters is located in the South—53 percent. They have the lowest voter participation rate in the country: In 1976, 56.4 percent were registered and 46 percent voted.

Almost 2 million black youth reside in the South. They are 53 percent of all black 18-24 year olds. In 1976, only 37 percent were registered and only 27 percent voted. By comparison, 65 percent of the 35-54 year olds in the South were registered and 56.5 percent voted.

The second largest block of eligible black voters is located in the North Central states—20 percent. They have the highest voter participation rate: in 1976, 66 percent registered and 57.2 percent voted. In this region, where 3 million eligible black voters live, the youth participation rate was the highest (44 percent registered and 32.7 percent voted) and so was the 35-54 year old voter participation rate (77.6 percent registered and 68.7 percent voted).

In the Northeast, where 2.6 million eligible blacks reside (17 percent of BVAP), 54.7 percent registered and 47.6 percent voted. Participation in the 35-54 age group was the lowest in the country (53.8 percent registered and 48 percent voted); and participation in the 18-24 age group was the second lowest (39 percent registered; 28 percent voted).

There are fewer eligible black voters in the West than in any other region—1.4 million or 9 percent of the total BVAP. However, their participation rate is noteworthy. In 1976, 61 percent were registered and 50 percent voted. Among black youth, the rates were 40 percent and 22 percent and among 35-54 year olds, the rates were 73 percent and 64 percent.

In all regions of the country, the BVAP is concentrated in metropolitan areas: 74.6 percent of the BVAP reside in metro areas, mainly in central cities (4.7 million in the South and 6.6 million outside the South).

Among the 4 million eligible black voters in non-metro (rural) areas, 58 percent were registered and 46 percent voted.

In the North and West, some 59 percent of metro and central city blacks were registered and almost 50 percent voted. In the South, 55 percent were registered and 45 percent voted.

The more education blacks have, the greater their voter participation rate. Those with 0-8 years (3.9 million) had a 54 percent registration rate and a 43.6 percent turnout rate. Those with at least 1 year of high school (4.6 million) had a 55 registration rate and a 44.5 percent turnout rate. Those with 1 year or more of college (2.8 million) had a 71 percent registration rate and a 68 percent turnout rate.

Persons who were employed participated at a higher rate than those who were not employed. Among both the employed and the unemployed, black women participated at a higher rate than men.

Among those employed, white collar workers (1.7 million females and 986,000 males) had a high rate of participation; 71 percent registered and 65 percent voted.

Service workers (686,000 males and 1.4 million females) registered at the rate of about 61 percent and voted at the rate of 51.6 percent

Blue collar workers (2.5 million males and 687,000 females) registered at the rate of 55-59 percent and voted at the rate of 46-50 percent. Black females had the higher rates of participation.

This brief statistical profile tells us quite a bit about the black vote. It indicates that black voter registration and voter turnout rates are lower than the rates for whites and too low to be acceptable by blacks. It shows that two age groups are prime targets for voter participation drives:

- 18-24 year olds: Because they represent a sizeable and growing constituency and because their participation rates are so low.
- 35-54 year olds: Because they represent nearly a third of all eligible black voters and because they are inclined to be more active politically.

Eddie N. Williams

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result is that, even though prices will not rise as sharply as the Administration had proposed, those smaller increases will likely be felt even more by the poor than the relatively large increases orginally proposed by the Administration because the larger increases included rebates.

Utility Rates

The plan passed by Congress also is not as strong in electric utility rate reform as the original proposal. Utility rates have been a particularly sore spot with the advocates of the poor. With few exceptions, those who use the least amount of energy pay the highest rates per amount used.

The poor typically pay more per kilowatt hour of electricity than the affluent. The Administration had hoped to make utility rate reform mandatory. The plan passed by Congress makes it voluntary. Even in the version passed by Congress, however, states that continued inequitable systems would be required to explain why they chose to keep such systems.

The Congressional energy bill also encouraged the utilities and industrial facilities to switch to coal. Some exceptions to that policy, however, would be allowed.

The plan passed by Congress also contained a little noticed provision for an office of minority economic impacts. The provision would set up an office that could analyze economic impacts on minorities as well as give loans, loan guarantees and grants to minority businessmen.

There was little in the plan, however, to comfort the poor or minorities. Most of the tax benefits, for such things as installing insulation or solar energy collectors, will go to those affluent enough to own their own homes. Those who rent homes, or those too poor to retrofit the homes that they own, will find little to be joyous about in the bill.

Indeed, considerable questions remain over just what the bill will accomplish. It is clear that everyone will pay what more for energy. It is not at all clear how much consumption will be cut, nor how much energy will be available in the future. As already noted, the plan passed by Congress reflected little of the President's conviction that the higher costs should fall most heavily on those most able to bear them. For that reason, it is especially important that the energy situation of the poor be carefully monitored. For the plan passed by Congress will affect them much more so than it will affect others.

The reluctance of Congress to give special energy benefits to the poor was also exhibited in the tax legislation. As more than one observer has already pointed out, the tax cut was aimed primarily at the middle class and the affluent.

Caught up in Proposition 13 fever, the Senate originally voted for some $29-billion in tax cuts, compared to $16 billion voted by the House. Ultimately, after the President threatened to veto the larger cut, Congress agreed on a cut of nearly $20-billion, with some $13-billion of that going for individual taxes and the remainder divided between business taxes and capital gains (profits from assets such as stock and real estate).

A typical family earning $8,000 would receive a reduction of $36. A family earning $15,000 would get $97, and a family earning $25,000 would get $249.

The poor were not forgotten entirely, however. There was a provision to raise the maximum earned income credit from $400 a year to $500 a year.

There was also an increase in tax breaks for businesses that hire certain categories of people who have had trouble getting jobs: welfare recipients, Vietnam veterans, convicted felons, young people.

Importance of the 95th Congress

What was most important about the 95th Congress, however, may not have been the legislation it passed—but the change in national mood that it captured. For what Congress was saying most clearly was that it no longer had the inclination to go out of its way to help those who were poor or non-white. Everyone is suffering, Congress seemed to be saying; and, if everyone is suffering, it is in some way wrong to accept the suffering of some as more legitimate than the suffering of others.

Thus, there may be an earned income credit for the poor, but only if there are also tax breaks on capital gains and on country club dues. Congress may attempt to cushion the effect of energy price increases, but it will be a very broad cushion, and one that does not allow special rebates for the least fortunate.

In some respects, such actions are only a reaction to the tax cut initiatives which have spread across the nation, but they really reflect something which goes a great deal deeper: an unwillingness to risk the granting of special concessions to groups that can be of marginal help in getting elected. The poor may be worthy of help, such reasoning goes, but they tend not to vote and to be much less organized than the middle class or the business world.

In a very real sense as well, Congress seems to be increasingly reflecting the mood of middle class Americans who feel that they have done all they can or wish to do for the less fortunate. The implications of that for the future are fairly clear. For in days to come we may find that the energy bill and the tax bill are not the exceptions but are the rule, undergirded by a philosophy which holds: The needs of the middle class must come first; and then, if there is time, we may consider the needs of the disadvantaged.

Telescope

Blacks Show Gains and Losses in November

The impact of the black vote in the November off year elections was clearly seen in key races throughout the nation, according to a Joint Center survey.

Black candidates suffered some major losses with the defeats of Sen. Edward Brooke in Massachusetts and of Lt. Gov. Mervyn Dymally and Attorney General candidate Yvonne Burke in California, but scored gains in statewide races in Wisconsin, Illinois and North Carolina.

Wisconsin voters elected their first black statewide official, a woman, Vel Phillips who will become Secretary of State. Roland Burris was elected state Treasurer of Illinois. Richard C. Erwin was elected to the North Carolina Court of Appeals by a margin of over 200,000 votes, thus becoming the first black North Carolinian to hold a statewide position since Reconstruction.

Other statewide office holders were re-elected: Richard Austin as Secretary of State in Michigan, Henry Parker as Treasurer in Connecticut, and Wilson Riles as Superintendent of Public Instruction in California. The Joint Center survey showed that the black vote, though for the most part remaining Democratic, did go to Republican candidates in significant numbers in Pennsylvania, Illinois and Michigan. In 10 predominantly black wards in Philadelphia, blacks gave 52 percent of their vote to winning Republican gubernatorial candidate Richard Thornburgh. In four wards in Chicago, incumbent Republicans Sen. Charles Percy and Gov. James Thompson received 33 percent and 24 percent of the black vote respectively. Sample black precincts in Detroit show blacks gave 29 percent of their vote to incumbent Republican Gov. William Milliken, who was re-elected.

Blacks also provided significant support to Republican congressional candidates Paul Trible in Virginia and Ed Bethune in Arkansas. Trible drew 29 percent of the vote in sample black precincts; Bethune, 44 percent. Black Republican congressional candidates, however, did not fare well. All 14 were defeated by lopsided margins.

All 12 members of the Congressional Black Caucus won re-election. In addition, William H. Gray (D-Pa.) was elected in Philadelphia to replace Robert N. C. Nix; Julian Dixon (D-Calif.) was elected to replace Yvonne Braithwaite Burke; Mickey Leland (D-Tex.) was elected to replace Barbara Jordan; and Bennett Stewart (D-Ill.) was elected to replace the late Ralph Metcalfe. Dr. Melvin Evans was elected to replace the late Ralph Metcalfe. Dr. Melvin Evans was elected as the non-voting delegate to the House of Representatives from the Virgin Islands. Evans is a Republican who formerly served as Governor of the Virgin Islands.

Although most incumbent black state legislators across the country won re-election, the total number was reduced from 294 to 284. The change came as result of incumbents being defeated, retiring, or their not seeking reelection. A total of 13 states lost black state legislators. However, legislatures in New York, Texas, Kentucky, Virginia, Tennessee, Alabama, and Florida added black members.

Although precise overall black turnout could not be measured, overall voter turnout in congressional districts with black majorities ranged between 12 and 49 percent. Nationwide in all 435 Congressional districts turnout among all voters was estimated at 34 percent.

In hotly contested races, black turnout was very high. In the predominantly black Pennsylvania 2nd Congressional District, turnout of the voting age population was 49 percent, 17 points higher than 1974 and virtually equal to the turnout in the 1976 presidential race. What this meant was the defeat of a proposed Philadelphia charter change which would have permitted Mayor Frank Rizzo to seek re-election.

In Mississippi's 4th Congressional district, independent black candidates Evan Doss and Charles Evers were on the ballot for the local congressional seat and the U.S. Senate, respectively. The result was high interest and high turnout in a congressional district which is 43 percent black. Forty-two percent of the voting age population turned out which was an increase of almost 10 percentage points over 1974.

The Joint Center is analyzing the overall election results in detail for publication in the December issue of FOCUS.

McCrary Named Florida Secretary of State

Miami lawyer Jesse J. McCrary, Jr., became Florida's first black cabinet member in more than a century with his appointment as Secretary of State by Gov. Reuben Askew.

The 40-year-old McCrary was sworn in by Florida Supreme Court Justice Joseph Hatchett, the state's first justice and replaced Bruce Smathers, who resigned to run for governor.

McCrary told reporters he would campaign for a proposed revision to the state's constitution to make the governor's cabinet appointive rather than elective. "People of my complexion have been on the cabinet only two times in 108 years and both were appointed." He noted. Hanging behind him as he spoke was a portrait of Jonathan C. Gibbs, who was Florida's last black cabinet member as Secretary of State in 1868-1873 and as Superintendent of Public Instruction in 1873-1874.

Although McCrary's term of office will end in January, he said that he does not consider it a caretaker term. He promised to push for easier registration, give more attention to cabinet duties on the state Board of Education, and continue his opposition to capital punishment.

Black Colleges Get Research Funds

The Department of Energy (DOE) has awarded a total of $600,000 to eight black colleges and universities for research projects on energy.

The head of the department's research and development program, John M. Deutch, said the awards were the "first step in DOE's effort to broaden the involvement of minority schools in our nation's energy research effort."

Similar awards are planned for next year.

Projects receiving funds are: Tuskegee Institute, energy management for the campus and research on a solar collection, $100,000; Atlanta University, advancement of energy research capability in the university and neighboring institutions, $50,000; North Carolina Central University,

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laser research, $85,000; Jackson State University, energy collection, using photocells, $50,000; Prairie View A&M University, development of a regional energy research center, $67,000; Howard University, research on solar cells and hydrogeneration of coal, $100,300; North Carolina A&T State University, solar research, $99,000; and Texas Southern University, research on sulfur in coal.

Blacks and Hispanics Political Leaders Meet for Common Good

An historic meeting was held in Washington, D.C., November 13, that brought together for the first time, black and Hispanic leaders to join forces "out of an awareness of our potential, an urgent sense of shared concerns and the need for future collaborative action."

The group, which is tentatively called the Working Committee on Concerns of Hispanics and Blacks, agreed on the following principles:

- To promote a better understanding of one another's problems, common concerns and culture.
- To identify and promote mutual national policy objectives of vital interest to our communities.
- To promote cooperation and collaboration in support of jointly held goals.
- To promote and coordinate civic awareness by encouraging voter education and registration, and strengthening participation in the political process at all levels of government.
- To seek to ensure that our constituencies do not bear the brunt of a restrictive economic, social and political climate.

Participants included: Luis Alvarez, National Puerto Rican Coalition, Inc.; Mario A. Anglada, ASPIRA of America, Inc.; Manuel A. Bustelo, National Puerto Rican Forum; Maria B. Cerda, Latino Institute; Julius L. Chambers, NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund; Rep. Walter E. Fauntroy (D-D.C.); Dorothy Height, National Council of Negro Women, Inc.; M. Carl Holman, National Urban Coalition; Benjamin F. Hooks, NAACP; Elton Jolly, OIC of America; Vernon Jordan, National Urban League; Baltasar Luna, National IMAGE, Inc.; Donald N. Pacheco, American G.I. Forum; Eduardo Pena, League of United American Citizens (LULAC); Ana Maria Perera, National Association of Cuban American Women, Inc. of the United States; Rep. Edward B. Roybal (D-Calif.); Elisa Sanchez, Mexican American Women's National Association; Pablo Sedillo, Jr., National Conference of Catholic Bishops; Marta Sotomayor, National Council of La Raza; Mario Vizcaino, Cuban National Planning Council, Inc.; Carmen Delgado Votaw, National Conference of Puerto Rican Women; Eddie N. Williams, Joint Center for Political Studies; Patricia A. Wright, representing Coretta Scott King; Raul Yzaguirre, National Council of La Rasa; and Ricardo Zazueta, SER Job for Progress.

New Mayor in Virginia

Russell Otey, a black, was elected mayor of Bedford, Virginia. The only black member of the city council, Otey was chosen by the other members to serve as mayor. Otey is a supervisor for the Lynchburg, Va. school system.

Bedford has a population of 6,011, of which 17.4 percent is black.

Councils of two other Virginia cities re-elected incumbent black mayors: Henry L. Marsh, of Richmond and Hermanze E. Fauntleroy, Jr., of Petersburg. And, in Portsmouth, James W. Holley III was selected to be the city's first black vice-mayor. First elected to the city council in 1968, Holley is a dentist and real estate investor.

In most Virginia cities, mayors and vice mayors are chosen by other members of the city council rather than being elected directly by voters.

FOCUS

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