

# **Voting Act extension may be in trouble**

WASHINGTON (NNPA)

— The Voting Rights bill may be in serious trouble.

When legislation to extend the 1965 Voting Rights Act for a second time reaches the floor in early June, black and liberal supporters expect an onslaught of weakening amendments.

These amendments, proposed by white conservatives, would limit the act's extension to 5 years

**(Continued on Page 10)**

# —Voting Act extension in trouble

## FROM PAGE ONE

rather than 10, and under a "bail-out" provision permit a locality to escape coverage under the legislation if it meets a series of requirements.

Another amendment would remove coverage of Spanish-speaking and other minorities.

The Congressional Black Caucus has sent out a mailing to 5,000 black elected officials and community leaders asking them to urge their congressional representatives to vote for passage of the legislation without the weakening amendments.

In a Black Caucus letter, signed by Congressman Charles B. Rangel, D-N.Y., the chairman of the 17-member group, and Congresswoman Barbara Jordan, D-Texas, who co-sponsored the Spanish-speaking provisions of the bill, the members said that the assistance of the black community was needed to assure passage of a strong bill.

The voting rights bill has been largely responsible for a massive increase in the number of black elected officials in the South, according to testimony given before the House Subcommittee on Civil and Constitutional Rights.

One estimate suggests that only 72 blacks served as elected officials in the 11 southern states in 1965.

At present the total of black elected officials in the seven southern states covered by the act had increased to 963.

These states now have one black congressman, 68

black state legislators, 429 black county officials and 497 municipal officers.

"So as not to be misled by the sheer numbers," the Judiciary Committee report said, it should be noted that "most of the offices newly-held by blacks are relatively minor and located in small municipalities or counties with overwhelming black populations . . . In the seven southern states which are totally or partially covered by the voting rights act, no black holds statewide office."

The most potentially-dangerous amendment, according to black political observers, in the "bail-out" provision submitted by M. Caldwell Butler, R-Va.,

which although defeated in the Judiciary by an extremely close vote, is expected to again be submitted on the House floor. The amendment offered by Robert McClory, R-Ill., removes coverage of Spanish-speaking Americans, a new provision of the legis-

Clarence Mitchell, NAACP's Washington bureau director, has opposed making the Spanish-speaking provisions an integral part of the voting rights bill rather than as a separate title, charging that their inclusion might be challenged on the House floor or later declared unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court.

Either action, he maintains, might jeopardize the entire bill. The Black

Caucus, many of whose members have a substantial Spanish-speaking constituency, differed with Mitchell, and with others, successfully called for adding the Spanish-speaking sections to the original bill.

Congressman Andrew Young, D-Ga., said he felt that Black Caucus support for the Spanish-speaking provisions was important in building a "black and white" coalition that could influence a variety of minority-interest issues on Capitol Hill.

A Black Caucus aide said that the Caucus intended to accelerate the number of mass mailings to black elected officials who are in a position to influence white congressional representatives.