

# Operation Big Vote Newsletter

FEB 27 REC'D

National Coalition on Black Voter Participation, Inc., 1301 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Suite 400, Washington, D.C. 20004

Number 2: February 1985

## OPERATION BIG VOTE: CRUSADE '84 -- "TWO MILLION MORE IN 1984"

During 1984, the National Coalition sponsored 60 OPERATION BIG VOTE coalitions in 25 states and the District of Columbia. Through these efforts, community groups forged active, nonpartisan coalitions that conducted voter registration drives, sponsored community voter education programs and engaged intense get-out-the-vote efforts. Working closely with BIG VOTE coalitions were pilot Black Women's Roundtables on Voter Participation.

For the first time in its history, the National Coalition was able to award OPERATION BIG VOTE grants. The grants were issued in late August to 43 projects in 11 states. Reports indicate that over 200,000 blacks were registered during September and early October under this special OPERATION BIG VOTE initiative.

### Black Registration Highest Ever Reported

According to a recent U.S. Bureau of the Census report, black voter registration in 1984 is now 66.3 percent, which is slightly higher than the 66.2 percent reported in 1968. This is the highest level ever reported by the Bureau. Today, 12.6 million blacks are registered compared to the 60 percent or 10 million who were registered in 1980.

### Reported Black Voter Registration

#### Presidential Elections

| <u>1984</u> | <u>1980</u> | <u>1976</u> | <u>1972</u> | <u>1968</u> |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 66.3%       | 60%         | 58.5%       | 65.5%       | 66.2%       |

#### Congressional Elections

| <u>1982</u> | <u>1978</u> | <u>1974</u> | <u>1970</u> | <u>1966</u> |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 59.1%       | 57.1%       | 54.9%       | 60.8%       | 60.2%       |

### Increased Black Participation Continues

Along with increased registration, the National Coalition is pleased to report that turnout continues to increase at a dramatic rate. In 1984, turnout was 56 percent compared to 50.5 percent in 1980.

This represents a continuation of the steady increase in both registration and turnout that began in 1976, the year that the National Coalition was founded and ran its first successful OPERATION BIG VOTE crusade.

### Reported Black Voter Turnout\*

#### Presidential Elections

| <u>1984</u> | <u>1980</u> | <u>1976</u> | <u>1972</u> | <u>1968</u> |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 55.8%       | 50.5%       | 48.7%       | 52.1%       | 57.6%       |

#### Congressional Elections

| <u>1982</u> | <u>1978</u> | <u>1974</u> | <u>1970</u> | <u>1966</u> |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 43%         | 37.2%       | 33.8%       | 43.5%       | 41.7%       |

\*Percentage of eligible voters

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

There are two ways to measure black voter turnout. The chart above measures turnout of eligible voters, whether or not the voters are registered. The other measure is turnout of registered voters. In 1984, 84 percent of registered blacks voted, which is consistent with turnout in previous presidential election years.

### Future OPERATION BIG VOTE Crusades

The National Coalition recognizes that while recent increases in black



voter participation are encouraging, the business of full voting rights for black Americans remains unfinished. The black vote continues to make a difference in local, county, state and some congressional races. One measure of this difference is seen in the continued increase in the number of blacks elected and appointed to office. Yet restrictive and antiquated registration and voting procedures create barriers that diminish and discourage black voting.

The next issue of the OPERATION BIG VOTE NEWSLETTER will review some of the existing barriers to voter participation and will report on when and where the black vote can make the difference. OPERATION BIG VOTE will continue to operate nationwide in the years to come and the National Coalition board and staff are working to increase program operations.

#### A SALUTE TO OPERATION BIG VOTE CONVENORS

"TWO MILLION MORE IN 1984" was the 1984 campaign slogan of OPERATION BIG VOTE. The increase in registration between 1980 and 1984, produced a net gain of 2.5 million voters and the rate of black voter registration is now back to the high level recorded in 1968. Both of these achievements were among the many important goals set by the National Coalition for 1984.

A number of important organizations and factors contributed to the significant increases in black registration and turnout. The National Coalition is proud to be in the forefront of the effort.

Voter registration, voter education, get-out-the-vote and related activities are hard work. Diplomacy, tenacity, organizing acumen and the ability to generate resources are among many skills necessary to a successful voter participation campaign.

The National Coalition proudly acknowledges the hard work and dedication of the following people who coordinated and convened OPERATION BIG VOTE coalitions and Black Women's Roundtables across the country.

#### ARKANSAS

Little Rock - T.E. Patterson, Arkansas Black Caucus; Pine Bluff - John Clark, Arkansas Black Caucus

#### CALIFORNIA

Alameda County - Henry Mozell, Oakland/Alameda Consumer Council, Anita Williams, Operation Big Vote (Big Vote); Los Angeles - John Mack, Urban League, John McDonald (deceased), NAACP, Mark Ridley-Thompson, Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Marcela Howell, Voter REP, Jackie-DuPont-Walker, Black Women's Forum

#### CONNECTICUT

Hartford - John Saunders III, Urban League

#### DELAWARE

Dover - Christopher Cherry, Prince Hall Grand Masonic Lodge, Inc.

#### DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Shirley Wilcher, Black Women's Roundtable on Voter Participation, Mildred Goodman and Rev. Willie Wilson, Big Vote

#### FLORIDA

Pensacola - Tony McCray, Jr., Big Vote

#### INDIANA

Indianapolis - Homer Smith, Big Vote

#### KENTUCKY

Louisville - Bessie C. King, National Council of Negro Women

#### LOUISIANA

New Orleans - Craig Shelton, Big Vote

#### MARYLAND

Baltimore - Lorretta Johnson and Mary Thompson, A. Philip Randolph Institute (APRI), Marvin Cheatham, NAACP, Rev. Bud Myers, BUILD; Eastern Shore - Gregory Meekins, NAACP, Saunders Marshall, Alliance for Progress, Rev. James Bishop and Eugenie Green, Big Vote; Montgomery County - Mike Fleming, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity; Prince George's County - Alvin Thornton, Clement Martin and James Pringle, Big Vote

#### MASSACHUSETTS

Boston - Lloyd King, and Rodney Foxworth, Roxbury Action Program, Ricardo Guthrie, Big Vote

#### MICHIGAN

Ann Arbor - Fred McCuiston, NAACP; Battle Creek - Emily Word, NAACP; Detroit - Christina Montague, NAACP; Flint - Melvyn Brannan and Yvonne Coulter, Vote Community Flint, Chester Hughes, NAACP Youth Council; Highland Park - Winona Humphrey and Walter T. Crider, NAACP, Paul Woods, Big Vote; Lansing - Rudolph Wilson, NAACP; Macomb County - Sarah Burns, NAACP; Muskegon - William Gill, NAACP; Pontiac - Jimmie Randolph, NAACP; Saginaw - Robert Niera, NAACP; Southfield - Ann Harp, NAACP

#### MISSOURI

Kansas City - Ken Kenney, Urban League; St. Louis - Ruth Kennedy, Coalition for Nonpartisan Voter Registration and GOTV

#### NEBRASKA

Omaha - Pat Carpenter, Big Vote

#### NEW JERSEY

Statewide - Alice Barnett, New Jersey Black Issues Convention (NJBIC), Counties: Camden - M. Edward Harvey,



NJBIC; Essex - Calvin West, NJBIC;  
Hudson - Addison McLean, NJBIC;  
Mercer - Kelley Ganges, NJBIC;  
Middlesex - Eddie Jennings, NJBIC;  
Monmouth - Tom Daniels, NJBIC;  
Passaic - Ed Carter and Marlee Jackson,  
NJBIC; Union - Warren Blackshear, NJBIC

#### NEW YORK

Albany - Jerry Lee, Voters, Inc.;  
Buffalo - Rufus Frasier, NAACP; New York - Bernice Powell, Coalition of 100 Black Women, Ed Cohen, Big Vote; Bronx - Eloise Bailey, Bronx Community College; Brooklyn - Charles Barron, Ricardo Herb, African Peoples Christian Organization; Manhattan - Sheila Sidney Redford, CUNY Student Senate; Queens - Bill Jefferson, United Black Men of Queens County, Inc.; Rochester - Willie Lightfoot, Political Education Registration Training Organization; Westchester County - Joe Wyke, Urban Coalition, Winston Ross, NAACP, Wayne Morris, Urban League

#### NORTH CAROLINA

Asheville - Leo Ferguson, Big Vote;  
Durham - Dr. Lavonia Allison, NC Black Leadership Caucus; Wilmington - Peter Grear, NC Black Leadership Caucus

#### OHIO

Cincinnati - Eddie Campbell, Larry Trice, APRI, Roy Bernard, Urban League, Sarah Gardner, Coalition of Black Trade Unionists; Cleveland - Kimberley Parsons, Lisa L. Payne, Big Vote; Columbus - Frank L. Lomax III, Pat Woods, Urban League; Dayton - Ada Barriteau, Trudi Brunson, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority; Toledo - Nelson Grace, NAACP Youth and Young Adult Council; Youngstown - George E. Mims, Big Vote

#### OKLAHOMA

Tulsa - Marilyn Seals, Voter Education Project

#### OREGON

Portland - Judy Knowles Boyer, APRI, Robert Phillips, National Association of Black Social Workers

#### PENNSYLVANIA

Philadelphia - Sylvia Webster, Coalition of 100 Black Women, Ida Garnett, NAACP, Audrey Johnson-Thornton, Big Vote; Pittsburgh - Carrie Washington, Operation Better Block

#### RHODE ISLAND

Providence - Errol Hunt, Urban League

#### SOUTH CAROLINA

Charleston - Walter Jenkins, NAACP

#### TENNESSEE

Memphis - Arnette Hill, APRI

#### TEXAS

Dallas - Roosevelt Johnson, Urban League, Rev. Darnell Pemberton, COVER/Big Vote, Ted Watkins, NAACP; Fort Worth - Eddie Humphries, APRI, Bob

Dardy, Big Vote; Galveston - Joel Murphy, NAACP, Anne Simmons, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Robert Hoskins, APRI, Warren Malone, Melvin Crockett, Big Vote; Golden Triangle - Tarlton Booker, APRI, Deborah Hanks, Virginia Village Residents Association, James Roberts, NAACP, L.K. Mitchell, Scottish Rite Masonic Lodges A F&AM, Inc.; Houston - Rufus Foley, APRI, E.M. Knight, Big Vote, Algenita Scott Davis, Black Women's Roundtable on Voter Participation, Charles Paul, Big Vote; Texarkana - John Jones, Civic and Educational Council, Rev. W.D. Dizer, Big Vote; Tyler - Dean L.V. Nauls, Texas College, Ernest D. Deckard, Organization of Men, Inc., Eldridge D. Moore, APRI

#### LEGISLATION

Voter turnout in the United States has been in a 20-year slump. The 1984 turnout figure of 59.9 percent shows that voter participation is beginning to climb; however, it has quite a way to go to reach the 1964 figure of 69.3 percent. Even then, the U.S. would lag behind many other countries. Democracies such as France, Sweden, West Germany and Canada normally have voter turnout rates between 70 and 98 percent. Corrective measures, however, are being considered to remedy this problem.

In the last session of Congress, ten bills were introduced that pertained to voter registration, voter education and voting rights. These bills are aimed at increasing voter participation as well as providing fairness to the Voting Rights Act. National Coalition Executive Director, Gracia Hillman testified before the House Administration Committee's Task Force on Elections. The task force was appointed in 1984 by then Committee Chairman, Gus Hawkins (D-California) and the bill, introduced by Rep. Al Swift (D-Washington), would provide financial assistance to states to encourage voter registration. Ms. Hillman also gave testimony at oversight hearings of the House Subcommittee on Civil and Constitutional Rights on the Voting Rights Act.

The following is the list of bills and their current status:

H.R. 5822

Sponsor: John Conyers (D-Michigan)  
Bill would outlaw runoff or additional primary elections; bill will be reintroduced in this session.

H.R. 335

Sponsor: John Conyers (D-Michigan)  
Bill seeks to clarify the laws surrounding the voting rights of certain criminal offenders; bill will be reintroduced in this session.



H.R. 6147

Sponsor: John Conyers (D-Michigan)  
Bill seeks to eliminate moratoria on voter registration before election day that are imposed by 36 states; bill will be reintroduced in this session.

H.R. 5815

Sponsor: John Conyers (D-Michigan)  
Bill proposes that states provide postcard registration with respect to Federal elections; bill will be reintroduced in this session.

H.R. 4207

Sponsor: Mario Biaggi (D-New York)  
Also known as the Voter Registration Act of 1983, this bill seeks to increase the political awareness of voters 18-24 years of age through educational programs; bill will be reintroduced in this session.

H.R. 84

Sponsor: Mario Biaggi (D-New York)  
Bill proposes that a uniform time for voting be established nationwide in order to combat the negative effects of election reports broadcast on the east coast before west coast polls have closed; bill will be reintroduced in this session.

H.R. 2746

Sponsor: Charles B. Rangel (D-New York)  
This bill proposes that voter registration applications be included in all documents required to be submitted to Federal agencies; bill will be reintroduced in this session.

H.R. 5944

Sponsor: Morris Udall (D-Arizona)  
Bill would amend Title 35 of the U.S. Code to provide that voter registration forms, absentee ballots, and certain related matter be mailed by election agencies free of postage; bill will be reintroduced in this session.

H.R. 4367

Sponsor: Al Swift (D-Washington)  
Bill seeks to provide federal grants to support general voter registration programs as well as door-to-door efforts; bill will be reintroduced in this session.

S 1676

Sponsor: Dave Durenburger (R-Minn.)  
Bill provides that registration and polling places for federal elections be accessible to handicapped and elderly individuals; became public law

(PL-98435) in August 1984.

The congressional offices invite comments on the legislation and welcome all inquiries. For further information on the individual bills, contact the Office of Legislative Information and Status at (202) 225-1772 or the Documents Room at (202) 225-3456.

#### POLITICAL NOTES....

##### NEW CHAIRMAN FOR CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS

Rep. Mickey T. Leland (D-Texas), new chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus, represents Texas' 18th Congressional District and is a fourth-term congressman. Rep. Leland is a member of the Post Office and Civil Service Committee and chairs the Subcommittee on Postal Personnel and Modernization. He also serves on the Committee on Energy and Commerce and the Subcommittee on Telecommunications, Consumer Protection and Finance. Rep. Leland is chairman of the Select Committee on Hunger, serves on the Subcommittee on Health and the Environment and is an active member of the Democratic National Committee.

##### GROWING POWER OF THE BLACK CAUCUS

The Congressional Black Caucus continues to gain stature with the selection of two of its members as chairmen of key committees. Rep. Augustus F. Hawkins (D-California) became chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee and Rep. William F. Gray III (D-Pennsylvania) is the new chairman of the House Budget Committee.

This brings to five, the number of Black Caucus members who chair standing committees in the House. The other committee chairmen are Julian Dixon (D-California), Standards of Official Conduct (Ethics), Ronald Dellums, (D-California), District of Columbia and Parren J. Mitchell (D-Maryland), Small Business. Several other members of the Caucus also chair other Select or Subcommittees. Chairmanships, gained by the seniority system, afford black politicians more clout and a better stance from which to negotiate.

##### NATIONAL BLACK ORGANIZATIONS FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS

Judge Revius O. Ortique, Jr.  
New Orleans  
Chairman  
Judicial Council of the National Bar Association

Honorable Webster J. Guillory  
Santa Ana, California  
President  
National Association of Black County Officials



Councilman Robert Farrell  
Los Angeles  
President  
National Black Caucus of Local Elected  
Officials

Senator Clarence Mitchell (D-Maryland)  
Chairman  
National Black Caucus of State  
Legislators

Honorable Mary Lett  
East Orange, New Jersey  
President  
National Caucus of Black School Board  
Members

Mayor Marion S. Barry, Jr.  
District of Columbia  
President  
National Conference of Black Mayors

#### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

CHAIR - Eddie N. Williams  
Joint Center for Political  
Studies

VICE CHAIR - LeGree S. Daniels  
National Black Republican  
Council

TREASURER - James "Biff" Carter  
Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity

SECRETARY - Geraldine Thompson  
Voter Education Project

#### COMMITTEE CHAIRS

FINANCE - Edward Sylvester  
Public Member

MEMBERSHIP - Yvonne Price  
Public Member

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT -  
John N. Sturdivant  
American Federation of  
Government Employees

SITE SELECTION -  
Norman Hill  
A. Philip Randolph  
Institute

#### MEMBERS

Dr. Dolly D. Adams  
The Links, Inc.

Bishop John Hurst Adams  
Congress of National Black Churches

Leonard Ball  
Coalition of Black Trade Unionists

Louis J. Brady  
International Union of Operating  
Engineers

William Brooks  
National Black M.B.A. Association, Inc.

Faye Bryant  
Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.

Kenyon C. Burke  
National Council of Churches

Hortense Canady  
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

Andrew Clark  
Communication Workers of America

David Claxton  
United Food and Commercial Workers  
International Union

Phillip M. Smith, M.D.  
National Medical Association

Representative Walter W. Fauntroy  
Congressional Black Caucus

Dr. Edith Francis  
Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc.

Frankie Jacobs Gillette  
National Association of Negro Business  
and Professional Women's Clubs

Tony Harrison  
Democratic National Committee

Dr. Thomas A. Hart  
Omega Psi Phi Fraternity

Dorothy Height  
National Council of Negro Women

James E. Rogers, Jr.  
Blacks In Government

Elton Jolly  
OIC's of America, Inc.

Coretta Scott King  
Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for  
Nonviolent Social Change

Ruby E. King  
National Education Association

William Lucy  
AFSCME

Joseph E. Madison  
NAACP

Clarence Mitchell III  
National Black Caucus of State  
Legislators

Hanley Norment  
Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity

William Pollard  
AFL-CIO

Bishop Frank C. Cummings  
A.M.E. Bishops Council

Earl Robinson  
International Association of Machinists  
and Aerospace Workers



Essie L. Rowser  
Chi Eta Phi Sorority

William Rush  
Improved Benevolent Protective Order  
of Elks of the World

Marc Stepp  
United Auto Workers

Alice Swain  
Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority

LeBaron Taylor  
Black Music Associaton

Niles C. White  
United Negro College Fund

Robert L. White  
National Alliance of Postal and  
Federal Employees

Clarence Wood  
National Urban League

Public Members

Honorable Marion Barry, Jr.

Ofield Dukes

STAFF

Gracia M. Hillman, Executive Director  
Julie E. Dade, Director of Programs  
Diana M. Scott, Administrative Secretary  
Andre D. Owens, Program Assistant  
La'Tanya Jones, Word Processor

Hats Off To Hardworkers

The National Coalition gratefully  
acknowledges the invaluable contribu-  
tions made by the following individuals  
who served as consultants and interns  
during 1984:

Ethiopia Alfred-DeBass, Consultant  
Kelvin Buchanan, Intern  
Charlotte David, Intern  
Moses Holmes, Consultant  
April Jackson, Intern  
Deborah Lee, Intern  
Earl O'Neal, Consultant  
Sheila Quarterman, Consultant  
Jane Spencer, Consultant  
Andrea Strader, Consultant  
Steven Tillett, Consultant  
Jean-Louise Turner, Consultant  
Vicki J. Williams, Consultant  
William Wolfe, Consultant

\*\*\*\*\*

DOUBLE ALERT!  
KEEP THIS DATE OPEN  
Friday, April 26, 1985

ANNUAL MEETING of the National  
Coalition on Black Voter Participation  
Membership and ANNUAL OPERATION BIG VOTE  
FUNDRAISER

Sheraton Washington Hotel  
Washington, D.C.

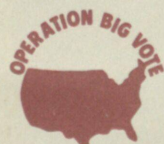
For further information, call Diana  
Scott (annual meeting) and Loretta T.  
Avent (fundraiser) at (202) 626-3552.

ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER....

As part of its commitment to  
provide information about black voter  
participation, the National Coalition  
on Black Voter Participation, Inc.  
will periodically publish the  
OPERATION BIG VOTE NEWSLETTER. The  
National Coalition is a nonprofit,  
nonpartisan, tax-exempt organization  
that works to increase black  
participation in the electoral  
process. This newsletter is free;  
however tax deductible contributions to  
help defray the costs of publication  
are gratefully accepted.

National Coalition on Black  
Voter Participation, Inc.  
1301 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Suite 400, Washington, D.C. 20004  
(202) 626-3552

Non-Profit  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Permit No. 4113  
Washington, D.C.



26874  
GERALDINE THOMPSON  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
VOTER EDUCATION PROJECT  
52 FAIRLIE STREET, N.W.  
ATLANTA, GA 30315