

MINUTES OF THE House COMMITTEE ON Elections

The meeting was called to order by Representative Richard L. Harper at
Chairperson

9:00 am a.m./p.m. on Tuesday, March 15, 1988 in room 521-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except: Representatives, Jenkins, King, Blumenthal, Helgerson, Johnson and Sawyer; all excused.

Committee staff present: Myrta Anderson, Legislative Research Department
Ron Thornburg, Secretary of State's Office
Dottie Musselman, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee:

Dr. Jacob U. Gordon, Chairman, Black Agenda Sub-Committee & Kansas Black Republican Council

Chairperson Harper called meeting to order and called the attention of the committee to SB 499. SB 499 is An Act relating to the preservation of ballots and election records. The Chair asked if the committee was ready to take action on this senate bill. Representative Foster made a motion to recommend SB 499 favorably for passage, and that it be placed on the Consent Calendar. Seconded by Representative Flottman. Motion carried.

SB 500, relating to voter registration was next up on the agenda for committee action. Representative Foster moved to recommend SB 500 favorably for passage. Seconded by Representative Baker. Motion carried.

The Chair now recognized Dr. Jacob Gordon. He came before the committee testifying on behalf of SB 601. This is An Act relating to political parties; concerning the membership of state party committees. This bill adds the chairperson of the parties official organization of blacks to the members of the state committee of each party. Supporters of the measure state that by adding the chairperson of the black's official organization to the state committee, the committee would broaden the base of the party.

Dr. Gordon passed informational testimony to the members of the committee at this time. He urged the committee to give this bill a unanimous decision to recommend it for approval by the Kansas legislature during the 1988 session, saying that his support for the bill is guided by three related factors; (1) his personal and professional experiences, (2) our state and national interest, and (3) the need to broaden the base for the political process. (Attachment 1).

Following a discussion period, the hearing closed on SB 601.

Representative Kline made a motion to favorably recommend passage of SB 601 from the committee. Seconded by Representative Littlejohn. Motion carried.

Representative Amos made a motion to accept the minutes of the March 2 and March 3rd meetings as written. Seconded by Representative Flottman. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 9:35 a.m.

SENATE BILL NO. 601

Presentation to the Committee on Elections

March 15, 1988

Representative Richard Harper, other members of the Committee on Elections, ladies and gentlemen:

I am very delighted to have the opportunity to visit with this august body today to share my point of view on the proposed Senate Bill No. 601, sponsored by Senators Winter, Anderson, Mulich, Parrish and Reilly. I urge you to give this bill a unanimous decision to recommend it for approval by the Kansas Legislature during the 1988 session. My support for the bill is guided by three related factors; (1) my personal and professional experiences, (2) our state and national interest, and (3) the need to broaden the base for our political process.

First, as a former British subject from Nigeria and as one whose professional career has been research and teaching of Black history at the University of Kansas for nearly twenty years, I have developed a better appreciation for my African roots and American heritage. During these years I have also become more sensitive to the social, political and economic needs of Black Americans. These experiences have led me to conclude that the United States is politically pluralistic and that values concerning democracy and the political process are operative.

Second, it is in our state and national interest to approve the proposed bill. Demographers have projected that by the year 2000 Blacks and other minorities will constitute more than a third of our population. This being the case, I would submit that a democracy like ours cannot afford the

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luxury of denying minorities full political participation in our society. Any de factor denial and/or the perception of the denial of minority full participation in our political process is inconsistent with our democracy as a system of values. In fact such an act of denial will not only threaten the future of our society but will weaken our ability to provide effective leadership to the free world and freedom fighters in the Third World, especially in South Africa and Nicaragua.

My third reason for speaking in favor of the bill is the need to broaden the base for our political process. We were pleased to note that voting rights on state committees of each party were extended to presidents of the political parties' official state organizations for women and young persons by the Kansas Legislature last year.

The Kansas Legislature should be commended for such a wise and timely action. This act, in my opinion, has helped to broaden the base for effective participation by the women and youth auxiliaries of both the Democratic and Republican parties in our state. Thus we have come today to ask you to extend similar opportunities to the chairpersons of the official organizations of Blacks and other minorities in both parties. The approval of this bill will mean a celebration of democracy as defined by President Abraham Lincoln, "government of the people, by the people, and for the people." The heart of democracy is the fact that people feel that they govern themselves.

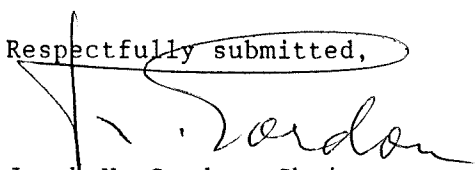
Since the 1870's, Kansas has always been the dream world of Black Americans, a spiritual and political haven in the eyes of Blacks. This is the home of many great Black leaders in America. To name just a few are Benjamin "Pap" Singleton, founder of the Black Exodus movement; Alfred Fairfax, the first Black Kansas Legislator in 1889; Gwendolyn Brooks, a

native of Topeka, became the first Black American to receive the Pulitzer Prize in 1950; W.L. Sayers, district court clerk for Graham County and later served as county attorney, 1900-1903 and 1912-1916; Gale Sayers, the youngest and most terrific football player in the nations's Hall of Fame; attorney Charles Scott, a leading lawyer in the famous 1954 case of Brown v. Topeka Board of Education; Edward McCabe, the only Black who has ever served in Kansas as state auditor in 1882 and 1884; Gordon Parks, the first Black man to direct full-length movies for a major Hollywood studio, etc., etc. The point here is that Kansas has always met its challenge and I have no doubt that we are prepared to meet new challenges as we enter into the 21st century.

Let me conclude by saying that your vote for this bill will make the difference in how we as Blacks perceive our democracy. This is particularly important to us at a time when American democracy is undergoing vast changes in our domestic ideas, policies, and institutions as well as in our relations with the rest of the world.

Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,


Jacob U. Gordon, Chairman
Black Agenda Sub-Committee
Kansas Black Republican Council