

7-27-1949

## Correspondence, John C. Stennis, July 27-30, 1949

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Washington, D.C.  
July 27, 1949

The Hon. John C. Stennis  
U. S. Senator, Mississippi  
Senate Office Bldg.  
Washington, D.C.

JUL 27 1949

Dear Senator Stennis,

It was with much regret that I heard of the results of the vote in the House of Representatives, yesterday, which, if it, the bill, ever passed the Senate would ban the poll tax in seven Southern States and New Hampshire. I believe such a law would be unconstitutional, and some authorities on Constitutional law think likewise. Nevertheless, the human attitude of "to Kell with the federal Constitution" seemed to prevail yesterday in the House, as a sop to Negro voters, no doubt.

This along with Mr. Truman's recent pronouncements regarding the Constitutionality of Home Rule for Washington, D.C., are clear cut violations of his oath of Office which he took Jan. 24, 1949, to uphold the Constitution of the U. S.

To get to the point, I would like

Some information from you, if you see fit to give out with it. First, I understand that you are Chairman of a Senate Sub. Committee set up to study the poll tax question. (1) Do you think that you will be able to keep this House-passed bill buried in your Committee during the second half of the 81st. Congress (1950), or do you think that Democrats and left-wing Republicans may try to force the bill out of your Committee, as Senator Knowland tried to do with the bill to change Senate Rule 22, at the opening of this Congress?

(2) If the bill is forced out of Committee, do you think that 64 Senators will sign a petition to shut off debate on a motion to take up the bill? I heard left-wing Senators like Pepper, Morse, Douglas, <sup>and</sup> Humphrey make speeches to the effect that cloture can never be invoked as long as this new amendment to Senate Rule 22 is in effect. But I don't regard their statements as having much authenticity.

(3) If this bill becomes law will it be challenged and finally end up in the U. S. Supreme Court, and if so, how do you think the High Court would rule?

Perhaps I seem unduly concerned about this bill, especially since my own state of Louisiana does not have the poll-tax requirements for voting. But it is the overall question of federal encroachments on state rights by an irresponsible administration that concerns me.

If you feel disposed to answer any or all of these questions, I will appreciate it.

Yours truly,

[Redacted signature]

apt. 2-A

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34 Poll Tax  
United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON  
RULES AND ADMINISTRATION

July 30, 1949

Mr. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. [REDACTED]:

This will acknowledge with thanks your letter of July 27th inquiring about the anti-poll tax bill. I think it unlikely that the anti-poll tax bill will be passed at the present session of Congress. It is a difficult matter to speculate, however, as to the fate of this bill at the next session. No test has as yet been made as to the effectiveness of the new cloture rule.

I would hesitate also to speculate about the possible ruling of the Supreme Court on this bill if it were to be enacted into law. I personally do not consider it constitutional but I do not feel in a position to make any prediction as to the opinion of the Court.

With best wishes, I am

Sincerely yours,

U. S. Senator

FS:eh