

Resigning after 2 years

STATEMENT BY STROM THURMOND

TO BE RELEASED
NOT BEFORE 4:30
SATURDAY, SEPT.
18, 1954

✓ [On the morning of the day the State Executive Committee met I was told by a member of the Committee that great pressure had been brought to bear upon the membership, and he thought a majority was committed against holding a Primary election. This gentleman wished to know if the committee proceeded to select a candidate, whether he could propose my name.

I told him I would not accept a nomination by the Committee because I believed the people should have the right to select a Senator to serve for six years.

The Committee at its meeting voted against holding a Primary. Notwithstanding the protests of the people, it is apparent that a sufficient number of members will not change their position and let the people vote.

The only alternative for the people is to go to the polls on November 2 and write in the name of the man they want as Senator.]

The Democrats of South Carolina took an active part in the campaign to secure for the people of the United States the right to elect their Senators. They enthusiastically supported Woodrow Wilson when he advocated a Constitutional amendment to have Senators elected by the people instead of by legislatures or conventions.

Long before the adoption of that amendment, Senator Tillman led a fight to give the people of South Carolina the right to vote in a primary election for officials who were to govern them.

The sons of South Carolina have donned the uniform of their country and risked their lives in many lands. They have fought to abolish dictatorships and secure free elections for the people of other countries. Those service men want now to preserve free and fair elections in their own State.

They realize a Senator may have the deciding vote between war and peace. He will have a vote as to who shall be drafted. No matter what he does or does not do he cannot be removed by the people for six years. The right of the people to select such a powerful official by a majority vote in a Primary is a right they should not surrender.

✓ [This is a fight for a principle. It is a fight for government by the people instead of government by a small group of committeemen. In response to the requests of thousands of people, I became a candidate. I have no selfish ambition in this fight.

To make the principle at stake crystal clear, I ^{have} pledged to the people of South Carolina, that if I am elected in the General Election on November 2, ^{that} I will tender my resignation in 1956, in sufficient time to let the Democrats of South Carolina nominate a United States Senator in the regular Democratic primary election that year, which is the earliest regular primary to be held. In this way the right of the people to nominate their Senator, which they were denied by the committee action, will be restored to them at the earliest possible time.]
~~by my election.~~

Therefore, I pledge to you, the people, that I will resign in time to give you the opportunity to elect in the Primary of 1956 a Senator who will serve for the remaining four years.