



## Module 1, Unit 2, Lesson 4:

### Small Group Discussion

#### Directions:

Students must read the state of Mississippi's response to the [Voting Rights Act](#). Working in small groups, compose an essay that answers the following question.

The Mississippi [Simpson County News](#) editorial board called the Voting Rights Act, "not the edict of a dictatorial president or the questionable interpretation of a court; it is an act of Congress!" Work together to write a short essay explaining why it's important that the Act was passed by the legislative branch.

Use the criteria below to compose the essay:

- What is the Voting Rights Act of 1965 [2 points]?
- What is the difference between the three branches of government (Executive, Judicial and Legislative) [3 points]?
- Which branch does the public feel best represents them [2 points]?
- Can you explain how this Mississippi newspaper will respond to the new Voting Rights Act [2 points]?

# VOTE YOUR INTELLIGENCE...

## (not your emotions)

The Congress of the United States has enacted "The Voting Rights Bill of 1965". Unwise and unfair as we believe this Act to be, it is not the edict of a dictatorial president or the questionable interpretation of a court; it is an act of Congress! As such, the Voting Rights Act is the Law of the Land, and is binding upon Mississippi and all her citizens.

This is a fact which must be faced by every Mississippian.

Fiery oratory will not alter this fact or protect our people from its consequences.

Reckless defiance of federal authority to enforce this Act will invite and, in the eyes of the World, justify further invasions of the sovereignty of this state.

Resentment displayed by Mississippians — either at the polls or in the streets — will produce nothing of value; rather, "telling the rest of the United States to go to Hell" will make Mississippi once again the prime target of radical agitators, the prime excuse for punitive federal legislation, the favorite "whipping boy" of the nation.

In today's circumstances, the most effective defense of "States' Rights" is state responsibility . . . responsible, adequate action on the state, county and local level. Intelligent action. Realistic action. Calculated action.

Only through calm study and reasoned actions can Mississippians hope to thwart the efforts of those who are dedicated to the destruction of local self-government.

This is the course chosen by your duly-elected state government. The Constitutional Amendments submitted for your approval at the polls on Tuesday, August 17, are no "overnight" propositions. They are the results of months of study and planning, of seeking the best available alternative to the potential chaos promised by the federal Voting Rights Act.

### TAKE YOUR STAND

#### negative

The new federal Voting Rights Act suspends all literacy and character qualifications for voting, as these apply to Negroes . . . but leave the Whites subject to Mississippi's strict voter requirements. The resulting "two sets of rules" leave the Whites at a disadvantage. Federal registrars, from the nation-at-large, will be sent to Mississippi with the aim of registering all adult Negroes regardless of character or ability to read and write. Many Whites will remain ineligible to vote.

The old Mississippi laws and Constitutional provisions setting qualifications for voting clearly are struck down (as they apply to Negroes) by the new federal Act; therefore, any effort through the courts to obtain relief from this Act is unlikely to succeed.

The "attitude" Mississippians display to a watching nation is important to building support for our conservative cause, to increasing Mississippi's influence in national affairs, and to continuing the now-rapid flow of job-creating businesses and industries into our economy. Public opinion nationally, which has proven its ability to bear upon Mississippi affairs, will interpret any sizeable vote against the Amendments as a sign that ignorance and prejudice rule Mississippi, and that the White people of this state are not interested in cooperating with their sister states for the advancement of the nation of which we all are a part.

#### positive

Approval of the Amendments will mean that White Mississippians can register and vote under the same lenient rules which the federal Voting Rights Act has made applicable to Negroes. In terms of numbers, the disadvantage of the Whites under the federal Act will be removed, and 400,000 White voters can be added to the rolls in a statewide White registration campaign.

The Constitution of the United States provides that the qualifications of voters are to be fixed by the Legislature of each state. The United States Supreme Court repeatedly has announced this rule. If the Amendments win approval at the polls on August 17, all questions clouding the acceptability of Mississippi's voting laws will be removed and a legal attack will be made upon the Constitutionality of the federal Voting Rights Act, and/or upon the applicability of that Act's provisions to Mississippi, under circumstances most favorable to success.

To a watching nation, which has begun to note the significant progress Mississippi is making through responsible state government, sound fiscal policies, maintenance of law and order, and one of the most aggressive economic development programs in America, an overwhelming vote FOR the Amendments on August 17 will confirm that modern Mississippi has indeed cast off a century of negative defense and has assumed the offensive in this fight.