

Joe Reed Says Negro Vote Will Decide Winner Of Every Alabama State Office

The Alabama Democratic Conference opened in Montgomery today with subcommittees named to screen candidates for all state offices.

Chairman of the all-Negro group, Joe L. Reed, told more than 100 members of the conference, "We're going to decide who's the winner in every office in the state."

Vice chairman of the conference, attorney Peter Hall of

Birmingham, opened the meeting and the Rev. Larry Williams of Montgomery said benediction.

In an interview before the conference got underway, Reed said, he didn't know whether endorsements of candidates will be made public.

"The committee will decide on that tomorrow morning," he said.

More than 200 representatives from at least 64 of Alabama's 67 counties are expected before the convention ends Sunday, the chairman said.

Reed said that he hopes to get at least 300,000 Negro voters to the polls on May 5.

"One of the criterias (of endorsement) used will be that the candidate will have to give recognition that Negroes are

involved in the mainstream," Reed said.

While the group may not make their endorsements public at this time, he said "the old backdoor approach is out."

"We're at the crossroads. For the first time we can decide who will be governor of this state — and I think everybody recognizes that," he added.

"The first thing we will do is get a candidate who recognizes

us and our position in the state.

"Second, we want a candidate who has the possibility of winning. We don't necessarily want the most liberal. If we wanted that, I could have run. But I couldn't win," he said.

Speaking of the gubernatorial race, Reed said, "I'm unwilling to sit at the table and deal with George Wallace under any circumstances. Look at what he did to his financial minister," Reed pointed out.

