

Tallahassee, Florida
April 9, 1947

Mr. Harry T. Moore, Executive Secretary
Florida State Conference, NAACP
Progressive Voters' League of Florida, Inc.
Box 4
Mims, Florida

Dear Mr. Moore :

I have your letter of April 4 with reference to a proposed piece of legislation being sponsored allegedly by Senator John E. Mathews.

I have read your letter with considerable interest and find the same to be sound, rational, conservative, and, in my judgement, fair. You speak for nothing which I cannot support. I endorse those things which you underwrite as principles of government.

Sincerely yours,

J. Tom Watson
Attorney General

Copy

from Tom W. Case

4/9/47

126 - Matthews Primary Bill

Mims, Florida
January 23, 1947

Dear Co-workers:

Notice is hereby given that the Progressive Voters' League of Florida, Inc., will hold a state-wide meeting at Mt. Olive M. E. Church on West Washington Street, Orlando, Saturday, February 1, at 11:00 A. M. All persons interested in the political welfare of Florida Negro citizens are cordially invited to attend this one-day meeting.

The Progressive Voters' League was organized primarily to help stimulate wholesome political activity among Negro citizens, and to help secure the unrestricted use of the ballot for all Florida citizens, without regard to race or creed. The Progressive Voters' League is not promoting any foreign "isms". We stand for American Democracy, pure and simple. We believe, like Patrick Henry, that "taxation without representation is tyranny". We believe, like Thomas Jefferson, "that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed -". We believe in the Constitution of the United States - including the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments. We believe that all citizens have a right to participate freely in the affairs of their government. We believe that inasmuch as American citizens of all colors and creeds have sacrificed freely to help win the recent struggle for democracy, all should share equally the fruits of victory.

Unfortunately, there are certain forces at work in Florida who would undermine the true principles of American Democracy, as expounded by Patrick Henry, Thomas Jefferson, and Abraham Lincoln. These forces are preaching the doctrines of foreign "isms", whereby the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution would be ignored, and certain citizens would be restricted in their use of the ballot, just because of their racial origin. We must get together and devise plans to combat these evil forces. Liberal-minded citizens of all colors must co-operate in an effort to secure and maintain a more practical application of the democratic principle of "government of the people, for the people, and by the people".

Rev. H. McNeal Harris, 418 West Washington Street, is pastor of the local church and chaplain of the Progressive Voters' League. Mrs. Viola T. Hill, 626 West Washington Street, is vice president of the League.

Sincerely yours,

Harry T. Moore

Milton P. Rooks, President
1135 Pierce St., Clearwater

Harry T. Moore
Executive Secretary

Mims, Florida
March 15, 1947

Fellow Citizens :

No doubt you have been hearing and reading much about the so-called "White Primary" Bill, that is to be presented to the Florida Legislature when it convenes next month. This bill, which is being sponsored by Senator John E. Mathews of Duval County, is similar to the Talmadge-sponsored "White Primary" Bill that passed the Georgia Legislature a few days ago. It seeks to divorce the Democratic Primary from State control and thus make the Democratic Party in Florida a private club. In this way Negroes and other minority groups can be barred from voting in the Democratic Primary, which is the main election in Florida.

The immediate purpose of the Mathews Bill is to disfranchise Florida Negro citizens. It is only natural, therefore, that every thinking Negro would bitterly oppose this bill. Inasmuch as we are citizens and tax payers of Florida, we should cherish all the rights of citizenship guaranteed by the Constitution. Chief among these is the right to vote - the right to help select those officials who are to have direct control of our every-day affairs.

Straight-thinking white citizens also oppose the Mathews Bill. These liberal-minded white citizens fully realize the fact that we shall have a true democracy in this country only when American citizens of all races, creeds, and colors are made secure in the full enjoyment of their Constitutional rights. These white citizens know that if one group of citizens can be disfranchised, the same thing can easily happen to another group. They realize also that private primaries, as advocated by the Mathews Bill, would open Florida politics to the worst form of fraud and corruption.

Straight-thinking white and Negro citizens plan positive action to save Florida from this threat of Fascism. A state-wide Conference To Help Defend Democracy In Florida will be held at the Congregational Church in Winter Park, Saturday, March 22, from noon to 4:00 P. M. Formal action will be taken to urge defeat of the Mathews "White Primary" Bill by the State Legislature, which convenes on April 8. Included on the list of Sponsors are many of the leading white and Negro citizens of Florida.

The Winter Park Conference is being co-ordinated by the Southern Conference for Human Welfare. The Florida State Conference of NAACP branches and the Progressive Voters' League of Florida, Inc., are working in full co-operation. Representatives from NAACP branches and Voters' League units, ministers, teachers, business and fraternal leaders, and other interested citizens are cordially invited to attend this ~~important~~ Conference.

We also suggest that you get in touch with your state senators and representatives and urge them to oppose the Mathews Bill.

Yours for democracy in Florida,

Harry T. Moore
Harry T. Moore, Executive Secretary

1. Florida State Conference, NAACP
2. Progressive Voters' League of Florida, Inc.

Mims, Florida
April 4, 1947

Legislators and Chief Executive
State of Florida
Tallahassee, Florida

Dear Sirs :

We wish to express our opposition to Senate Bill No. 15, sponsored by Senator John E. Mathews of Duval County, which is to be presented again to the Florida Legislature. We oppose this bill for two reasons. In the first place, it seeks to disfranchise a third of the voting population of Florida. In the second place, it would remove the primaries from State control and thus leave our election machinery open to the worst forms of fraud and corruption.

Senator Mathews has frankly admitted that his Bill is designed to keep Negroes from voting in Democratic primaries. He also admits that "the negroes in a general election cannot elect a candidate". In short, Senator Mathews is admitting these two facts: (1) that the Democratic Primary is actually THE ELECTION in Florida, and (2) that the General Election in Florida is little more than a formality. Therefore, those citizens who cannot vote in the Democratic Primary are almost completely disfranchised.

But why should the Negro citizens of Florida be disfranchised? Have we not proven ourselves to be loyal citizens of this state? Have we not always rallied to the support of our country whenever a crisis arose? Have we not made our contribution to the progress and development of this state and nation? What have we done so bad and so unpatriotic that we should be denied the fundamental right to vote? Can Florida have a true democracy with one third of its citizens and tax payers disfranchised?

Senator Mathews has written much about the "Communist-inspired, CIO-controlled negro block vote". This is merely a bit of propaganda designed to frighten those who would give all citizens their Constitutional right to vote. The great majority of Negroes do not care anything about communism or any other kind of "ism". I have lived in Florida all of my life, and I know most of the leading Negro citizens of this state. We are not awayed by any foreign ideas of government. We want a real democracy here at home. We want a fuller enjoyment of all the rights and privileges guaranteed by the Constitution. We want to vote when voting really counts. We want to help elect those officials who have direct control of our every-day affairs.

Negroes do not seek to control any election. We just want free participation in the affairs of our government. In a true democracy the will of the majority always prevails. Minorities gain control only when the democratic process is stifled. That is what happened in Germany.

Removing the primaries from State control will expose Florida politics to the worst forms of fraud and corruption. Political bosses and cliques can more easily get control of our elections.

Passage of the Mathews Bill will help to promote Fascism and Communism in our state. If we are to enjoy that type of democracy described in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States, we must have free and unfettered elections for all citizens, without regard to race or creed. We therefore urge you to help defeat the Mathews Bill and thereby help to maintain in Florida a "government of the people, for the people, and by the people".

Yours for democracy in Florida,

Harry T. Moore
Harry T. Moore, Executive Secretary

1. Florida State Conference, NAACP
2. Progressive Voters' League of Florida, Inc.

Mims, Florida
March 15, 1947

ellow Citizens :

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The immediate purpose of the Mathews Bill is to disfranchise Florida Negro citizens. It is only natural, therefore, that many thinking Negro would bitterly oppose this bill. Inasmuch as we are citizens and taxpayers of Florida, we should cherish all the rights of citizenship guaranteed by the Constitution. Chief among these is the right to vote - the right to help select those officials who are to have direct control of our every-day affairs.

Straight-thinking white citizens also oppose the Mathews Bill. These liberal-minded white citizens fully realize the fact that we shall have a true democracy in this country only when American citizens of all races, creeds, and colors are made secure in the full enjoyment of their Constitutional rights. These white citizens know that if one group of citizens can be disfranchised, the same thing can easily happen to another group. They realize also that private primaries, as advocated by the Mathews Bill, would open Florida politics to the worst form of fraud and corruption.

Straight-thinking white and Negro citizens plan positive action to save Florida from this threat of Fascism. A state-wide Conference To Help Defend Democracy in Florida will be held at the Congregational Church in Winter Park, Saturday, March 22, from noon to 4:00 P. M. Formal action will be taken to urge defeat of the Mathews "White Primary" Bill by the State Legislature, which convenes on April 8. Included on the list of Sponsors are many of the leading white and Negro citizens of Florida.

The Winter Park Conference is being co-ordinated by the Southern Conference for Human Welfare, The Florida State Conference of NAACP Branches and the Progressive Voters' League of Florida, Inc., are working in full co-operation. Representatives from NAACP branches and Voters' League units, ministers, teachers, business and fraternal leaders, and other interested citizens are cordially invited to attend this ~~important~~ Conference.

We also suggest that you get in touch with your state senators and representatives and urge them to oppose the Mathews Bill.

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Harry T. Moore
Harry T. Moore, Executive Secretary

1. Florida State Conference, NAACP
2. Progressive Voters' League of Florida, Inc.

Winter Park Conference

4/22/87

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March 15, 1947

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Harry T. Moore, Executive Secretary

1. Florida State Conference, NAACP
2. Progressive Voters' League of Florida, Inc.

Call to write Park

3/22/47

"To promote the general welfare by furnishing information on candidates and measures."

FLORIDA VOTERS' LEAGUE

James F. Hasic, President
Royal W. France, Vice-Pres.
Paul S. Peirce, Treasurer
Edwin L. Clarke, Secretary
Winter Park, Florida

March 17, 1947

STATE COUNCIL

Raymond F. Bellamy, Tallahassee
Lloyd F. Boyle, Sanford
Heleen W. Cole, Winter Park
Carson Doggett, Mt. Dora
Paul S. Finner, Tallahassee
Walter P. Fuller, St. Petersburg
Robert J. Gisher, Jacksonville
Walter Gospihl, Kissimmee
Hamilton Holt, Winter Park
R. F. Howes, DeLand
Edward A. Johnson, Orlando
Francis P. Locke, Miami
A. R. Mead, Gainesville
William Melcher, Winter Park
Walter Metcalf, Tampa
Paul S. Peirce, Winter Park
Raymond Robins, Brooksville
Morris A. Skop, Orlando
Frances Prescott Smith
Winter Haven
Ludd M. Spivey, Lakeland

Dear Fellow Citizen,

The Florida Voters' League knows that you are interested in good government. It therefore asks that you read carefully the enclosed statement on a current menace to democracy in Florida.

The League urges your cooperation in the effort to defeat this threatening project. Three simple things you can do, as follows:

1. Give publicity to our statement. Show it to your friends. If your local paper has not published it, take it to the editor and ask him to print it.
2. Write a brief letter to your paper, expressing in your own words your opposition to the project for relinquishing control of the primaries to the political parties.
3. Write a letter or even a postal to your representatives in the legislature. Better still, go with a group of friends to see them. Tell them why you are opposed to this project. They will understand you readily, as we have already sent them our Brief. If possible, get their pledge to oppose and to work against the project.

The Florida Voters' League will be glad to have a report on your success.

Sincerely,

Edwin L. Clarke
Secretary

The Florida Voters' League needs widespread support in its work to inform the people on problems of government. You may become a member upon payment of the annual fee, \$1.00.

Additional copies of this letter, the accompanying Brief, and literature on the Florida Voters' League may be obtained from the Secretary, Box 87, Rollins College, Winter Park, Florida.

NEWS SERVICE
FLORIDAS VOTERS' LEAGUE
WINTER PARK, FLORIDA

For Release
March 17
or thereafter

WINTER PARK, FLORIDA March 16.-- Members of the non-partizan Florida Voters' League havw just had a referendum on the question, "Should the State leave to political parties full control over primaries?" In the postal ballot, sent to all League members, 97 per cent of those voting opposed abandoning state control, and wanted the League to cpossue such a change. Accordingly the League Executive Board today issued the following statement.

Why Political Parties Should Not Have Sole Control Over Primaries.

1. A primary uncontrolled by the State is far more likely to be manipulated, and dishonestly, than is one subject to state control.
2. An uncontrolled primary must be financed by a charge upon voters (the old undemocratic poll tax in a new form) or by a large fee charged candidates, thus favoring rich aspirants for office.
3. The proposal is a step away from democracy and toward control by a special group. As such it is a threat to all minority groups. If we permit an all-white primary, which is the purpose of this project, we can logically and easily go on to an all-Christain primary, an all-Protestant primary a native-born-of-native-parents primary, a red-suspenders primary. Through such a step-by-step method the Nazis, at whom men once laughed, destroyed democracy in Germany.
4. The primary needs no "protection" from voters who happen not to be white. Thousands of them are intelligent and many are well educated. They have the same wish for good government that others have.
5. It is unnecessary as a means to protect the primary from ignorant voters. Florida needs only make a fair educational test and administer it fairly.
6. In the light of repeated decisions of the Supreme Court on similar projects in Texas, the plan is clearly unconstitutional.
7. High ranking officers in the Democratic Party and in the government of Florida have declared that the State should not seek to evade the law of the land. So have progressive organizations, such as the Florida Section of the Southern Regioal Council, and the Southern Conference for Human Welfare.
8. It is not good for the reputation of a state to try to evade the supreme law of the land. In the eyes of America the passage of such a project would put Florida in the class of Mississippi and Georgia, the homes of Bilboism and Talamdgeism. It would make Florida seem much less desirable to high grade winter visitors and potential citizens from outside the state.

Additional copies of this statement may be obtained from Edwin L. Clarke, Secretary, Florida Voters' League, Winter Park, Florida.

Mims, Florida
January 23, 1947

Dear Co-workers :

Notice is hereby given that the Progressive Voters' League of Florida, Inc., will hold a state-wide meeting at Mt. Olive A. M. E. Church on West Washington Street, Orlando, Saturday, February 1, at 11:00 A. M. All persons interested in the political welfare of Florida Negro citizens are cordially invited to attend this one-day meeting.

The Progressive Voters' League was organized primarily to help stimulate wholesome political activity among Negro citizens, and to help secure the unrestricted use of the ballot for all Florida citizens, without regard to race or creed. The Progressive Voters' League is not promoting any foreign "isms". We stand for American Democracy, pure and simple. We believe, like Patrick Henry, that "taxation without representation is tyranny". We believe, like Thomas Jefferson, "that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed -". We believe in the Constitution of the United States - including the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments. We believe that all citizens have a right to participate freely in the affairs of their government. We believe that inasmuch as American citizens of all colors and creeds have sacrificed freely to help win the recent struggle for democracy, all should share equally the fruits of victory.

Unfortunately, there are certain forces at work in Florida who would undermine the true principles of American Democracy, as expounded by Patrick Henry, Thomas Jefferson, and Abraham Lincoln. These forces are preaching the doctrines of foreign "isms", whereby the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution would be ignored, and certain citizens would be restricted in their use of the ballot, just because of their racial origin. We must get together and devise plans to combat these evil forces. Liberal-minded citizens of all colors must co-operate in an effort to secure and maintain a more practical application of the democratic principle of "government of the people, for the people, and by the people".

Rev. H. McNeal Harris, 418 West Washington Street, is pastor of the local church and chaplain of the Progressive Voters' League. Mrs. Viola T. Hill, 626 West Washington Street, is vice president of the League.

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