

FOR RELEASE -- 3 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 19, 1972

~~Humphrey's~~ HUMPHREY HITS ADMINISTRATION FOR OPPOSING BILL  
THAT WOULD OPEN FRANCHISE TO 50 MILLION UNREGISTERED AMERICANS

MILWAUKEE, Feb. 19--Senator Hubert H. Humphrey today accused the Nixon Administration of opposing legislation that could result in the ~~the~~ most significant enlargement of the American electorate since women's suffrage--the National Voter Registration Act of 1972.

Humphrey said the legislation, of which he is an original co-sponsor, would remove many complex and cumbersome barriers that prevent otherwise eligible voters from registering, by ~~substituting a simple Federal registration postcard~~ <sup>afford</sup> permitting registration through a simple Federal registration postcard.

~~Registration~~ "This legislation is designed to open the franchise to some 50 million <sup>unregistered who are</sup> Americans otherwise qualified to vote, ~~who didn't in 1968 because they did not register.~~" Humphrey told a large gathering at the Boston Store here on the final day for registration for the Wisconsin primary.

"But the Administration is strongly opposing this bill," Humphrey said. The ~~Administration~~ Justice Department, which was headed by the man who is now Mr. Nixon's campaign manager, cited a phony states rights argument to disenfranchise 50 million ~~more~~ potential American voters.

"And the chairman of the Republican National Committee calls ~~it~~ <sup>the bill</sup> 'unwise.'

"What kind of political double-talk is that? Let me ask you: Is the ~~democratic~~ democratic process unwise? Is it unwise to let the people decide?

"I say its time to open the polling places to all eligible voters. And the best way to start is to remove the ~~difficult~~ difficult and cumbersome procedures that keep millions of Americans from registering."

Humphrey said the simplified procedure would eliminate residency requirements for Presidential and Congressional elections, ~~and~~ prohibit state registration books from closing more than 30 days before election day, and remove other obstacles that surveys ~~have shown~~ show prevent high voter registration.

"This is not a political issue," ~~Mr~~ Humphrey said. "It is an American issue, and I call on the ~~President~~ President to put the weight of his Administration behind the National <sup>V</sup>oter Registration Act--to let the people judge."

Humphrey ~~also~~ cited ~~the~~ evidence ~~that~~ that points to the fact that those who do overcome barriers ~~are~~ in the registration process, do turn out on election day.

In 1968, he said, more than 80 per cent of those registered actually voted, although some 37 million potential voters could not cast ballots because they were unregistered.

~~Women's~~ "Women's suffrage, the Voting Rights Act, and the 26th Amendment--the passport to political participation for young Americans--have brought us closer to true universal suffrage," *he said*.

"The next logical step is is the National Voter Registration Act.

"If the Federal government can ~~now~~ make it possible ~~to~~ <sup>to</sup> ~~bring~~ for 95 per cent of the American population to pay income taxes, it can make it possible for Americans to register to vote quickly and easily by mail."

MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN--SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 1972--BOSTON STORE

1. REGISTRATION - GENERAL IMPORTANCE

YOUNG PEOPLE ALL ACROSS THIS NATION ARE GATHERING THIS ELECTION YEAR TO REGISTER--TO USE THE VOTE IN THE FIGHT FOR GOOD JOBS, FOR INCREASED EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE, FOR A BETTER ENVIRONMENT, FOR PEACE.

BUT TOO OFTEN THE REGISTRATION PROCESS IS A HINDRANCE--AND NOT A CONVENIENCE.

TOO OFTEN IT IS A BARRIER TO VOTING--AND NOT A GUARANTEE OF VOTING.

TOO OFTEN AMERICANS ARE UNABLE TO REGISTER--

--BECAUSE THEY DON'T KNOW WHERE TO REGISTER

--BECAUSE THEY DON'T KNOW HOW TO REGISTER

--BECAUSE THEY CAN'T GET THERE

--BECAUSE THEY DON'T HAVE THE TIME

--BECAUSE THEY ARE TOO LATE

--BECAUSE THEY HAVE JUST MOVED

--BECAUSE THE REGISTRATION PROCESS IS NEEDLESSLY COMPLEX AND CUMBERSOME.

WE KNOW THAT PEOPLE WHO REGISTER DO VOTE: IN 1968, 80.8 PERCENT OF THOSE REGISTERED VOTED. BUT 37 MILLION AMERICANS DID NOT VOTE IN 1968 BECAUSE THEY WERE NOT REGISTERED. AND WE ALSO

KNOW THAT IT IS THE POOR, THE UNDEREDUCATED AND THE MINORITIES WHO DO NOT REGISTER, AND WHO ARE SOMETIMES PREVENTED FROM REGISTERING.

WE NEED A SIMPLE, EASY TO UNDERSTAND REGISTRATION PROCESS-- AND WE CAN GET ONE THIS YEAR.

2. THE NATIONAL VOTER REGISTRATION ACT OF 1972

I HAVE COSPONSORED VITAL REGISTRATION LEGISLATION WHICH IS NOW BEFORE THE CONGRESS--THE NATIONAL VOTER REGISTRATION ACT OF 1972.

THIS BILL WILL GIVE ALL AMERICANS A NATIONAL SYSTEM OF VOTING REGISTRATION.

--IT WILL PROVIDE FOR FEDERAL REGISTRATION POSTCARDS TO BE SENT TO EVERY ELIGIBLE AMERICAN.

--IT WILL ELIMINATE RESIDENCY REQUIREMENTS FOR PRESIDENTIAL AND CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS.

--IT WILL PROHIBIT STATE REGISTRATION BOOTHS FROM CLOSING MORE THAN 30 DAYS BEFORE ELECTION DAY.

--A SYSTEM OF NATIONAL VOTER REGISTRATION IS THE NEXT LOGICAL STEP IN EXPANDING THE AMERICAN ELECTORATE. IT IS NEEDED NOW. IT CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED NOW.

IF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT CAN FIND 95 PERCENT OF ALL AMERICANS TO GET THEIR INCOME TAXES, IT CAN FIND YOU AND REGISTER YOU QUICKLY AND EASILY BY MAIL.

THE PROCESS OF BRINGING MORE AMERICANS INTO THE VOTING BOOTHS STARTED 50 YEARS AGO WITH THE 19TH AMENDMENT, CONTINUED WITH THE 24TH AMENDMENT AND THE VOTING RIGHTS ACTS, AND RECENTLY WAS GREATLY EXPANDED WITH THE 26TH AMENDMENT--THE PASSPORT TO POLITICAL PARTICIPATION FOR YOUNG AMERICANS.

3. NIXON ADMINISTRATION'S REFUSAL TO AID REGISTRATION.

THE EXPANSION OF VOTING RIGHTS IS NOT A PARTISAN ISSUE--IT IS AN AMERICAN ISSUE. BUT THE NIXON ADMINISTRATION IS NOT SUPPORTING--AS IT SHOULD--A FEDERAL ROLE IN A NEW SYSTEM OF VOTER REGISTRATION.

THE ADMINISTRATION STRONGLY OPPOSES THE NATIONAL VOTER REGISTRATION ACT WHICH COULD RESULT IN THE MOST SIGNIFICANT ENLARGEMENT OF THE AMERICAN ELECTORATE SINCE WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.

THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT--WHICH USED TO BE HEADED BY THE MAN WHO IS NOW MR. NIXON'S CAMPAIGN MANAGER--CITED A PHONY STATES RIGHTS ARGUMENT AGAINST THE NATIONAL REGISTRATION SYSTEM.

AND THE CHAIRMAN OF THE REPUBLICAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE CALLS THE BILL "UNWISE".

LET ME ASK YOU: IS THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS UNWISE? IS IT UNWISE TO LET THE PEOPLE DECIDE?

I SAY IT'S TIME TO OPEN THE POLLING PLACES TO ALL ELIGIBLE VOTERS. AND THE BEST WAY TO START IS TO REMOVE THE DIFFICULT AND CUMBERSOME PROCEDURES THAT KEEP MILLIONS OF AMERICANS FROM REGISTERING.

I CALL UPON PRESIDENT NIXON TO PLACE THE GREAT WEIGHT OF HIS ADMINISTRATION BEHIND THE NATIONAL VOTER REGISTRATION ACT.

HE HAS REFUSED TO DO THIS THUS FAR. DEMOCRACY DEMANDS--AND THIS LEGISLATION DESERVES--A MASSIVE VOTE IN FAVOR OF REGISTRATION REFORM.

4. AMERICAN YOUTH: REASONS FOR VOTING

THE 26TH AMENDMENT IMMEDIATELY PRODUCED 11.5 MILLION NEW VOTERS--AND 3.5 MILLION AMERICANS TURN 18 EVERY YEAR.

THESE NEW VOTERS WILL PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN 1972. THEY CAN PROVIDE THE MARGIN OF VICTORY FOR A CANDIDATE WHO DESERVES THEIR SUPPORT. BUT TO BE EFFECTIVE, YOUNG AMERICANS MUST ORGANIZE, MUST REGISTER AND MUST VOTE. YOU MUST MAKE YOUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS REALIZE HOW CRUCIAL THEIR VOTES ARE.

--IF I WERE 18 AND SAW A NATION STILL AT WAR IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, I WOULD VOTE.

--IF I WERE 18 AND SAW WHITE TEENAGE UNEMPLOYMENT AT 13 PERCENT AND BLACK TEENAGE UNEMPLOYMENT CLOSE TO 35 PERCENT, I WOULD VOTE.

--IF I WERE 18 AND KNEW THAT OVER 5 MILLION OF MY FELLOW CITIZENS WERE UNEMPLOYED THROUGH NO FAULT OF THEIR OWN, I WOULD VOTE.

--IF I WERE 18 AND BELIEVED THAT AMERICA MUST DO BETTER IN HEALTH CARE, IN EDUCATION, IN PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT, IN CONTROLLING CRIME, IN PROVIDING HOUSING, I WOULD VOTE.

--IF I WERE 18 AND SAW MY GOVERNMENT RESPONDING TO THE CRISIS OF THE MOMENT AT HOME AND ABROAD, BUT LACKING EVEN THE FEEBLEST PLANS FOR NEXT YEAR OR THE NEXT DECADE IN EDUCATION, IN HEALTH CARE, IN HOUSING, I WOULD VOTE.

--YES, IF I WERE 18 AND HAD HEARD SO MANY GOVERNMENT PROMISES, BUT SEEN SO FEW RESULTS, I WOULD VOTE.



# Minnesota Historical Society

Copyright in this digital version belongs to the Minnesota Historical Society and its content may not be copied without the copyright holder's express written permission. Users may print, download, link to, or email content, however, for individual use.

To request permission for commercial or educational use, please contact the Minnesota Historical Society.



[www.mnhs.org](http://www.mnhs.org)