

H. R. 7

The poll tax has been repealed in every State where it is not *deeply embedded in the State Constitution*. In Alabama, change of the poll-tax requirement in the Constitution calls for a three-fifths vote of both houses of the State legislature, then a vote by the State's "qualified electors", namely one-tenth of the potential voters, and those largely controlled by party machines. Other States have similar or harder conditions. That is why a *Federal bill is essential*. In the last Congress, an anti-poll-tax bill was passed, 3 to 1 by the House, but filibustered to death in the Senate. A new anti-poll-tax bill has been passed by the House, H. R. 7, by a vote of 265-110 on May 25, 1945.

**FILIBUSTER IN THE SENATE**

The Senate poll taxers led by Senator Bilbo have already stated that they would conduct a filibuster on H. R. 7 in this session of the Congress.

To defeat a filibuster, a cloture vote is required. To obtain cloture (cloture limits debate), a 2/3 vote is necessary. At the last session of Congress the filibusters were able to defeat the anti-poll-tax bill because cloture could not be obtained. H. R. 7 has been referred to the Judiciary Committee of the Senate. The poll taxers will attempt to prevent the Judiciary Committee from voting H. R. 7 onto the floor.



**CLOTURE**

Senators who support poll tax repeal must not only vote for the bill but must also vote FOR CLOTURE and continue to vote for cloture until the filibuster is broken. Furthermore they must consent to no "gentlemen's agreement" (as last year) to drop the fight if the first several votes on cloture are unsuccessful.

The following Senators voted against cloture last session:

Ariz. Hayden	Ky. Chandler	Mont. Wheeler	R. I. McNary
Calif. Johnson	La. Ellender	Nev. McCarran	Tenn. Gerry
Fla. Andrews	Overton	N. M. Chavez	Tenn. McKellar
Idaho. Clark	Maine. White	N. C. Bailey	Vt. Stewart
Ill. Thomas	Md. Radcliffe	N. D. Nye	Vt. Aiken
Iowa. Lucas	Md. Fedings	N. D. Langer	Wyo. Austin
Iowa. Gillette	Minn. Shipstead	Ore. Holman	Wyo. O'Mahoney

The following Senators are new in the Senate or were uncommitted in the last session:

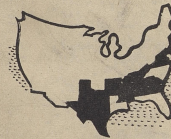
Ariz. McFarland	Minn. Ball	N. J. Hawkes	S. D. Bushfield
Del. Buck	Neb. Wherry	N. M. Hauch	Gurney
Iowa. Wilson	Nev. Scruggam	N. C. Reynolds	W. Va. Reverecomb
Mich. Ferguson	N. H. Bridges	Okl. Moore	Wyo. Robertson

**POLL TAX REPEAL A WAR MEASURE**

President Roosevelt, Wendell Wilkie, and all other responsible leaders of the Nation have called for the abolition of the poll tax as one of the greatest single barriers to American war unity. The poll tax keeps in a position of unwarranted power a bloc of Congressmen who are not answerable to the people—Congressmen who on the record do the most to provoke disunity. The poll tax keeps from millions of our citizens the experience of genuine democratic processes—a fact used effectively by the Axis to discredit and dishonor us among our friends and allies. The importance of the poll-tax issue to the war was recognized when in the last Congress, the poll-tax requirement was abolished for servicemen. In this Congress the same logic calls for complete and uncompromising abolition of the poll tax for all Americans as a *war need and a war obligation*. Ten million Americans must be given the right to vote.

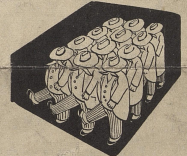
**POLL TAX  
FACT SHEET**

NOTE: The poll tax, one of the little-understood and popularly underestimated threats to the war effort, is coming up for action in the Senate. Americans deserve to know (1) that the poll tax deprives 10,000,000 of their fellow citizens of the right to vote;



(2) that the existence of a poll tax which keeps 10,000,000 citizens from voting impairs national unity and the nation's war effort, and (3) that the Axis uses the poll tax to discredit us at home and among millions of Allied peoples abroad.

The poll-tax issue, crucial to war and democracy, is one about which all Americans deserve to be fully informed so that action can be taken. This Fact Sheet contains important basic information, as well as objective answers to questions frequently asked about the poll tax and the poll tax bloc in Congress. Copies of this Fact Sheet are available upon request.



For further information communicate with the  
**NATIONAL COMMITTEE TO ABOLISH THE POLL TAX**

10 Independence Avenue • Washington 4, D. C.

## EIGHT STATES HAVE IT

Before he can vote, an American citizen must pay a poll tax if he resides in any of the following 8 States: *Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Mississippi, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.*

The tax is from one to two dollars a year and is cumulative for varying periods in four of the eight States. After 20 years' lapse, for example, not \$1.50 but \$30 must be paid in Alabama.

## WHY IT LIMITS VOTING

For years many Southerners living on credit—share-croppers and company-town miners, for example—*have had no cash from year-end to year-end. They cannot vote.*

In an average poll-tax State, the yearly per capita income, even in best years, seldom goes as high as \$350. With poverty like this, men and women cannot afford to pay what amounts to *one to three days' income* for the privilege of voting. Yet in the same State, the poll tax is \$1.50 a year and if not paid, adds up year by year to \$3.00, \$4.50, \$6.00, etc.

*The poll tax limits voting.*

## HISTORY

The history of the poll tax is that of an openly admitted campaign to limit the vote in the 1890's and the early 1900's. Only Georgia has had a poll-tax requirement from earlier times, and Georgia added other vote-limiting provisions during the "period of disfranchisement" from 1889 to 1908. The "Solid South" has used the poll tax to keep the Negroes and so-called "white trash" from the polls.

When the Supreme Court of Tennessee refused in July 1943 to uphold the repeal of the poll tax by the Tennessee legislature, it was clearly shown that only Federal action can remove this restriction on the vote which is deeply embedded in the constitutions of the eight poll-tax States.

## THE POLL-TAX VOTE

In the 1942 non-Presidential elections, 37% of the population voted in the poll-tax States as against 25% in the non-poll-tax States. In the 1940 Presidential elections the corresponding figures were 12% and 43%.

But more significant is to put it in terms of potential voters. In 1940, only 22% of the potential voters voted in the poll-tax States as against 71% in the non-poll-tax States. This means that more than two-thirds of the possible voters in the poll-tax States were disfranchised.

Other results of the poll tax in 1942:

1. Of the 79 poll-tax Representatives, 60 had no opposition in the election. In the entire States of Arkansas, Mississippi, and South Carolina, there was *not one single opposition vote.*

2. More votes were cast for the 2 Representatives from Rhode Island, the smallest State in the Union (population 713,000), than five Representatives from the entire States of South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi, plus five districts in Virginia (total population 11,500,000). Rhode Island's voters have only 2/37 the representation in Congress that our equivalent of poll-tax voters have. A similar comparison could be made with the other Northern and Western States.

3. Only 2,905 votes cast by 4/5 of 1% of the population elected a Congressman from the 6th District of South Carolina.

Since it took less than 9,400 votes to elect the average poll-tax Congressman, and 47,000 to elect a non-poll-tax Congressman, one poll-tax vote is worth more than five non-poll-tax votes. *Thus the poll tax has the additional effect of disfranchising non-poll-tax voters.*



## PRIMARIES

The claim is often made that the poll-tax States, being one-party, have their real elections in the primaries. In 1942 a majority (47) of the 78 poll-tax districts had no contest in the primaries. And even in contested districts only 12% of the population voted in the 1940 Presidential year primaries.

## POLL-TAX CORRUPTION

The existence of the poll tax means that large sections of the vote are the corrupt purchase of political machines. Relatives and henchmen of political leaders seldom have to pay their own poll tax—it is paid for them. With a 1% to 9% vote patronage goes far. Decent votes seem like money thrown away and honest voters become apathetic. In Virginia a machine boss can pay a block of 4,000 poll taxes and, if convicted for the offense, pay a fine of only \$5. The payment of a poll tax means usually the purchase of a vote.

## POLL-TAX CONGRESSMEN

Thus poll-tax Congressmen are almost totally independent of the people of their states. They are "permanent" politicians, re-elected term after term. In the last 3 elections the turnover rate among non-poll-tax Congressmen has been 90% greater than among poll-taxers. *Seventeen poll-tax Congressmen have been in Congress 20 years or more.* These veterans become experienced legislative tacticians, experts on rules and methods, past-masters of political maneuvering.

## CONTROL OF COMMITTEES

The power of these long-tenure Congressmen is greatly increased by their control of Congressional committees. *Seniority determines the rank of committee members,* and poll-tax members gradually work up to ranking member and chairman. In 1943, of the 24 chairmen and ranking members of the 12 most important committees of the House, 14, or almost 60%, were Representatives from poll-tax States. *This was three times their due proportion.* In the same year, 8 poll-taxers were chairmen or ranking members of each of the 10 most important committees of the Senate, or *more than twice their due proportion.* Such control steadily increases.

## LEGISLATIVE LEDGER

How poll-tax Congressmen vote can be seen by their record in recent years. They voted 2 for and 73 against the anti-lynching bill, and filibustered it to death in the Senate. They voted 7 for and 63 against the Wage-Hour bill. They voted 61 for and *none* against the Hobbs anti-labor bill in April, 1943. They voted similarly on other key legislation. *They are, by any fair examination of their voting record, manifestly lacking in democratic, let alone progressive, allegiance.*

## NEGRO AND WHITE

The poll-tax has been called a Negro issue. Admittedly it bears down particularly hard on Negroes because they are the poorest in the South, and abolition of the poll tax is a prerequisite for any substantial growth of the Southern Negro vote. *Yet the fact remains that it disfranchises 6 whites to every 4 Negroes.*

