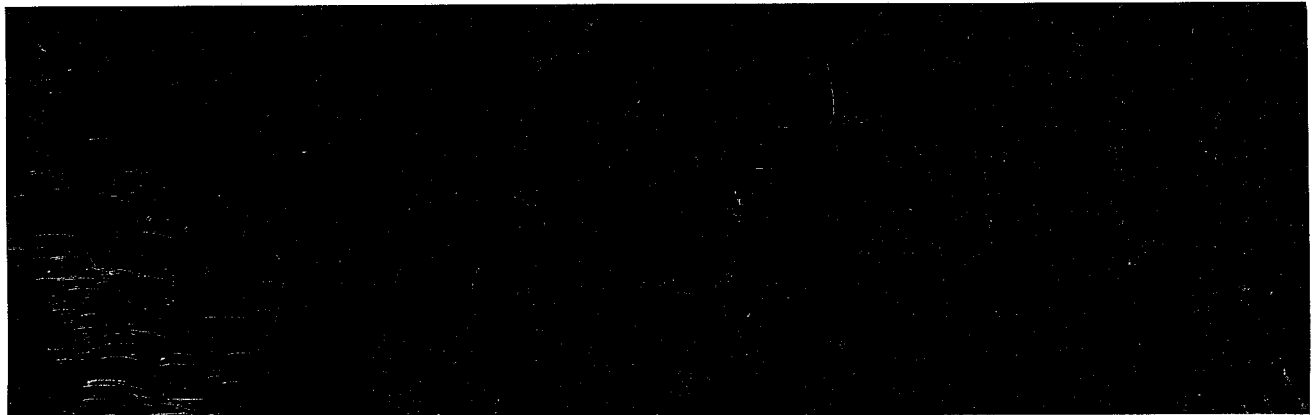
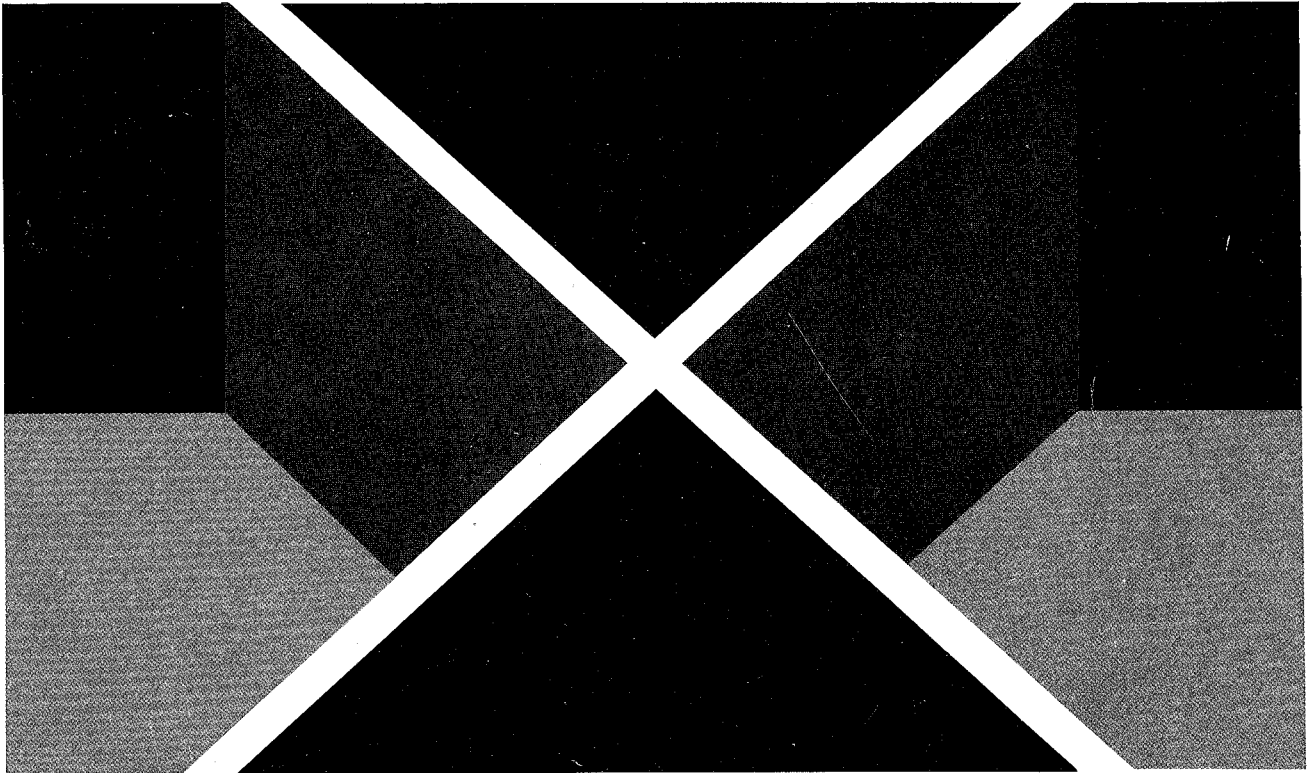


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*THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT:  
TEN YEARS AFTER*



U.S. Commission on Civil Rights

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is a temporary, independent, bipartisan agency established by Congress in 1957 to:

Investigate complaints alleging denial of the right to vote by reason of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin, or by reason of fraudulent practices;

Study and collect information concerning legal developments constituting a denial of equal protection of the laws under the Constitution because of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin, or in the administration of justice;

Appraise Federal laws and policies with respect to the denial of equal protection of the laws because of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin, or in the administration of justice;

Serve as a national clearinghouse for information concerning denials of equal protection of the laws because of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin; and

Submit reports, findings, and recommendations to the President and the Congress.

Members of the Commission:

Arthur S. Flemming, Chairman

Stephen Horn, Vice Chairman

Frankie M. Freeman

Robert S. Rankin

Manuel Ruiz, Jr.

Murray Saltzman

John A. Buggs, Staff Director

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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

THE U.S. COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS  
Washington, D.C.  
January 1975

THE PRESIDENT  
THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE  
THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Sirs:

The Commission on Civil Rights presents this report to you pursuant to Public Law 85-315, as amended.

This document presents the Commission's evaluation of the current status of minority voting rights in jurisdictions covered under the Voting Rights Act of 1965, as amended in 1970. The information on which this report is based was obtained by the Commission primarily from staff interviews in these jurisdictions and from court decisions and analysis of the files of the U.S. Department of Justice.

The Voting Rights Act has contributed substantially to the marked increase in all forms of minority political participation in the last 10 years. The very existence of the act as well as the specific remedies that it provides give support to minority citizens as they exercise their constitutional right to vote. Nevertheless, though the Voting Rights Act has been effective, detailed examination of recent events reveals that discrimination persists in the political process. The promise of the 15th amendment and the potential of the Voting Rights Act have not been fully realized. We, therefore, conclude that the protections of the Voting Rights Act should not be allowed to expire in August 1975.

We urge your consideration of the facts presented and the Commission's recommendations for corrective action.

Respectfully,

Arthur S. Flemming, Chairman  
Stephen Horn, Vice Chairman  
Frankie M. Freeman  
Robert S. Rankin  
Manuel Ruiz, Jr.  
Murray Saltzman

John A. Buggs, Staff Director



THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT: TEN YEARS AFTER

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A Report of the United States  
Commission on Civil Rights  
January 1975

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## PREFACE

The 1965 Voting Rights Act is one of the most significant pieces of civil rights legislation ever enacted. Its passage and enforcement have been responsible for substantial increases in the number of blacks registered, voting, and elected to office in the seven Southern States covered by the act. This study has a twofold purpose: (1) to determine whether the conditions which led to the act's original passage have been eradicated; and (2) to determine whether the promise of full participation has been fulfilled for blacks, Puerto Ricans, Mexican Americans, and Native Americans in jurisdictions covered by the act's special provisions.

In the course of the study, Commission staff members visited 54 jurisdictions in 10 States (Alabama, Arizona, California, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, New York, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia) between July and November 1974. Within these States, counties and cities were chosen on the basis of preliminary research that indicated that there were problems of minority participation in the political process. The selected counties represent a wide geographical range as well as rural and urban areas.

The staff conducted over 200 interviews with persons knowledgeable about the political process in these States. These persons included

county clerks, county registrars, and other city and county officials; minority officeholders; minority candidates for office; public officials at the State and national level; and other persons active in civil rights activities. Observations by Commission staff were made during the 1974 primaries in Louisiana, Georgia, and South Carolina, and during the 1974 general elections in Arizona and California.

Other sources of information included the Department of Justice, the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, the Voter Education Project, and the Joint Center for Political Studies. Commission staff also reviewed State election codes for the 10 States, as well as trial and appellate court decisions and pleadings.

This report deals primarily with events that occurred since 1971. Previous reports of the Commission and others have discussed earlier years of the Voting Rights Act. The report treats examples of problems<sup>1</sup> that continue to affect the enfranchisement of minority voters. It is, therefore, not a complete review of all political activity in the jurisdictions covered by the act.

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1. Throughout this report, the terms black, Native American, Puerto Rican, and Mexican American (or Chicano) are used to refer to the predominant minority groups in the jurisdictions covered by the Voting Rights Act. The term white is used to refer to the nonminority population of these jurisdictions.



Prior to the publication of a report, the Commission, in accordance with its statute, rules, and regulations, affords any individuals or organizations that may be defamed, degraded, or incriminated by any material contained in the report an opportunity to respond in writing to such material. All responses received in a timely fashion are incorporated or reflected in the body of the report, or included in Appendix 7.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Commission is indebted to Emilio E. Abeyta, Cynthia C. Matthews, Deborah P. Snow, and Thomas R. Watson, who prepared this report under the direction of Frank G. Knorr.

Appreciation is also extended to the following staff members and former staff members who provided support and assistance in the production of the report:

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The Commission is also grateful to David H. Hunter who returned to the Commission to lend his expert assistance to this effort.

The report was prepared under the overall supervision of John Hope III, Assistant Staff Director, Office of Program and Policy Review.

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