

Negro voter may cast deciding ballot Tuesday

BY JAMES CHISUM, News staff writer

Alabama's more than 241,396 Negro voters could decide political life or death for any one of the state's three gubernatorial candidates Tuesday.

But too many factors which can't be examined in advance make even a qualified prediction of the effect of the "Negro" vote impossible. These factors include:

—The size of the vote. The 241,396 figure is impressive, but it could be cut sharply if many Negroes decided simply to refuse to make a choice. The number of white voters who participate also would have a bearing on the weight of the Negro votes.

—THE NATURE of the white vote. If an overwhelming majority chose one of the candidates, even a Negro vote close to the 241,396 figure would have little effect, probably deciding only which candidate came in second.

—The unanimity and control of Negro leaders. At this point, known Negro leaders apparently don't agree on which choice would benefit their people more. This could lead to a three-way split of the available Negro votes. However, this might be offset if Negro voters simply don't follow the advice of their leaders and make the choice for themselves.

To make the Negro vote effective, Negro leaders must battle a widespread feeling that their people have no choice in the election except to vote for a segregationist or throw their vote away on an independent who has no chance to win.

POINTING OUT the massive effort to get Negroes registered, Dr. John Nixon, president of the Alabama NAACP council, said "We've been working nearly 50 years to get them registered . . . We definitely want them out."

Using current estimates, Negro voters in full strength would have about one vote in four if white voters go to the polls in full strength. But if 250,000 of the approximately one million white voters stay away from the polls, Negro votes would be about one in three.

In this case a unified Negro vote easily could decide the outcome of the election if white voters came to the polls in light numbers and split three ways among the candidates.

The Negro vote could bring the election into an extremely close contest if the independent candidate, Dr. Carl Ray Robinson, were largely ignored and one of the other candidates got only two out of three white votes.

The Negro vote could make the candidate less favored by whites a close contender — and perhaps give him the election.

BUT THE most unpredictable factor in the Negro vote is its unanimity. Negro leaders are unified — at least in public — only in a desire to wield the power available to them by getting out the vote.

Alabama's largest Negro political organization, the Jefferson County Progressive Democratic Council, is backing Mrs. Lurleen Wallace, reportedly as a means of aiding the national Democratic Party. Leaders of the organization predict 95 per cent of Jefferson County's approximate 62,992 registered Negro voters will follow its recommendations and will help influence Negro voters elsewhere in the state.

But the Alabama Coordination Association for Registration and Voting, headed by Dr. Gordon Rogers Jr. of Anniston, reportedly has failed to agree on a gubernatorial candidate, though it has picked a slate of lesser candidates.

IT ALSO HAS been reported that the Confederation of Political Organizations, a group associated with the NAACP, couldn't agree on a candidate.

Dr. Nixon, however, says enigmatically "We think one of the candidates has a good chance."

He also concedes that he believes Mrs. Wallace, as a stand-in for her husband, should be defeated, though he admits that the general opinion among Negro voters at the grass roots is that both Martin and Wallace are cut from the same segregationist cloth.

Dr. Nixon believes the power of the Negro vote will be most apparent in Birmingham, Mobile and Montgomery, where he says more than 105,000 Negroes are registered. He estimates that 250,000 to 260,000 Negro voters are registered in the state.

This figure is slightly higher than the latest estimate of 249,547, made by the Southern Regional Council in Atlanta, or the earlier 241,396 estimate of the council.

Approximately 1,187,075 white voters are registered, the Council estimated last summer.

COUNTY	WHITE	NEGRO
Autauga	6,932	2,308
Baldwin	19,692	1,242
Barbour	9,825	3,666
Bibb	8,087	933
Blount	13,709	140
Bullock	3,323	3,197
Butler	7,850	1,803
Calhoun	33,472	4,404
Chambers	11,889	1,439
Cherokee	9,651	482
Chilton	16,006	747
Choctaw	5,833	3,024
Clarke	10,336	2,564
Clay	8,534	399
Cleburne	7,493	139
Coffee	11,334	1,002
Colbert	20,569	2,818
Conecuh	5,559	2,084
Coosa	5,678	956
Covington	16,486	1,010
Crenshaw	6,469	1,213
Cullman	24,622	122
Dale	11,658	1,414
Dallas	12,787	10,513
DeKalb	26,680	217
Elmore	15,710	2,813
Escambia	15,631	1,825
Etowah	41,820	4,120
Fayette	9,141	664
Franklin	13,616	725
Geneva	10,321	585
Greene	2,001	3,927
Hale	4,515	4,096
Henry	6,629	1,459
Houston	15,604	1,813
Jackson	18,526	629
Jefferson	175,087	62,992
Lamar	9,927	367
Lauderdale	18,434	1,339
Lawrence	14,731	1,315
Lee	13,470	2,818
Limestone	14,272	1,278
Lowndes	2,823	2,758
Macon	4,997	7,130
Madison	41,333	3,183
Marengo	7,288	5,799
Marion	16,418	267
Marshall	17,174	152
Mobile	107,455	24,794
Monroe	7,542	2,497
Montgomery	43,514	19,268
Morgan	25,741	1,194
Perry	5,495	3,847
Pickens	7,407	1,717
Pike	11,788	3,180
Randolph	10,230	1,182
Russell	12,682	3,932
St. Clair	11,044	906
Shelby	13,208	985
Sumter	3,775	3,392
Talladega	21,389	3,406
Tallapoosa	17,807	1,818
Tuscaloosa	29,049	5,707
Walker	26,885	1,277
Washington	7,690	1,469
Wilcox	3,639	3,765
Winston	11,179	40
TOTALS	1,187,075	241,396

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