

CORE - Congress of Racial Equality  
38 Park Row, New York 38, New York  
Cortlandt 7-6270

To: Stephen Carrier, Taconic Foundation  
Memo on: CORE Voter Registration Program  
From: James Farmer, CORE National Director

Assuming the availability of sufficient funds, CORE is able to carry on dynamic voter registration programs during the coming year (beginning October 1st) in three states. These programs will emphasize Negro voter registration in Urban communities and also in rural areas. Professional staff under supervision experienced in Southern voter registration campaigns would work with existing action organizations, civic groups and churches. CORE proposes to undertake voter registration campaigns in South Carolina, Florida, and Louisiana. These Southern states represent a good portion of the hard core of the South. Registration campaigns in South Carolina, and northern Florida and Louisiana would require painstaking meticulous and perhaps dangerous work. Yet, our experiences in South Carolina indicate that significant progress can be made.

These proposals are also made under the assumption of a continuing interest and program in the field of voter registration. Our experience in South Carolina has indicated that modest starts can be used to expand programs. However, it wouldn't be wise to be satisfied with gains made in the short space of one year.

Staff: Staff of this program would work under my general supervision and that of field director Gordon R. Carey. To administer the day-to-day operation, we have available James T. McCain who has extensive experience in voter registration campaigns throughout the South. He has been in charge of our registration efforts in South Carolina since 1956. Field Secretary, Tom Gaither is also available for this assignment. Gaither spent the summer of 1960 in voter registration work. One of our volunteer leaders will, we think, be readily available. We would have to secure the services of a fourth competent person to handle the program outlined.

In South Carolina, CORE has seven active committees on registration education (CORE) as well as two college chapters. In the last three years these groups have been responsible for registering approximately 17,000 of the 62,000 Negroes registered in that state. This has been made possible through the activities of CORE Field Secretary James McCain and of Tom Gaither. In the past, CORE has not been able to keep these men at work consistently on voter registration. In addition, we have developed a core of trained volunteer leaders in South Carolina in the field of voter registration. One or two of them might be available to staff the other voter registration offices which we propose.

In Florida, CORE has groups in Miami, St. Petersburg and Tallahassee. These represent the geographic range of the state. It seems feasible to us to set up an office in St. Petersburg to service the entire state. St. Petersburg is relatively close to the unregistered Negro population in the agricultural northern counties of Florida. Our Miami group has done sporadic but effective work on voter registration. With sufficient encouragement and resources, we feel that significant number of Negroes could be registered in this important metropolitan area.

Louisiana is, of course, bifurcated. The existing CORE group in New Orleans could carry on one type of dramatic and effective voter registration campaign. Other

groups in Baton Rouge and Shreveport face a more difficult problem because of the opposition of local registration boards. Yet the possibilities for action are very good.

In each state we contemplate setting up a small office staffed by one professional and one clerical person. The professional would spend a good deal of his time traveling throughout the state holding seminars and workshops with local registration groups on details of the registration procedure in that community. There would be a minimum allocation for expenses, office supplies and phones.

The National Office of CORE would undertake to provide legal assistance (for minor harassment such as arrests on traffic charges, etc.), a major publication on the voter registration campaign, one full-time administrator, James T. McCain. In addition, of course, the National Office of CORE would provide general administrative services such as bookkeeping, auditing, public relations, etc. The total expenditure of \$64,000.00 is slightly less than 10% of the CORE budget for the current fiscal year. This is not so large a percentage that it cannot be properly integrated into the overall framework: we can adequately supervise and administer such a program. However, neither is it so small a portion of the budget that it can be met from funds normally available. To carry on this campaign would require outside assistance.

One final note. Our registration campaigns would be undertaken in the spirit of assuming an obligation of citizenship. We do not register so much to secure better garbage collection (important as that may be) as to assert our dignity. We do not register to replace a Stanley Isaacs with a Hulan Jack but rather to bring about an integrated society of friends.

August 17, 1961

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Schedule of Estimated Annual Expenses, CORE Voters Registration Program

	<u>South Carolina</u>	<u>Florida</u>	<u>Louisiana</u>	<u>Total</u>
Rent	600	600	600	1800
Salaries				
Professional	5,000	5,000	5,000	
Clerical	3,000	3,000	3,000	24,000
Expenses - travel within state, etc.	2,500	2,500	2,500	7,500
Mimeo, printing, supplies	2,500	2,500	2,500	7,500
Phone	300	300	300	900
Legal*				1,500
Publication				2,500
Administrator Salary & Expense				10,500
General Overhead (15%) bookkeeping, auditing, public information, etc.				<u>8,430</u>
			TOTAL	<u>\$64,630</u>

\*Defense against minor harassment such as arrests for speeding, etc. It is assumed that the Justice Department will bear expense of suits against registration boards if they are needed.