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Voting & Mississippi -(a very brief history)

With the election one day away, this is the (obligatory) “be sure you vote” blawg.



Tuesday we go to the polls to elect State and National officials. You get to vote for the person you think should be President, and a MS Senator, (if in your district) Congressmen, 2 MS Supreme Court Justices, and a host of local positions, such as election commissioners.

We hear and see a lot of talk about Mississippi being subject to Federal oversight in her elections. Below is a brief explanation of that Federal oversight.

Mississippi has a stormy past when it comes to voting rights - attempting to restrict minority access to voting – and those past State actions can still be felt in today’s elections. Mississippi is one of 8 states subject to the Department of Justice “pre-clearance” and oversight on any voting/election law changes pursuant to the Voting Rights Act of 1965. (Some sections of other states are subject to the pre-clearance oversight).

This legislation was designed to ensure the right of minority citizens to register and vote, and to prevent discriminatory laws passed by state and local entities. Both permanent and non-permanent provisions are proscribed. One permanent provision applies nationwide and outlaws any voting practice that results in the denial of voting rights on the basis of a person’s race, color, or membership in a language-minority group.

The non-permanent provisions that are relevant to Mississippi require “pre-clearance” of any changes in voting/election laws and allows the DOJ to send federal observers to the polls in Mississippi

To pass muster any changes in voting/election laws must demonstrate that the voting change does not have the purpose or effect of discriminating on the basis of race or language minority. If the DOJ or the federal court determines that there is a discriminatory purpose or effect, then an objection is issued. If an objection is issued, the change cannot be put into operation.

Source: *The Voting Rights Act and Mississippi 1965-2006, A Report of the RenewtheVRA.org*, by Robert McDuff.

With that brief history of MS voting you can see the impact and importance that the right to vote has for many citizens. Exercise your right to vote; let your voice be heard and your vote be counted.

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