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# PRESS RELEASE

CONTACT: RENEE HUIE  
COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
June 23, 1981

ATLANTA, GA.... In testimony today in Washington before the Subcommittee on Civil and Constitutional Rights of the House Judiciary Committee, Mrs. Geraldine G. Thompson, executive director of the Voter Education Project, Inc. (VEP), called the Voting Rights Act "the most effective civil rights legislation ever passed."

Speaking for the extension of the Voting Rights Act, Mrs. Thompson noted that since passage of the Act in 1965 minority voter registration has increased by a thousand percent in Mississippi and more than a hundred percent in some other southern states. In addition, the region now has 2,400 black elected officials as compared to less than a hundred prior to 1965. "However," Mrs. Thompson stated, "The U.S. House of Representatives has only two black members from the South. Only three percent of the area's state senators and eight percent of the state representatives are black. Blacks make up five percent of county governing board members and three percent of the mayors." She added, "These actual percentages of black elected officials show that race is still an overwhelming factor in southern politics."

Mrs. Thompson stated that VEP's 19 years of experience in the voting rights field showed a definite need for extension of the key provisions of the Voting Rights Act if minorities are to achieve full equality in the political system.

VEP is a nonpartisan, nonprofit, tax-exempt organization which was established in 1962 to increase minority political participation in the South.



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## PRESS RELEASE

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COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
MAY 15, 1981

Atlanta, Ga.... The Voter Education Project, Inc. (VEP) released today a study of the State of North Carolina's procurement policies relating to minority businesses.

The study, done by VEP's Research Department, shows that the State of North Carolina has no law, no administrative policy, and no set procedures for insuring that minority business firms get an equitable share of the state's purchasing dollars. Further, the state keeps no centralized records of the amounts it spends each year for goods and services.

The Minority Business Development Agency was set up by the state in 1977 to encourage greater participation in the purchasing system by minority enterprises. However, the agency's small staff, its limited information about purchasing opportunities, and its lack of enforcement power severely limits its ability to significantly increase state business with minority firms.

Based upon the U.S. Census Bureau's 1977 Survey of Minority-Owned Business Enterprises, the State of North Carolina has over 10,000 minority businesses whose gross receipts run over \$330,000,000 annually. The VEP study points out that many of these firms could be potential bidders on state contracts. VEP's Research Associate, Richard Hudlin stated, "In view of North Carolina's long history of invidious discrimination, it is naive to assume that these firms are receiving a fair share of state business."

In recent years, the federal government has enacted legislation requiring



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its agencies to develop practices and policies designed to open up the federal government as a direct market for minority firms. The State of North Carolina has thus far not enacted similar legislation.

In order to open up the vast state government market to minority businesses, VEP's study recommends that the State of North Carolina institute an aggressive affirmative action policy that would enable minority firms to obtain a fair share of state business. Further, VEP recommends that the state's minority political and business leaders organize around this crucial issue of minority enterprise and work through the political system to bring about positive change on their behalf.

VEP's Executive Director, Sherrill Marcus, said, "This study has been issued as part of VEP's effort to establish a practical link between politics and economic development in the 1980s. We hope that this study will open the door further to state business for minority enterprise."

VEP is a nonpartisan, non-profit, tax-exempt organization which has worked in the 11 southern states since 1962 to increase minority political participation.





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