

U.S. CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

PROGRAM CATEGORY E.—VOTING RIGHTS

A. Statutory authority for this program is found in the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (Public Law 89-110) which was signed by the President on August 6, 1965. Essentially, the act charges the Commission with three main responsibilities which must be carried out after initial determinations have been made by the Attorney General and the Director of the Census on the basis of standards and criteria outlined in section 4(b) of the act. The Commission is charged with—

- (1) Listing of eligibles to vote;
- (2) Determination of challenges of persons on eligibility lists; and
- (3) Observation of elections.

In respect to its first responsibility, section 6 requires the Commission to appoint examiners to prepare and maintain lists of persons eligible to vote in those jurisdictions where the Attorney General or a court determines that a need therefor exists. Personnel so appointed examine applicants concerning their qualifications. The Commission's second responsibility is based on section 9 which authorizes challenges to those listed on eligibility lists. All such challenges are heard and finally determined by a hearing officer appointed by and responsible to the Commission. Thirdly, at the request of the Attorney General, section 8 authorizes the Commission to assign observers to insure that persons entitled to vote are permitted to do so and that their votes are tabulated.

B. Implementation of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 cannot be calculated in terms of the production or receipt of units and items. The impact of the program conducted under the act has, however, been profound and far reaching. Since the enactment of the Voting Rights Act, for example, the Civil Service Commission has (1) established voter listing offices in 62 counties in five States; (2) found 158,094 persons eligible to vote out of 161,964 applicants as of December 31, 1967; (3) received 4,929 challenges of persons on eligibility lists; (4) conducted 924 hearings of such challenges; and (5) assigned observers in 21 elections in five States as of February 27, 1968.

As a direct result of the Commission's administration of the responsibilities created by law, along with those assigned to it by the Attorney General, vast numbers of the disenfranchised have been found eligible to vote within the past 2½ years; they have cast their votes in elections in various jurisdictions; and they have had their ballots tabulated. The Commission's operations have had a direct and immediate effect upon 160,000 disenfranchised citizens. The operations have, in turn, motivated hundreds of thousands of other disenfranchised citizens to exercise their constitutional rights. The participation by minority member citizens as candidates in elections prior to August 1965 in the affected areas was rare and infrequent. However, in many elections held since the enactment of Public Law 89-110 minority member candidates have been elected to public office and, in other cases, when not elected, they have received sufficient votes to require runoff contests. Operations by the Commission under Public Law 89-110 have insured the free and uninhibited exercise by citizens of their democratic privileges.

C. Mr. Wilson Matthews, who serves as the Director of the Office of Hearing Examiners, working through the offices of regional directors in the affected areas, has the primary responsibility for the operation of the voting rights program in the Civil Service Commission.

Mr. MATTHEWS. Mr. Chairman, I am Wilson Matthews, Director of the Office of Hearing Examiners and coordinator for the voting rights program working through the regional directors and negotiating with the Department of Justice. This is a somewhat unique program for the Civil Service Commission and probably just a little off the civil service line. However, it was given to the Civil Service Commission by the Voting Rights Act of 1965, Public Law 89-110.

We have three specific responsibilities in this act. One, the listing of eligibles to vote; two, handling challenges made against such eligibles; and three, observing elections. No. 1 and No. 2 are brought to us by the Attorney General's Office. We are not, if I may use the