STATEMENT BY STROM THURMOND

The right of the people to elect their United States Senator was won only after years of struggle by those who believed in good government, and who were opposed to senators being named in smoke-filled rooms dominated by machine politicians. It was one of the great reforms which grew out of the agrarian or people's movement of the late nineties and later led by such Democrats as Bryan, Wilson and others.

Not for half a century have the people of South Carolina been denied the right to nominate and elect their senator for a full term or for an unexpired term following a general election. In 1954 the people of South Carolina do not want that right taken away from them.

I had hoped, and I still hope, for a Democratic primary. I realize that some members of the Democratic State committee were confused and misled by the political maneuvering which began only a few hours after the death of our distinguished Senator Maybank last Wednesday and culminated in the nomination of a candidate by the committee last Friday. It is still not too late to hold a primary. All that is needed is for the committee candidate to withdraw and agree to run in a primary which under law can be legally held and for which there is ample time.

If those who put over the committee nomination continue to ignore the demand which has swept over South Carolina for the people to be given a right to choose their Senator, then I shall permit my name to be used in a write-in campaign to be aggressively conducted between now and the November election.

Since the action of the State committee, I have been overwhelmed with requests from every county urging me to return to public life and lead this fight for the right of the people to elect their senator.
I understand the handicap of a write-in, but I have no doubt that in the end the will of the people will prevail.

No Democrat by voting in the 1954 Democratic primary is bound to support any candidate except those named in that primary. They are not bound by oath, by party rules, or by law to support the nominee of the state committee. We were pledged to support the nominees of the 1954 primary and, of course, had Senator Maybank lived he would have been unanimously elected. The state committee cannot transfer the nomination of Senator Maybank to any other candidate, and in the absence of a special primary, Democrats are absolutely free under the rules of the party, under their oaths, and under the law, to go into the General Election and vote for the candidate of their choice.

Being a Democrat, as a Senator from the sovereign state of South Carolina I will participate in the Democratic caucus of the Senate and vote as a Democrat in the organization of the Senate. No act of mine as long as I am a member of the Senate will conflict with the principles of the Democratic Party of South Carolina as enunciated by the state convention of our party.

In international affairs, I believe partisanship should stop at the water's edge. I shall do all I can to uphold our government in its negotiations and dealings with foreign governments in our present tense world situation, especially in our efforts to contain communism and prevent its devastating and deadly hand from further engulfing free nations and free peoples.