



PRESS RELEASE

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ATLANTA, GA... The Atlanta based Voter Education Project (VEP) announced today that Louisiana black voters played the decisive role in the victory of Governor-elect Edwin Edwards. VEP officials stated that Edwards, a Democrat, was given the winning lead with 93% of the black vote in the open primary October 22. Republican incumbent David Treen only received 3.2% of the black vote, and Republican candidate Robert Ross attracted 3.1%.

In the hotly contested race, combined voter turn-out among blacks and whites on a statewide basis was as high as 81%, with black voter turn-out reaching the 73% level.

Edwards received 55% of the white vote, and Treen got 44%, revealing the clear edge black voters furnished to Edwards.

Officials at VEP also said that black voter strength in Louisiana could be increased dramatically by the 1984 elections. VEP researcher King Farouk Brimah said, "Almost 50% of blacks of voting age in Louisiana are still not registered to vote." As of October 1983, he said, 481,861 blacks in Louisiana were registered out of a total black voting age population of 854,003, which leaves 372,142 unregistered.

"This is the problem," VEP Executive Director Geraldine Thompson said, "we must get the other 372,000 registered." Ms. Thompson elaborated, "If half of the voting power of blacks in Louisiana can now decisively elect a Governor, think of the possibilities if blacks registered to their full numerical potential. This election conclusively demonstrates that we have moved from being mere political mannikins in the electoral process. But unless we register to our full potential, we will simply

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become political minions. Being the decisive 'swing vote' in one election is definitely progress, but it is not sufficient for the long run."

With a voting age population of 2,228,695, whites are 1,501,431 strong among registered voters.

Founded in 1962, the Voter Education Project (VEP) provides research, financial, and other technical resources to registration and education drives in 11 southern states, including Louisiana.