

**An Assessment of Voting Rights Progress in South Carolina
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Charles S. Bullock III
Richard B. Russell Professor of Political Science
Department of Political Science
The University of Georgia

Ronald Keith Gaddie
Professor of Political Science
The University of Oklahoma

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V.O. Key writes of the “harshness and ceaselessness of race discussion in South Carolina. . .”¹ After noting the extensiveness of the black population in the state, Key observes that, “South Carolina’s preoccupation with the Negro stifles political conflict.”² Of all the former Confederate states, South Carolina had, proportionally, the largest slave population, the largest proportion of white households owning slaves, and was historically the most bellicose in defense of slavery from prior to the founding of the United States until through the beginning of the Civil War. The status and subjugation of blacks in South Carolina was a priority of white political leadership and a matter of public policy.

The behavior of whites in South Carolina at the end of the 19th century and on into the 20th century illustrates Key’s black threat hypothesis.³ The state’s population was almost 60 percent black in 1900 and remained majority black through the 1920 census. For more than half a century after the Civil War, if African Americans had access to the ballot, and had voted cohesively, they could have elected statewide officials. Moreover, many counties would have been subject to black rule in a fair electoral environment and the influence of black votes would have persisted well beyond 1920 in some counties.

¹ V.O.Key, Jr. 1949. *Southern Politics*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. p. 130.

² *Ibid*, p. 131.

³ *Ibid*, p. 130.

South Carolina whites headed off the possibility of black political dominance (or even influence) by instituting techniques designed to restrict black political participation. The state adopted a literacy test in 1895 and made use of a white primary from 1896 until 1947. The state went to an extraordinary effort to maintain the white primary by repealing all state legislation relating to the conduct of primary elections.⁴ As part of its broad panoply of disfranchising techniques, South Carolina adopted a poll tax in 1895 and continued to require payment of this tax through the 1950 election cycle. Race baiters like “Pitchfork Ben” Tillman encouraged whites to keep blacks in subordinate positions. In 1948, its former governor, Strom Thurmond, led the States’ Rights Party in its presidential bid—a campaign that stressed the traditional southern distrust of federal authority and the desire to continue to subjugate African Americans’ political and economic ambitions.⁵

Black Turnout and Registration

Despite the state’s eagerness to secede and its actions that helped initiate the Civil War and a long history of race-baiting oratory, by 1964, South Carolina had a higher share of its African-American voting age population registered to vote than any other Deep South state. At the time of the 1964 presidential election, 37.3 percent of the state’s black population along with 75.7 percent of the white population had signed up to vote.⁶

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 627.

⁵ The irony of this event is that prior to 1948, Strom Thurmond was characterized as a political moderate who had the support of the NAACP in his bid for governor.

⁶ U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Political Participation* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1968), pp. 252-253.

While South Carolina whites registered at higher rates, the state's black registration rate was roughly twice that of Alabama and more than five times the percentage found in Mississippi.

Within two years after the signing of the initial Voting Rights Act, a majority (51.2 percent) of South Carolina's adult black population along with 81.7 percent of the white population had signed up to vote. While the proportion of the black population registered to vote in South Carolina had been 9.5 percentage points below that of its northern neighbor before the Voting Rights Act, by 1967, North and South Carolina had almost identical shares of their black voting age populations registered.⁷

Prior to the Voting Rights Act, only two counties in the Palmetto State had less than 10 percent of their black adults registered to vote.⁸ By 1967, after federal examiners had registered 3,403 blacks in Clarendon County, 69.4 percent of its black population was on the registration rolls. In McCormick County, which was not immediately visited by federal examiners to sign up voters, black registration had risen to 43.5 percent of the age eligible population by the middle of 1967.

After each election, the U.S. Bureau of the Census conducts a survey to determine the rates at which Americans have registered and voted. These surveys rely upon self-reports of the individuals who were sampled and, consequently are almost certainly

⁷ *Political Participation*, op.cit. pp. 222-223.

⁸ In Clarendon County, the site of one of the challenges to separate but equal policies in school assignments that became part of *Brown V. Board of Education*, only 6.9 percent of the black population was registered to vote while in the state's smallest county, McCormick, 9.3 of the black population was registered.

inflated. However despite the problem of over-reporting, these figures can be used to make comparisons across time and across different states and regions.

Table 1 presents the Census Bureau estimates of registration by race in South Carolina from 1980 through the 2004 presidential election. During the 1980s, registration rates differed little by race in the Palmetto state. The greatest disparities come in 1984 and 1988. In the latter year, 61.8 percent of whites compared with 56.7 percent of blacks say they were registered. In 1984, 62.2 percent of the African-American population and 57.3 percent of the white had registered to vote. In three of the five election years, higher proportions of African Americans than whites reported being on the voter rolls. During the 1990s, white registration rates generally exceeded those for blacks although in 1990, the rate of black registration was 5.7 points greater than white registration. Since 1998, the two races have reported being registered at very comparable rates. Indeed, in 1998 and 2000, the figure is almost exactly the same for blacks and whites. In 2002, for instance, the black registration rate was two points greater than that for whites. In the 2004 election, each race reached record high levels of registration, although the white figure was three points above that for African Americans.

(See Table 1)

Overall, the self-reported black registration has increased. For three of the elections in the 1980s, fewer than 60 percent of the blacks of voting age reported being registered. Thereafter, the figure drops below 60 percent only in 1994 when it stands at 59 percent. For the four most recent elections, approximately 68 percent of blacks reported being registered for the three elections of 1998-2002 while the figure increases to record level of 71.1 percent in 2004. The 71.1 percent of blacks who report being

registered in 2004 exceeds the white self-reported registration rate for any year other than 2004 when the white figure is 74.4 percent.

In order to have a base line for comparison of the progress of a state subject to section 5 preclearance, the bottom half of the table presents the self-reported registration rates by race for voters who do not live in the South. In some of the earlier elections, especially, 1982 through 1988, blacks living outside the South are more likely to report being registered than those who lived in the Palmetto State. Beginning in 1990, however, a larger proportion of the black voting age population in South Carolina, compared with the North and West, reported being registered, except for 1992. While the differences in the South Carolina and the non-South rates were modest through 1996, a substantial gap opens up beginning in 1998 when 68 percent of the blacks in South Carolina, but only 58.5 percent of the non-southern blacks, claim to be registered. In 2000 the disparity is almost seven percentage points and in 2002, 68.3 percent of blacks of voting age in South Carolina reported having been registered compared with only 57 percent of African Americans outside the region.

Table 2 presents the post-election survey results from the Bureau of the Census surveys on self-reported turnout. In six of the thirteen election years, South Carolina voting age blacks report turning out to vote at higher rates than whites. In several elections, the reported differences are modest (1980, 1986). The year in which the difference between black and white self-reported voting is largest in favor of African Americans is 1984, when 51.4 percent of the blacks compared with 47.9 percent of the whites said they went to the polls. In contrast, in some years a substantially larger percentage of whites than blacks report having voted. For example, in 1988, 11.6

percentage points more whites than blacks reported voting; and in 1992, the white advantage in self-reported turnout was 61.6 percent compared to 48.8 of the blacks who reported voting. For the three most recent election years, the reported rates of participation are similar with higher percentages of blacks reporting voting in both 2000 and 2002; while in 2004, four percentage points more whites than African Americans said they went to the polls.

The levels of black participation were in the 40 to 50 percent range with the outliers being 1982 and 1994, when approximately 39 percent of the blacks reported voting, and 2000 and 2004, when approximately 60 percent of the African Americans said they went to the polls. In mid-term elections, black participation rates are closer to 40 percent with the high point coming in 2002 when almost 49 percent of blacks reported voting.

(See Table 2)

For comparative purposes, black and white self-reported turnout rates outside the South are also included in Table 3. For the first five election years, a larger proportion of blacks outside the South, compared with South Carolina alone, reported voting. But in 1990, 44.6 percent of South Carolina blacks reported participating in the election compared with 38.4 percent of the non-South blacks. In 1994 and 1996, the differences between South Carolina and non-South black self-reported participation are small, although figures for South Carolina trail those for the non-South. In the three most recent elections for which Census Bureau data are available, black self-reports of participation in South Carolina outpace those in the non-South. These differences increase from an

advantage in South Carolina of 2.4 percentage points in 1998, to 7.6 percentage points in 2000, and 9.4 percentage points in 2002.

Whether compared to the self-reported participation rates of whites in-state or blacks outside of the state, South Carolina black participation compares quite favorably. These comparative rates of participation suggest that consistent obstacles to African-American registration and voting no longer account for uncommonly small registration or turnout rates in the Palmetto state.

South Carolina was one of the first states to report actual registration and turnout figures by race. Table 3 shows the black and white registration and turnout in general elections for the state in 1972 through 2004. Since these are actual counts, they are not subject to the kind of over-reporting that frequently results in over-estimation of registration and turnout in the Census Bureau reports. The turnout percentages in Table 3, unlike Tables 1 and 2, use the registration figures as the denominator (where the denominator is the adult population).

For both races, registration has increased dramatically. For African Americans the number of registrants has almost tripled over the 32-year period. In 1972, less than a quarter of a million African Americans were on the voter rolls, while by 2004 the figure had reached almost two-thirds of a million. The number of black registrants in 2004 almost exactly equals the number of white registrants in 1972, which was two thirds of a million (and has grown to almost one and two-thirds million). In 1972, blacks made up roughly one-fourth of the state's registrants while 32 years later; blacks comprised 28.5 percent of the registrants. This exceeds the black share of South Carolina's voting age population which the Census Bureau estimates to be 28 percent as of 2004.

(See Table 3)

Black turnout has almost tripled during the period covered in Table 3. When the much smaller denominator of registration is used rather than the age-eligible population used in Table 2, participation rates for both blacks and whites are larger. Even back in 1972, more than two-thirds of the black registrants voted. This percentage has generally been approximated in subsequent presidential years with the 56.4 percent in 2000 being an exception. In 1974, only 46 percent of the black registrants turned out. In subsequent mid-term elections, most black registrants have cast ballots.

Among whites, the 80 percent turnout rate in 1972 was exceeded only in 1992. Until 1996, at least three-fourths of the white registrants have participated in presidential years. In 1996 and 2000 white turnout was closer to two-thirds, but rose to 72 percent in 2004. In mid-term elections, 55-67 percent of the white registrants have voted. While the white turnout rate always exceeds that of blacks, in 1982 the disparity was only half a percentage point. Usually the difference has been less than ten percentage points. The average rates of turnout for the 32-year period are 66.5 percent for whites and 58.7 percent for African Americans.

In 2004, African Americans cast 26.6 percent of the votes in South Carolina. This is an increase of a 4.4 percentage point over the 22.2 percent of the votes cast by blacks in 1972. The share of the votes cast by African Americans in 2004 is less than two percentage points below the black share of the voting age population in South Carolina as estimated by the Census Bureau in 2004. The most dramatic growth in black turnout is an almost 50 percent increase between 2002 and 2004. The numbers of black voters was relatively constant from 1996 through 2002, hovering just below 300,000 except in 2002.

But in 2004, black participation increased dramatically. In the most recent gubernatorial election year, the rate at which whites voted was less than five percentage points higher than the rate for black participation. In the most recent presidential election year, the racial disparity was approximately 6.5 percentage points.

While the rate at which black registrants go to the polls is typically a few percentage points lower than the rate for whites, the data in Tables 1 through 3 indicate that whatever barriers to black participation may have existed 40 years ago have been largely, if not totally, overcome. Black registration and turnout have increased dramatically. Political science research suggests that much of the disparity that persists in participation rates between blacks and whites is due more to differences in socioeconomic characteristics and efforts to mobilize than in obstacles to registration. The literature on American political participation consistently finds that socioeconomic status (SES) is the determinant of political involvement. The classic *Who Votes?*,⁹ Leighley and Nagler's¹⁰ reexamination of the *Who Votes?* analysis, and the work of Verba and his colleagues¹¹ consistently finds this effect across ethnic and racial groups.

⁹ Raymond Wolfinger, and Steven Rosenstone. 1980. *Who Votes?* New Haven: Yale University Press.

¹⁰Jan E. Leighley and Jonathan Nagler. 1992. Class Bias in Turnout: The Voters Remain the Same. *American Political Science Review* 86: 725-736; Jan E. Leighley and Jonathan Nagler. 1992. Individual and Systemic Influences on Turnout: *Who Votes?* 1984. *Journal of Politics* 54: 718-740.

¹¹ Sidney Verba and Norman Nie, 1972. *Participation in America: Political Democracy and Social Equality*. New York: Harper, Row; Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Schlozman,

Additional research finds that once one places controls for SES, black “overparticipation” is found among African Americans.¹² However, Abramson and Claggett¹³ observed that African-American voter participation still lagged white participation, even when controls for socio-demographic influences—especially education—were introduced, while Uhlaner et al find that Anglo whites and African Americans have similar rates of political participation, and that it is Latinos who lag in voting due to education and citizenship factors.¹⁴ Leighley and Vedlitz find that cultural theories are largely not valid in explaining differences in participation beyond SES effects.¹⁵

and Henry Brady, 1995. *Voice and Equality Civic Volunteerism in American Politics*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

¹² See, for example, Thomas M. Guterbock, and Bruce London. 1983. Race, Political Organization, and Participation: An Empirical Test of Four Competing Theories. *American Sociological Review* 48: 439-453; Marvin E. Olsen, 1970. Social and Political Participation of Blacks. *American Sociological Review*. 35: 682-697; Verba and Nie, 1972.

¹³ Paul R. Abramson, and William Claggett, 1984. Race-related Differences in Self-Reported and Validated Turnout. *Journal of Politics*, 46: 719-739.

¹⁴ Carole J. Uhlaner, Bruce E. Cain, and D. Roderick Kiewiet, 1989. Political Participation of Ethnic Minorities in the 1980s. *Political Behavior* 11: 195-231.

¹⁵ Jan E. Leighley and Arnold Vedlitz, 1999. Race, Ethnicity, and Political Participation: Competing Models and Contrasting Explanations. *Journal of Politics* 61: 1092-1114.

Socio-economic status matters and so does political effort. Katherine Tate argues in the *American Political Science Review* that participation by African Americans is associated with education, political interest, and partisanship.¹⁶ She also observes that intensity of racial identity is not a source of participation,¹⁷ but instead participation in civic culture organizations such as churches or political organizations drives participation. Arnold Vedlitz finds that intensive voter registration drives do not in and of themselves increase participation, but rather increase the number of non-voting registrants.¹⁸ Instead, it is registration plus mobilization—as Tate observed—that matters. Wielhouwer validates the importance of these findings by pointing out that African-American undercontacting really arises from a lack of GOP contacting.¹⁹ Those who are contacted belong to civic culture organizations that possess strong social

¹⁶ Katherine Tate, 1991. Black Political Participation in the 1984 and 1988 Presidential Elections. *American Political Science Review* 85:1159-1176.

¹⁷ Maurice Mangum (2003), writing in the *Political Research Quarterly*, finds that group efficacy – the belief that their group is taken seriously – motivates participation among African-Americans, as does trust in government and the degree of individual political engagement. See Maurice Mangum, 2003. Psychological Involvement and Black Voter Turnout. *Political Research Quarterly* 56: 41-48.

¹⁸ Arnold Vedlitz, 1985. Voter Registration Drives and Black Voting in the South, *Journal of Politics* 47: 643-651.

¹⁹ Peter W. Wielhouwer, 2000. Releasing the Fetters: Parties and the Mobilization of the African American Electorate. *Journal of Politics*. 62: 206-222.

networks. According to Wielhouwer, while education still matters, contacting is important for explaining variations in mobilizing black voters.

The actual turnout figures show similar voting rates between whites in South Carolina and African Americans nationwide. Although the figures in Table 3 are more reliable than those in Table 2, comparisons with most other states are not possible using the Table 3 data, since most states do not maintain registration data by race nor do they report turnout data by race. Thus, despite problems frequently associated with over-reporting for the figures in Tables 1 and 2, using these tables is appropriate in order to make comparisons across states and between states and regions.

African-American Officeholding

When record keeping began on the numbers of African American elected officials, South Carolina had 28 in 1969. Almost two-thirds of these held municipal offices while only four held county positions and two served on school boards. By 1974, the number of black officeholders in South Carolina had risen to 116. As of 1980, the number had exceeded 200 and five years later it broke 300. The most recent figures reported in Table 4 are for 2001 and show a total of 534 black officeholders. Among this number are 252 serving in cities and 83 holding county office. Another 157 serve on school boards. The 2001 figures show a slight dip from those at the end of the 1990s.

(See Table 4)

African-American Representation in Congress

The South Carolina congressional districting plan for the 1990s created a majority-black district. The 6th district which includes parts of Charleston, Columbia and all of Florence was drawn to be 62 percent black. With this heavy concentration of African Americans, the incumbent, Robin Tallon, a white incumbent who had a reputation for being responsive to black concerns,²⁰ opted not to seek reelection.²¹ James Clyburn who had spent the last 18 years as the commissioner for Human Affairs and who had twice lost bids to become Secretary of State easily defeated a distinguished field of fellow African Americans. While Clyburn had not held elected office, he defeated three state legislators taking 56 percent of the vote in the initial primary. Clyburn continues to represent the 6th district and appears to be invulnerable even though the district's black population dropped below 57 percent in 2002.

South Carolina was the Deep South state in which Republicans had their first major success. This early success stemmed from the decision of Senator Strom Thurmond to switch to the Republican Party in 1964. Thurmond, a former governor and the State's Rights Party nominee for president in 1948 gave the GOP credibility at a time when Republicans in other parts of the Deep South struggled to achieve any success below the level of the presidential elections. By the 1990s, the Republican Party had come to dominate South Carolina politics. Republicans won three consecutive gubernatorial and after 1994 held four of the six congressional offices. For more than a

²⁰ Carol M. Swain. 1993. *Black Faces, Black Interests*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. pp. 145-159.

²¹ David T. Canon. 1999. *Race, Redistricting, and Representation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. p. 135.

decade, Democrats have held only two South Carolina congressional districts and one of these has been filled by an African American.

While African Americans hold half of the Democratic congressional seats, earlier black candidacies came up short. The first African American to win a Democratic nomination, Matthew Perry, who later became a federal judge, polled 44 percent of the vote against Floyd Spence in the district that contains Columbia in 1974. During the 1980s, Spence again confronted African-American challengers in his 64 percent white district. In 1982, the black challenger, Ken Moseley, won 41 percent of the vote.

African-Americans in the State Legislature

The South Carolina House holds the distinction as the only American state legislative chamber to have ever had an African-American majority among its members. Briefly in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War, blacks held most seats in the lower chamber.²² The success enjoyed by African Americans in winning seats in the South Carolina House was short lived as white males who had served the Confederacy regained the franchise and began to impose obstacles that reduced black participation.

The first black to win a seat in the state House in modern times won election in 1970. As Table 5 shows, the black share of the House membership in the South Carolina House tripled in 1975 reaching almost 10 percent. Only modest growth in the black proportion occurred over the next two decades. Then in 1995, the black percentage rose to almost 20 percent where it remains.

²² W. E. B. Du Bois (introduction by David Levering Lewis). 1999. *Black Reconstruction in America 1860-1880*. New York: Free Press.

(See Table 5)

Traditionally the South Carolina Senate was the dominant political institution in the state. Senators elect judges and in the past some held important administrative posts while sitting in the upper chamber.²³ Until the implementation of the one-person, one-vote judicial mandate, each South Carolina county had its own state senator. Each of these 46 senators was a major if not the dominant force in his/her county. The senator controlled the finances of the county through the supply bill which provided funding for county functions and had to be enacted by the state legislature.

While the practice of giving each county its own senator did not survive the 1960s, the state sought to maintain the sanctity of county boundaries when required to equalize population among senate districts by combining counties into multi-member districts when necessary. As a result of the relatively large electoral districts represented by South Carolina senators, all of which had white majorities, the first African American did not reach the upper chamber until 1983—when DeQuincey Newman won a special election to one of the five seats allocated to Richland County (Columbia).²⁴

The redistricting plan implemented in 1984 eliminated multi-member Senate districts. In the new single-member plan, ten districts had black population majorities and African Americans won four of these. Table 5 shows that the number of black seats

²³ Key, *Southern Politics*, p. 151.

²⁴ Charles S. Bullock, III, and Ronald Keith Gaddie. 1993. Changing from Multi-Member to Single-Member Districts: Partisan, Racial, and Gender Impacts. *State and Local Government Review* 25: 155- 163.

in the 46 member Senate has fluctuated between six and eight since 1991 and is currently eight.

Republicans won control of the state House in 1994 and after the election a decade later held 60 percent of the seats in that chamber. Of the House Democrats about half were African Americans in 2005. In 2001, Republicans took control of the Senate and by 2005 held 59 percent of the seats. In the Senate, 42 percent of the Democrats are black.

Statewide Candidacies

No African American has won a statewide office in South Carolina in modern times. Theo Mitchell, a black state senator, did win the Democratic nomination for governor in 1990. This nomination, however, was widely seen as having little value because of the popularity of the incumbent Republican Carroll Campbell. Mitchell was further weakened by federal indictments and managed to obtain only 27 percent of the vote. Mitchell had difficulty mobilizing even the black community. It is estimated that between 15 and 25 percent of the black vote went to the Republican Campbell.²⁵ Exit poll data for South Carolina in 1990 show Campbell with 24% of the African-American vote.²⁶

²⁵ Michael Barone and Grant Ujifusa. 1991. *The Almanac of American Politics, 1992*. Washington, D.C.: National Journal. p. 1113.

²⁶ According to the VRS exit poll in the 1990 South Carolina Gubernatorial Election:

	<u>Theo Mitchell-D</u>	<u>Carroll Campbell-R</u>	<u>n</u>
White	14.5	81.1	1,412

The growing significance of the black vote within the Democratic Party came after the Republican Party's emergence, as the dominant party in the state, based on its ability to appeal to most white voters. As a consequence, Democrats have struggled to win any offices. By 2005, only two of the nine constitutional offices in the Palmetto State—Commissioner of Education and State Treasurer—had a Democratic incumbent. Indeed, Democrats allowed one position, that of Adjutant General to go to a Republican by default, since no Democrat came forward to contest the position.

African Americans competed for two statewide posts in 2002. Steve Benjamin was the Democratic nominee for Attorney General while Rick Wade represented the Democratic Party in the contest for Secretary of State. The vote shares won by the two African-American Democrats compare favorably with white Democrats who lost statewide bids in 2002 as reported in Table 6. Of the losing statewide Democrats only incumbent governor Jim Hodges and the Democratic nominee for the Commissioner of Agriculture drew substantially larger numbers of votes than did the two African-American candidates. These results suggest that race has little impact on the behavior of South Carolina voters. Instead, party seems to be a better predictor with Republicans winning all but two of the statewide offices being contested. The tide toward the

Black	63.7	24.0	438
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See Voter Research and Surveys, 1990. VOTER RESEARCH AND SURVEYS GENERAL ELECTION EXIT POLL: STATE FILES, 1990 [Computer file]. New York, NY: Voter Research and Surveys [producer]. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor], 1991.

Republican Party was so strong in 2002 that two Democratic incumbents, Governor Jim Hodges and Comptroller General Jim Lander, both fell to Republican challengers.

(See Table 6)

Further evidence of the degree to which partisanship may be more significant than race is offered in Table 7. This table shows the racial make up of individuals who participated in the Democratic primaries from 1984 through 2004. In the mid-1980s, whites constituted more than 60 percent of the Democratic primary voters. Nonetheless, the share of the Democratic primary vote cast by whites has declined over time. In 1996, for the first time, more African Americans than whites voted in the Democratic primary. In the next two primaries, slightly more white than black voters asked for Democratic ballots. But in the 2002 Democratic primary, which had a record low number of participants at just over 114,000, 61 percent of those relatively few voters were African Americans. This is the primary that chose the nominees who fared so poorly in the general election of constitutional officers. In the most recent primary, again far more African Americans than whites participated with blacks making up 58 percent of the Democratic primary electorate.

(See Table 7)

The overall Democratic primary vote has decreased substantially over time. In 1986, a mid-term election in which nominees for state constitutional officers were selected, almost 360,000 voters helped select those Democratic nominees. In the two most recent mid-term elections, fewer than 150,000 voters participated in the Democratic primary. (Since South Carolina does not register voters by party, individuals have the option of choosing to participate in either parties' primary when they go to the polls.)

Problems confronted by African Americans in winning major offices in South Carolina are probably due more to their partisanship than to their race. Most whites support Republicans in the general election and by substantial margins vote in the Republican primary while the bulk of the vote in the Democratic primary is cast by African Americans.²⁷ With Republicans dominating the congressional delegation, both chambers of the legislature, and the state's constitutional officers, it is not surprising that African Americans have not won statewide posts.

Racial Voting Patterns

James W. Loewen, a sociologist at the University of Vermont, did an extensive study of racial voting patterns in South Carolina for the period between 1972 and 1985. His analysis of 130 elections, most of which were local, used data provided by the U.S. Department of Justice from the State Election Commission files. Loewen examines only contests for single-member districts and ones in which there was at least one serious black candidate and one serious white candidate.²⁸ For the 130 elections, Loewen found that, on average, 90.2 percent of the whites voted for white candidates while, on average, 85.0 percent of blacks voted for a black candidate. He noted that, "Black voting behavior began somewhat less polarized than white but soon increased to nearly the white level." Loewen divided the elections into two-year segments. Only in the 1978-79 periods were

²⁷ Democrats Aim for Gubernatorial Gains. *Southern Political Report*. April 15, 2005. p. 5.

²⁸ James W. Loewen, "Racial Bloc Voting in South Carolina," unpublished manuscript, August 13, 1987.

blacks more cohesive (an average of 91.8 percent of blacks voted for a black candidate) than whites. An average of 87.5 percent of whites voted for a white candidate during that biennium. Loewen notes that, “Whites bloc voted even more than blacks, making it difficult for black candidates to win.”²⁹ From his examination of racial voting, Loewen concludes that, “white and black candidates had a 50/50 chance when 51.3% of the valid ballots for the office were cast by black voters.”³⁰

The Loewen study included three congressional contests. The average level of black cohesion for those contests was 74.8 percent of the African-American voters supporting a black candidate while 78.8 percent of the white candidates backed a white candidate.³¹ A more recent study provides evidence of racial voting patterns in a set of four black-versus-white South Carolina congressional contests. These four contests involve the initial election of James Clyburn, the first African American to be elected to Congress from South Carolina in the 20th century, and his next three re-elections. As Table 8 reports, unlike in the 1970s and 1980s when whites were more cohesive than blacks, today black voters are far more cohesive than white voters. Table 8 provides three different estimates of cohesion for both black and white voters. The first estimate for each contest which appears under the “OLS” heading presents the estimate derived from using ordinary least squares ecological regression. This is one of the two techniques for determining racial voting patterns sanctioned by the Supreme Court in

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

Thornburg v. Gingles.³² The second technique is ecological inference developed by Gary King.³³ The third estimate reports the share of the vote in precincts in which at least 90 percent of the voters were of one race. This approach was also approved by the court in *Thornburg*.

The lowest level of cohesion reported for black voters indicates at least 95 percent of them voted for the black candidate. This is more than 20 percentage points greater for black cohesion than Loewen observed in the three congressional contests that he studied, all of which occurred between 1980 and 1984. White cohesion in the more recent congressional contests, especially after the initial Clyburn election in 1992, is not only much less than the black cohesion but is also lower than the figures reported by Loewen for the early 1980s. Thus while five percent or fewer of the black voters supported the white candidate, Clyburn often got at least 30 percent of the white vote and is almost always estimated to have taken more than a quarter of it. Whites have become somewhat more willing to vote for a black candidate while blacks have become far less willing to support a white candidate.

(See Table 8)

An analysis of South Carolina gubernatorial election returns indicates that the gubernatorial and congressional white vote is slipping away from Democratic candidates. While several Democratic members of Congress were able to attract substantial shares of

³² *Thornburg v. Gingles*, 476 U.S. 30 (1986).

³³ Gary King. 1997. *A Solution to the Ecological Inference Problem*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

the white vote sometimes exceeding 60 percent in the 1986-1990 elections, more recently, Democrats struggled to achieve even a third of the white vote.³⁴

One of the explanations for the change may be that the contests observed by Loewen were either Democratic primaries or runoffs, while those reported in Table 8 were general elections. Thus in the more recent elections, voters had a partisan cue available which they did not have in the Democratic primaries and runoffs studied by Loewen.

Before the House Judiciary subcommittee holding hearings on the extension of the Voting Rights Act in 1981, Loewen testified that, “Bloc voting is not diminishing, or if it is, only at a glacial rate. By state, that includes a division of the pre-1975 elections versus post-1975 elections across the South, I found that that the proportion of whites voting white decreased from 94 to 92 percent, hardly much movement.”³⁵ The congressional results from South Carolina for the 1990s indicate a substantial reduction in white voting cohesion from what Loewen reports at the time of the most recent extension of the Voting Rights Act.

³⁴ Ronald E. Weber. Preliminary Report on Liability Issues for Hearing in *Leonard v. Beasley*. July 7, 1997. The trend was for Democratic candidates to decline and drop toward the share of the white vote cast for Michael Dukakis and Bill Clinton and their presidential bids. These Democratic nominees attracted less than a quarter of the white vote in the 1988 and 1992 elections.

³⁵ Testimony of James H. Loewen before the subcommittee on Civil and Constitutional Rights of the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives, extension of the *Voting Rights Act* , Part I, p. 271 (May 19, 1981).

In that same testimony, Loewen does sound a positive note. “By 1991 I hope that white bloc voting is decreased, so that blacks are not shut out by such policies, and so that we can infer that whites no longer oppose a possibility of black political power with such unanimity. I think there is potential for such a finding at that time, but the factual situation today is quite different.”³⁶ As Table 4 shows, by 1991, African Americans held 405 public offices in South Carolina, up from 227 that were held at the time of Loewen’s testimony. During the decade, the number of black county officers and the number of black school board members had more than doubled, while the number of municipal office holders had increased from 96 to 171.

Loewen then further opines that in black-white contests, “characteristics of the candidate seem to make little difference to white voters.... Among whites then, race typically determines election outcome, nothing but race.”³⁷ Later in his testimony, Loewen elaborates,

I think what is happening is that the blacks are going by qualifications, incumbency, well-knownness on the part of both the black and white candidates. That indicates that a substantial part of the black population is not routinely bloc voting. And, of course, I argued perversely that the white population, which does not usually show this kind of variation, thereby does show that race is the only factor that makes a difference to them.³⁸

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.273.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 271.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 276.

The evidence from the 1990s might now be interpreted as just the reverse of what Loewen concluded. That is, it is the black population that is voting cohesively with at least 95 percent of the African-American vote going for the black candidate, while the variation appears among white voters where between a quarter and a third are willing to cast a ballot for the African-American candidate.

Table 9 presents comparative data on white support for white Democratic congressional candidates in South Carolina. Results show that only in 1992 did a white Democrat, John Spratt attract the bulk of the white vote. In the next three elections, Spratt's vote share was in the 40 percent range. For 1996 and 1998, we have estimates for non-incumbent Democratic nominees. These candidates receive between one-sixth and one-third of the white vote. Thus they tend to do no better than the African-American member of Congress from South Carolina, James Clyburn. However, with the exception of Darrell Curry, the Democratic nominee in 1996 for the Fourth District, the non-incumbent white Democrats achieved roughly the same share of the white vote as Clyburn managed once he established himself as an incumbent. Curry, however, ran more poorly among voters than Clyburn did in his first bid for Congress.

(See Table 9)

Although not shown here, the Democratic candidates whether black or white achieved overwhelming shares of the black vote. In 1998, the two white Democratic challengers ran as well among black voters as did the long-time incumbent John Spratt in

the Fifth District. Indeed, the two white challengers did as well among black voters as James Clyburn did.³⁹

These new figures indicate that the Loewen observation may well need modification. A restatement now might be that for black voters the only thing that is important is party—so that blacks will vote overwhelmingly for the Democratic nominee regardless of that person’s race or qualifications—and will not vote for a Republican, regardless of the Republican’s qualifications or status as an incumbent, a challenger, or a contestant for an open seat. While party also seems to be important as a correlate of white voting behavior, there are more whites willing to vote for a black Democrat than there are blacks willing to vote for a white Republican.

David Epstein and Sharyn O’Halloran take into consideration the greater cohesion of black than white voters in South Carolina. In an analysis of South Carolina state Senate elections from 1988 through 1994, they conclude that the black community has an equal opportunity of electing its preferred candidate in a district once it is 46.7 percent black in its voting age population.⁴⁰ While higher concentrations of African Americans increase the likelihood that their preferred candidate will prevail, the rates at which blacks register and vote, combined with the cohesiveness of the black and white

³⁹ Charles S. Bullock, III and Richard E. Dunn. The Demise of Black Districting and the Future of Black Representation. *Emory Law Journal*, 48 (Fall 1999): 1248.

⁴⁰ David Epstein and Sharyn O’Halloran. A Social Science Approach to Race, Redistricting, and Representation. *American Political Science Review* 93 (March 1999): 189.

electorate, now enables African Americans to determine an electoral outcome even when they constitute less than half of the voting age electorate.

John Ruoff has also examined the question of how heavily black a district must be for African-American candidate preferences to succeed. Ruoff estimated that blacks had an 85 percent chance of electing their preference once the total population of a district reached between 57 and 58 percent black.⁴¹ The Ruoff estimates were based upon elections held between 1980 and 1992. Thus his data base differs from the more recent set of elections considered by Epstein and O'Halloran and Ruoff focuses on the black percentage in the total population, while Epstein and O'Halloran consider voting age population. Finally, Ruoff sets an 85 percent threshold for success while Epstein and O'Halloran use a 50 percent probability for success. It appears very likely that Ruoff might also agree that blacks have at least an equal chance of electing their preferred candidates even in districts in which whites constitute a slight majority of the voting age population.

Original estimates of white support for Democratic congressional candidates since 2000 appear in Table 10. In five contested congressional districts in 2000, the Democratic nominee received between 18.5% (district 3) and 47.1% (district 5, held by long-time incumbent Jack Spratt) of the estimated white vote. The second-highest estimated white support for a Democrat was in congressional district 6, where black incumbent James Clyburn carried an estimated 37.4% of the white vote. By comparison,

⁴¹ Cited in Orville Vernon Burton. *Legislative and Congressional Districting in South Carolina*. 1998. In *Race and Redistricting in the 1990s*. Edited by Bernard Grofman. New York: Agathon Press. p. 297.

the Gore-Lieberman ticket garnered an estimated 25% of the white vote statewide. Three congressional seats were contested by both major parties in 2002. In those districts, the white vote was heavily Republican, with Democrats pulling just 16.8% in district 4 and 18.4% of the white vote in district 3, while incumbent Democrat James Clyburn captured an estimated 31.1% of the white vote in district 6. In 2004, just four congressional districts were contested by Democrats—districts 1 and 3 were conceded without opposition. In congressional district 4, just 13.5% of the estimated white vote went for the Democratic challenger, and in district 2 just 19.7% of the estimated white vote went for the Democrat. Democratic incumbents Spratt (49.4% of the white vote in district 5) and Clyburn (30.6% of the white vote in district 6) ran ahead of the estimated white vote for Democrats in the President and US Senate elections (22.4% and 26.9% respectively).

(See Table 10)

Results of statewide elections for state offices in South Carolina for 1998 and 2002 appear in Table 11. The range of the estimated Democratic share of the white vote in 1998 is from a low of 28.9% in the secretary of state contest to a high of 46.9% in the superintendent of education contest. The second-highest white vote share for a Democrat came in the governor's race, where challenger Jim Hodges upset incumbent Republican David Beasley, pulling an estimated 40.7% of the white vote according to ecological regression analysis. Exit polls stated the white vote for Hodges at 38%, and 90% of the black vote for Hodges.⁴² In the race for lieutenant-governor, incumbent Republican Bob Peeler defeated challenger and former lieutenant-governor Nick Theodore. Theodore garnered an estimated 30.1% of the white vote. In two open seat contests, for

⁴² Leigh Strope, 1998. Hodges wins in upset. Associated Press, November 3.

Superintendent of Education and Comptroller, Democrats pulled an estimated 46.9% and 39.4% of the white vote. In the Treasurer contest, a Republican incumbent was bested by the Democrat he ousted in 1994, who pulled an estimated 36.8% of the white vote. In the remaining Republican incumbent contests, Democrats pulled an estimated 33.6%, 29.6%, and 28.9% of the white vote respectively.

The 2002 election results indicate further decay of the support for Democrats in general among white voters. Of the eight, contested statewide offices in South Carolina in 2002, four were held by Democratic incumbents and four were vacated by incumbent Republicans who ran against the incumbent governor Jim Hodges (D). Of the four Democratic incumbents running in 2002, two—Governor Hodges and the Comptroller Jim Lander—were defeated. Hodges pulled an estimated 33.5% of the white vote, -7.2 points from 1998, while Lander pulled an estimated 31.2% of the white vote, -8.2 points from 1998. The successful Democratic Superintendent of Education and Treasurer pulled an estimated 47.0% and 37.8% of the white vote respectively, which represented slight gains over 1998.

In the open seats, two of the four Democratic candidates were African American—Steve Benjamin for Attorney General, and Rick Wade for Secretary of State. Benjamin pulled an estimated 27.9% of the white vote, while Wade captured an estimated 26.1% of the white vote. The white Democratic candidate for Lieutenant-Governor had an estimated 28.3% support among South Carolina whites, while the losing white Democrat running for Agriculture Commissioner pulled 33.8% of the white vote, or about the same as the incumbent Democratic Governor in his losing effort and better than the incumbent Democratic Comptroller in his failed reelection bid.

Analysis of the black vote (not shown here) reveals consistent support well in excess of 90% for Democratic candidates. The white vote in recent elections shows variability based on incumbency status of the contest, with incumbent Democrats sometimes pulling more of the white vote than open seat Democrats or challengers. Since 2000, the vote among whites for black Democratic candidates has been consistent with that of white candidates of the same incumbency status, while the black vote is largely fixed in the most recent elections.

Table 1

REPORTED REGISTRATION BY RACE IN SOUTH CAROLINA AND OUTSIDE THE SOUTH, 1980-2004

	1980	1982	1984	1986	1988	1990	1992	1994	1996	1998	2000	2002	2004
South Carolina													
Black	61.4	53.3	62.2	58.8	56.7	61.9	62	59	64.3	68	68.6	68.3	71.1
White	57.2	54.5	57.3	56.4	61.8	56.2	69.2	62.6	69.7	67.9	68.2	66.2	74.4
Non-South													
Black	60.6	61.7	67.2	63.1	65.9	58.4	63	58.3	62	58.5	61.7	57	na
White	69.3	66.7	70.5	66.2	68.5	64.4	70.9	65.6	68.1	63.9	65.9	63	na

Source: Various post-election reports from the U.S. Bureau of the Census.

Table 2

REPORTED TURNOUT BY RACE IN SOUTH CAROLINA AND OUTSIDE THE SOUTH, 1980-2004

	1980	1982	1984	1986	1988	1990	1992	1994	1996	1998	2000	2002	2004
SC													
Black	51.3	38.9	51.4	42	40.7	44.6	48.8	38.7	49.9	42.8	60.7	48.7	59.5
White	51.7	37	47.9	41.3	52.3	42	61.6	49.4	56.2	48.8	58.7	45.1	63.4
Non-South													
Black	52.8	48.5	58.9	44.2	55.6	38.4	53.8	40.2	51.4	40.4	53.1	39.3	na
White	62.4	53.1	63	48.7	60.4	48.2	64.9	49.3	57.4	45.4	57.5	44.7	na

Source: Various post-election reports from the U.S. Bureau of the Census.

Table 3

Registration and Turnout by Race in South Carolina, 1972-2004

Year	Registration		Turnout		Rate	
	Black	White	Black	White	Black %	White %
1972	224,854	666,510	152,546	533,812	67.84224	80.09062
1974	261,110	736,302	120,799	416,126	46.26364	56.51567
1976	284,926	827,810	192,170	620,878	67.44558	75.00248
1978	291,486	804,742	157,567	485,761	54.05646	60.36233
1980	319,826	914,363	222,580	696,901	69.59409	76.2171
1982	341,709	886,963	189,908	497,990	55.57594	56.14552
1984	388,948	1,005,186	262,476	754,155	67.48357	75.02641
1986	368,954	928,767	197,746	572,810	53.59638	61.67424
1988	388,255	1,047,722	245,304	796,542	63.18116	76.02608
1990	358,469	995,933	184,743	608,871	51.53667	61.13574
1992	387,624	1,149,516	286,911	950,556	74.01786	82.69185
1994	376,981	1,122,608	203,243	749,877	53.91333	66.79776
1996	489,850	1,324,927	294,983	908,503	60.21905	68.57004
1998	552,066	1,469,697	281,289	817,195	50.95206	55.60296
2000	622,244	1,643,955	284,354	832,582	45.69815	50.64506
2002	557,342	1,490,026	284,354	832,582	51.01966	55.87701
2004	659,366	1,655,816	433,732	1,197,416	65.78016	72.31576

Source: Biennial reports of the South Carolina Board of Elections.

TABLE 4
NUMBER OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN ELECTED OFFICIALS
IN SOUTH CAROLINA, 1969-2001

Year	Total	County	Municipal	School Board
1969	28	4	18	2
1970	38	2	30	2
1971	61	5	37	7
1972	66	7	41	6
1973	99	15	44	24
1974	116	20	57	24
1975	132	22	56	26
1976	148	23	67	29
1977	182	30	69	48
1980	238	38	100	65
1981	227	33	96	58
1984	263	37	130	65
1985	310	60	128	95
1987	340	65	135	114
1989	373	68	149	128
1991	405	75	171	125
1993	450	81	188	139
1995				
1997	542	75	248	171
1999	542	72	261	166
2001	534	83	252	157

Source: Various volumes of *The National Roster of Black Elected Officials* (Washington, D.C.: Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies).

Table 5

RACIAL MAKEUPS OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA LEGISLATURE

1965-2005

Year	SC Senate	% Black	SC House	% Black
1965	0	0	0	0
1967	0	0	0	0
1969	0	0	0	0
1971	0	0	3	2.419355
1973	0	0	4	3.225806
1975	0	0	12	9.677419
1977	0	0	13	10.48387
1979	0	0	13	10.48387
1981	0	0	15	12.09677
1983	1	2.173913	15	12.09677
1985	4	8.695652	16	12.90323
1987	4	8.695652	16	12.90323
1989	5	10.86957	16	12.90323
1991	6	13.04348	17	13.70968
1993	7	15.21739	18	14.51613
1995	6	13.04348	24	19.35484
1997	8	17.3913	26	20.96774
1999	7	15.21739	26	20.96774
2001	7	15.21739	24	19.35484
2003	7	15.21739	25	20.16129
2005	8	17.3913	25	20.16129

TABLE 6
RESULTS FOR 2002 SOUTH CAROLINA STATEWIDE CONTESTS LOST BY
DEMOCRATS

Office	Race of Democrat	Democrat	Votes for Republican
Senator	White	487,359	600,010
Governor	White	521,140	585,422
Lt. Governor	White	498,431	573,734
Secretary of State	Black	463,501	610,799
Attorney General	Black	482,560	601,931
Comptroller Gen.	White	485,748	583,079
Commissioner of Agriculture	White	525,595	537,168

Source: South Carolina Election Board Web Page

TABLE 7
 TURNOUT BY RACE IN SOUTH CAROLINA DEMOCRATIC PRIMARIES,
 1984 - 2004

Year	Total	Nonwhite	% Nonwhite
1984	373,258	130,998	35.1
1986	359,577	135,018	37.5
1988	334,615	116,056	34.7
1990	219,755	95,028	43.2
1992	274,032	112,169	40.9
1994	314,341	136,342	43.4
1996	206,354	107,130	51.9
1998	149,257	73,715	49.4
2000	194,796	93,558	48.0
2002	114,346	70,003	61.2
2004	184,288	106,917	58.0

Source: South Carolina Secretary of State

Table 8

RACIAL VOTING AND PARTICIPATION PATTERNS IN SOUTH CAROLINA'S
SIXTH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
(Percentages)

	Race	Party	OLS	WHITES			OLS	BLACKS		
				EI	HP	(N)		EI	HP	(N)
<u>1992</u>										
Clyburn	B	D	22.7	29.5	20.4	(23)	100	96.2	97.0	(44)
Chase	W	R	77.3	70.5	79.6		0.0	3.8	3.0	
<u>1994</u>										
Clyburn	B	D(I)	25.7	32.1	25.2	(22)	100	95.0	96.9	(45)
McLeod	W	R	74.3	67.9	74.8		0.0	1.3	2.5	
<u>1996</u>										
Clyburn	B	D(I)	30.3	35.7	29.7	(16)	100	95.2	96.7	(46)
McLeod	W	R	69.7	64.3	70.3		0.0	4.8	3.3	
<u>1998</u>										
Clyburn	B	D(I)	32.0	37.1	30.8	(18)	100	99.0	97.8	(42)
McLeod	W	R	68.0	62.9	69.2		0.0	1.0	2.2	

OLS = ecological regression; EI = district-level estimates from King's (1997) method for ecological inference; HP = racially homogenous precincts; I = incumbent; C = challenger; OS = open seat

Source: Charles S. Bullock, III, and Richard E. Dunn, "The Demise of Racial Districting and the Future of Black Representation," *Emory Law Journal* 48 (Fall 1999): 1209 - 1253.

TABLE 9
 WHITE SUPPORT FOR WHITE DEMOCRAT
 HOUSE CANDIDATES, 1992-1998
 (Percentages)

	State	Dist.	Candidate	OLS	White Support		(N)
					EI	HP	
<u>1992</u>							
Spratt	SC	5	I	52.1	52.0	52.1	(115)
<u>1994</u>							
Spratt	SC	5	I	42.1	43.6	43.7	(115)
<u>1996</u>							
Dorn	SC	3	C	29.4	29.3	31.6	(153)
Curry	SC	4	C	16.7	17.9	20.1	(129)
Spratt	SC	6	I	42.4	42.3	38.6	(101)
<u>1998</u>							
Frederick	SC	2	C	27.1	29.6	30.7	(96)
Reese	SC	4	OS	31.4	32.8	33.7	(123)
Spratt	W	5	I	45.1	48.6	47.6	(93)

OLS = ecological regression; EI = district-level estimates from King's (1997) method for ecological inference; HP = racially homogenous precincts; I = incumbent; C = challenger; OS = open seat

Source: Charles S. Bullock, III, and Richard E. Dunn, "The Demise of Racial Districting and the Future of Black Representation," *Emory Law Journal* 48 (Fall 1999): 1209 - 1253.

TABLE 10

ECOLOGICAL REGRESSION ESTIMATES OF WHITE SUPPORT FOR
DEMOCRATIC CONGRESSIONAL CANDIDATES, 2000 & 2004, CONTESTED
RACES

	<i>2000</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>2004</i>
Congress, CD1	26.9	-----	-----
Congress, CD2	28.5	-----	19.7
Congress, CD3	18.5	18.4	-----
Congress, CD4	-----	16.8	13.5
Congress, CD5	47.1	-----	49.4
Congress, CD6	37.4*	31.1	30.6*
President (state)	25.0		22.4
US Senate '04(state)			26.9

*African-American candidate.

Source: Computed by authors from data obtained from South Carolina Secretary of State elections website (<http://www.state.sc.us/scsec/stats.html>).

TABLE 11

ECOLOGICAL REGRESSION ESTIMATES OF WHITE VOTER SUPPORT FOR
DEMOCRATIC STATEWIDE CANDIDATES IN 1998 AND 2002

	<i>1998</i>	<i>2002</i>
Adjutant-General	29.6++	----- ++
Agriculture Comm.	----- +	33.8
Attorney General	33.6++	27.9*
Comptroller	39.4	31.2+
Governor	40.7++	33.5+
Lieut. Governor	30.1++	28.3
Sec'y State	28.9++	26.1*
Supt. Of Education	46.9	47.0+
Treasurer	36.8++	37.8+

*African-American candidate.

+Incumbent Democrat.

++Incumbent Republican

Source: Computed by authors from data obtained from South Carolina Secretary of State elections website (<http://www.state.sc.us/scsec/stats.html>).