

# Congress Protects the Right to Vote: The Voting Rights Act of 1965

## Worksheet 3: Weighing the Issues

Each row of this table presents a pair of documents presenting evidence heard by the House Judiciary Committee. Acting as members of the committee, each small group will:

- Use Worksheet 2 to evaluate one pair of documents to determine which makes the stronger argument relating to the division of federal and state authority over voting rights.
- Mark the column on this sheet that indicates the group’s assessment of the more persuasive of the two documents in your assigned pair and the degree to which it is more persuasive.
- Answer Question 1 (below) in relation to your assigned document pair, and have a spokesperson share your answers with the class.
- Contribute to class discussion to answer Question 2.

Evidence in support of the Voting Rights Act	<i>Strongly persuasive</i>	<i>Moderately Persuasive</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Moderately Persuasive</i>	<i>Strongly Persuasive</i>	Evidence opposed to the Voting Rights Act
<i>1. Evidence presented in Congress prior to the Committee hearings</i>						
<b>1A.</b> “Shocking Brutality in Selma” speech by Sen. Walter Mondale submitting for the record a newspaper article on the Selma march*						<b>1B.</b> “The Real American Tragedy” speech by Rep. James Martin submitting for the record a newspaper article on the Selma march*
<i>2. Testimony presented to the Judiciary Committee during its hearings</i>						
<b>2A.</b> Testimony of U.S. Attorney General Nicholas deB Katzenbach * with voting statistics						<b>2B.</b> Testimony of Virginia Attorney General Robert Y. Button*
<i>3. Opinions from non-Congressional stakeholders</i>						
<b>3A.</b> President Lyndon Johnson’s March 15 address to the nation *						<b>3B.</b> “In a Time of Frenzy,” opinion from the Southern States Industrial Council*
<i>4. Citizen letters sent to the Committee</i>						
<b>4A.</b> Letter from Mrs. E. Jackson of Brooklyn, New York						<b>4B.</b> Letter from George Neu of Newport News, Virginia
<i>5. Testimony to the Committee by Members of Congress</i>						
<b>5A.</b> Statement of Rep. Claude Pepper of Florida*						<b>5B.</b> Statement of Rep. L. Mendel Rivers of South Carolina*

1. What argument is being contested in this pair of documents, and which makes a stronger case for its position?
2. Based on this evidence, should Congress pass legislation to change the balance of state and federal authority over voting?

\* These documents are excerpts from original records, not facsimiles. For source information for all ten documents, see the Document Citation List.

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## Document Citation List

U.S. House of Representatives. Committee on the Judiciary. Tables of data relating to race, voting, and voting tests submitted by the Attorney General. Hearings on *H.R. 6400 and other proposals to enforce the 15th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States*, March 18, 1965. 89th Congress. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1965.

1A. Senator Walter Mondale (MN). "Shocking Brutality in Selma, Alabama," *Congressional Record* Vol. 111, Pt. 4 (March 8, 1965) pp. 4350-4352.

1B. Congressman James Martin (AL). "The Real American Tragedy," *Congressional Record* Vol. 111, Pt. 4 (March 15, 1965) pp. 5017-5018.

2A. Statement by Attorney General Nicholas deB. Katzenbach before the House Judiciary Committee on the proposed Voting Rights Act of 1965, March 18, 1965; Judiciary Committee, Legislative Files, House bills, H.R. 6400; 89th Congress, Records of the U.S. House of Representatives, Record Group 233, National Archives Building, Washington, D.C.  
ARC Identifier [5754066](#)

2B. U.S. House of Representatives. Committee on the Judiciary. Statement of Hon. Robert Y. Button, Attorney General of the State of Virginia. Hearings on *H.R. 6400 and other proposals to enforce the 15th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States*, March 29, 1965. 89th Congress. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1965.

3A. President Lyndon Johnson's speech to Congress on voting rights: The American Promise, March 15, 1965; Judiciary Committee, Accompanying papers, S. 1564 (SEN 89A-E12); 89th Congress, Records of the U.S. Senate, Record Group 46, National Archives Building, Washington, D.C.  
ARC Identifier [5753156](#)

3B. U.S. House of Representatives. Committee on the Judiciary. Statement and editorial from the Southern States Industrial Council. Hearings on *H.R. 6400 and other proposals to enforce the 15th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States*, April 6, 1965. 89th Congress. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1965.

4A. Letter from Mrs. E. Jackson in favor of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, March 8, 1965; Judiciary Committee, Legislative Files, House bills, H.R. 6400; 89th Congress, Records of the U.S. House of Representatives, Record Group 233, National Archives Building, Washington, D.C.  
ARC Identifier [2173239](#)

4B. Letter from George Neu to the Chairman of the Judiciary Committee against the Voting Rights Act of 1965, March 26, 1965; Judiciary Committee, Legislative Files, House bills, H.R. 6400; 89th Congress, Records of the U.S. House of Representatives, Record Group 233, National Archives Building, Washington, D.C.  
ARC Identifier [2173238](#)

5A. U.S. House of Representatives. Committee on the Judiciary. Statement of Congressman Claude Pepper. Hearings on *H.R. 6400 and other proposals to enforce the 15th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States*, March 24, 1965. 89th Congress. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1965.

5B. U.S. House of Representatives. Committee on the Judiciary. Statement of Congressman L. Mendel Rivers. Hearings on *H.R. 6400 and other proposals to enforce the 15th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States*, March 31, 1965. 89th Congress. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1965.