

The News and Observer

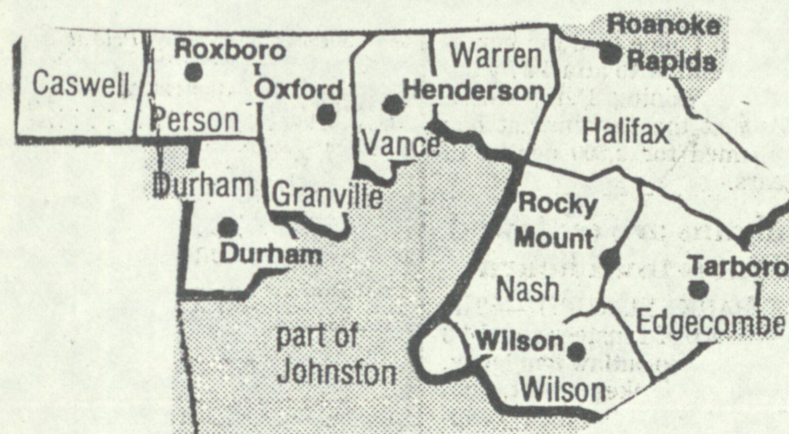
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Blacks have out-registered whites almost 2-to-1 in the past 18 months in the 2nd Congressional District, foreshadowing a possible upset of the white incumbent.

The increase in black voter registration is likely to boost the attempt by state Rep. Kenneth B. Spaulding, a black from Durham, to defeat freshman congressman I.T. "Tim" Valentine of Nashville for the Democratic nomination.

Black voters are expected to turn out in large numbers for North Carolina's May 8 primary election, spurred by the presidential candidacy of the Rev. Jesse L. Jackson.

Valentine narrowly won over a black opponent, H.M. "Mickey" Michaux Jr., in a runoff primary in 1982 that split voters chiefly along racial lines. Valentine got 8,106 more votes than Michaux, who had led Valentine and a third candidate in the first primary without winning the majority needed to avoid a runoff.

Based on preliminary figures

provided Tuesday by the various counties in the 2nd District, black registration has increased in the district since October 1982 by 24,458 voters — to 99,933 from 75,475, or 32.4 percent.

In comparison, white registration increased by 12,306, or 7.9 percent, bringing the total number of whites registered to 167,731. That compares with 155,425 whites who were registered in the district 18 months ago.

The figures do not break down the race of newly registered voters by party. But the district's electorate has been overwhelming Democratic, as have its black voters.

"Based on those numbers, it would indicate that (Valentine) would lose," John E. Bishop of Rocky Mount, Valentine's finance chairman, said in an interview Tuesday. Bishop acknowledged that his statement was intended in part to motivate Valentine supporters to go to the polls.

"I think (the election) could get down to the last county and last precinct before it's decided," he said.

Bishop attributed the increase in black registration to Jackson, rather than Spaulding, who has neither the money nor the organization that Michaux had in 1982.

Another Valentine supporter, William R. Pittman, a Raleigh consultant who coordinated Valentine's 1982 campaign, said Jackson's upcoming visit through part of the district could be a big boost to Spaulding.

"Jackson has generally supported the election of black candidates," Pittman said. "He can point out (to black voters) what happened the last time (in the 1982 runoff)."

The key to the race, Pittman predicted, will be voter turnout.

"If only half of those people (the new registrants) vote, Valentine still has a margin," Pittman said.

James M. O'Reilly, a Durham consultant for Spaulding, described the figures as "spectacular."

"I don't think there's any doubt

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the race thing can be overblown in the sense that in Durham, at least, we know a lot of whites registered are supporters of Spaulding.

While Spaulding is trying to ap-

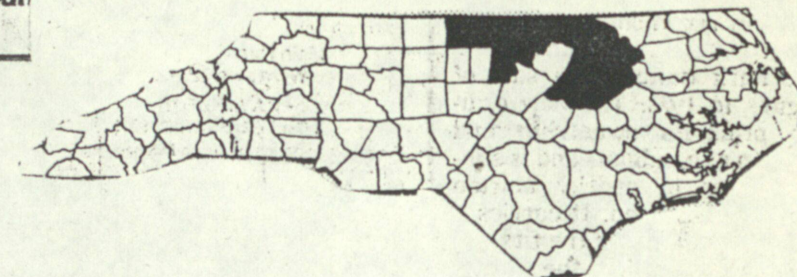
New black voters

outnumber whites

nearly 2-to-1

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about it," O'Reilly said. "It's a real strong showing and will be helpful to Spaulding. But I think



peal to white voters, Valentine is trying to draw blacks into his camp. "I'm going to need black votes," Valentine said in a recent interview.

Increases in registration among whites and blacks were based on a comparison of 1982 registration figures provided by the state Board of Elections and the most recent figures available in the 10 counties and one additional township included in the 2nd District.

Final registration figures were available for eight of the counties — Durham, Caswell, Person, Vance, Granville, Warren, Halifax and Wilson. Figures in Nash were complete as of Jan. 19, in Edgecombe as of April 2, and in O'Neals Township in Johnston County as of March 6. The township is the only part of Johnston County included in the district.

Registration for the primary election closed on April 9.

Comparisons of current registration figures and those of October 1982 showed that:

■ In Caswell County, black registration increased by 23.1 percent, to 5,234 from 4,252. White registration increased 14.2 percent, to 6,239 from 5,464.

■ In Durham County, black registration increased by 41.2 percent, to 28,386 from 20,104. White registration increased 7.5 percent, to 53,157 from 49,439.

■ In Vance County, black registration increased by 49.7 percent, to 8,577 from 5,731. White registra-

tion increased 13.9 percent, to 11,222 from 9,849.

■ In Warren County, black registration increased by 18.1 percent, to 5,831 from 4,937. White registration increased 7.4 percent, to 4,249 from 3,955.

■ In Granville County, black registration increased by 19.6 percent, to 6,826 from 5,709. White registration increased 7.4 percent, to 9,895 from 9,213.

■ In Person County, black registration increased by 51.4 percent, to 4,707 from 3,108. White registration increased 11.7 percent, to 9,758 from 8,736.

■ In Halifax County, black registration increased 33.2 percent, to 12,056 from 9,050. White registration increased 12.0 percent, to 15,714 from 14,032.

■ In Nash County, black registration increased by 19.0 percent, to 7,086 from 5,955. White registration increased 1.4 percent, to 21,652 from 21,346.

■ In Edgecombe County, black registration increased 21.4 percent, to 11,468 from 9,447. White registration increased 6.9 percent, to 13,587 from 12,707.

■ In Wilson County, black registration increased 37.0 percent, to 9,468 from 6,913. White registration increased 8.0 percent, to 20,813 from 19,265.

■ In O'Neals Township of Johnston County, black registration increased 9.3 percent, to 294 from 269. White registration increased 1.8 percent, to 1,445 from 1,419.