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Drastic Steps Considered To Prevent Mass Negro Vote

Editor's note: This is the first of three stories on legal measures Alabama may take to keep Negroes from gaining political control under the proposed new federal voting law."

By REX THOMAS

Associated Press Writer

If Congress enacts a strong new civil rights law, Alabama may

take drastic action to prevent mass Negro voting, especially in counties with predominantly Negro populations.

Several far-reaching steps are under consideration, ranging from abolition of primary elections in local races to the handicapping of city and county officials by the Legislature.

Some counties like Macon —

where Negroes outnumber white residents nearly 6-1 — may be merged, as a last resort, with neighboring counties which have heavier white populations.

No official action has been taken thus far, but state officials and members of the Legislature have begun to explore the possible legal remedies which might keep Negroes from gaining political con-

trol in the counties where they are heavily concentrated.

Gov. John Patterson and State Democratic Chairman Sam Engelhardt say there has been increasing talk in recent weeks about the possibility of abandoning the traditional party primaries in local elections and having Democratic nominees chosen by handpicked party committees.

That would keep Negroes from dictating the choice of party nominees, and thus force them to run their own candidates as independents or write-ins if they hoped to elect their own officials.

But in the 14 counties where Negroes have a majority of the population, that might not achieve the desired results. Mass Negro registration would enable them to

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WEATHER

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ALABAMA JOURNAL

Central And Southeast Alabama's Largest Evening Newspaper

1960 YEAR—NO. 77

Ph. *AM 2-7411 THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA, WEDNESDAY, MARCH 30, 1960

UNITED PRESS I

Efforts To Prevent Mass Negro Voting In Alabama

Negroes outnumber white voters in nearly 6-1 — may be used, as a last resort, with a view to winning counties with larger white populations.

Official action has been taken in some counties, but state officials and members of the Legislature have been urged to explore the possible legal avenues which might keep Negroes from gaining political control in the counties where they are heavily concentrated.

Gov. John Patterson and State Democratic Chairman Sam Engelhardt say there has been increasing talk in recent weeks about the possibility of abandoning the traditional party primaries in local elections and having Democratic nominees chosen by handpicked party committees.

That would keep Negroes from dictating the choice of party nominees, and thus force them to run their own candidates as independents or write-ins if they hoped to elect their own officials.

But in the 14 counties where Negroes have a majority of the population, that might not achieve the desired results. Mass Negro registration would enable them to

put their own ticket on the general election ballot and outvote the whites.

To guard against that, some authorities have suggested passage of a law prohibiting write-ins in votes and repeal of existing laws which spell out the procedure of getting independent candidates on the ballot and creating new

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Alabama's Largest Evening Newspaper

55 — MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA, WEDNESDAY, MARCH 30, 1960 — UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL 36 PAGES PRICE FIVE CENTS