

15)

RADIO AND TELEVISION REPORT BY SENATOR STROM THURMOND (D-SC) ON
MARCH 1, 1956

My fellow South Carolinians:

In September, 1954, Democrats in every county called on me to lead a write-in campaign as their candidate for the Senate. This occurred after the people were denied a special primary for the purpose of selecting a party nominee to succeed the late Senator Maybank, who had been renominated without opposition in the regular primary. The view of many political observers was that such a campaign would be hopeless because of the difficulties of write-in balloting.

I believed the people themselves had a right to vote for a candidate of their choice to fill an office, especially since the term of office was for six years. I agreed to become a Democratic write-in candidate for the Senate seat left vacant for the term beginning in January, 1955.

In the 1954 campaign I stated:

"This is a fight for principle...To make the principle at stake crystal clear, I pledge to the people of South Carolina that if I am elected in the General Election on November 2, 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."

On March 21 the State Democratic Convention will be held. One of its functions is to provide for a primary to nominate Democrats for the various offices which will be filled by the voters in November in the General Election. Candidates who enter the primary must qualify between noon on March 22 and noon on April 5.

The time has come for me to fulfill my promise to the people of South Carolina.

I have tried to choose a course that will be as crystal clear as the principle I upheld in the 1954 campaign.

SATURDAY I

55-15)

~~Today I have~~ delivered my letter of resignation to Governor Timmerman.

The text of the letter states:

"In keeping with the pledge which I made to the people of South Carolina during the 1954 campaign, and in order that the State Democratic Convention can place the office in this summer's primary, I hereby resign as United States Senator effective on and as of April 4, 1956, and I respectfully request that you accept this resignation effective on that date."

The State Convention can provide for a primary to nominate a candidate for the remaining four years of the six year term to which I was elected. The Democrats of South Carolina can have the opportunity of nominating the person of their choice on June 12. Any person who desires to enter the primary as a candidate has sufficient notice.

I shall be a candidate for nomination in the primary to succeed myself in the Senate.

My resignation was made effective April 4, the day before the closing of the books for qualification and before the campaign opens. Because of the unprecedented circumstances of the 1954 Senatorial election, I would not want to have any advantage which might result from my holding office during this primary campaign.

My resignation will guarantee a free and open primary election for South Carolina Democrats. I believe the course I have taken in resigning, and in making this announcement a month before the effective date, fulfills to the utmost the pledge I made to the people in 1954.

The trust reposed in me by the people has been deeply appreciated, and I have tried at all times to reward this trust by exerting my best efforts on behalf of the State and the Nation.

Thank you.

The End