

Transcribed from an undated Alabama voter registration form. Both the form and the notes are used with the gracious permission of Civil Rights Movement Veterans (<http://crmvet.org/>).

APPLICATION FOR REGISTRATION, QUESTIONNAIRE AND OATHS

PART I

(This is to be filled in by a member of the Board of Registrars or a duly authorized clerk of the board. If applicant is a married woman, she must state given name by which she is known, maiden surname, and married surname, which shall be recorded as her full name.)

Full Name: _____
Last First Middle

Date of Birth: _____ Sex _____ Race _____ (1)

Residence Address: _____ (2)

Mailing Address: _____

Voting Place: Precinct _____ Ward _____ District _____

Length of Residence: In State _____ County _____

Precinct, ward or district _____

Are you a member of the Armed Forces? _____ (3)

Are you the wife of a member of the Armed Forces? _____

Are you a college student? _____ If so, where? _____ (4)

Have you ever been registered to vote in any other state or in any other county in Alabama?

_____ If so, when and in what state and county and, if in Alabama, at what place did you vote in such county? _____

Highest grade, 1 to 12, completed _____ Where _____

Years college completed _____ Where _____

PART II

(To be filled in by the applicant in the presence of the Board of Registrars without assistance.)

I, _____, do hereby apply to the Board of Registrars of _____ County, State of Alabama, to register as an elector under the Constitution and laws of the State of Alabama and do herewith submit my answers to the interrogatories propounded to me by the board.

(Signature of applicant)

1. Are you a citizen of the United States? _____
2. Where were you born? _____
3. If you are a naturalized citizen, give number appearing on your naturalization papers and date of issuance. _____
4. Have you ever been married? _____ If so, give the name, residence and place of birth of your husband or wife. _____ (5)
Are you divorced? _____
5. List the places you have lived the past five years, giving town or county and state ____ (6)____

6. Have you ever been known by any name other than the one appearing on this application? _____ If so, state what name. _____
7. Are you employed? _____ If so, state by whom. (If you are self-employed, state this.) _____ (7)
8. Give the address of your present place of employment _____

9. If, in the past five years, you have been employed by an employer other than your present employer, give name of all employers and cities and states in which you worked. ____ (8)____

10. Has your name ever been stricken for any reason from any list of persons registered to vote? _____ If so, where, when, and why? _____

11. Have you previously applied for and been denied registration as a voter? _____ If so, where and when? _____
12. Have you ever served in the Armed Forces? _____ If so, give dates, branch of service, and serial number _____
13. Have you ever been dishonorably discharged from military service? _____(9)_____
14. Have you ever been declared legally insane? _____ If so, give details _____(10)_____
- _____
15. Give names and addresses of two persons who know you and can verify the statements made above by you relative to your residence in this state, county and precinct, ward or district. _____(11)_____
16. Have you ever seen a copy of this registration application form before receiving this copy today? _____ If so, when and where? _____(12)_____
17. Have you ever been convicted of any offense or paid any fine for violation of the law? _____ (Yes or No) If so, give the following information concerning each fine or conviction: charge, in what court tried, fine imposed, sentence, and, if paroled, state when, and if pardoned, state when. (If fine is for traffic violation only, you need write below only the words “traffic violation only.”) _____(13)_____
- _____
- _____

(Remainder of this form is to be filled out only as directed by an individual member of the Board of Registrars.)

PART III

Part III of this questionnaire shall consist of one of the forms which are **Insert Part III** as herein below set out. The insert shall be fastened to the questionnaire. The questions set out on the insert shall be answered according to the instructions therein. Each applicant shall demonstrate ability to read & write as required by the Constitution of Alabama, as amended, and no person shall be considered to have completed this application, nor shall the name of any applicant be entered upon the list of registered voters of any county until after such **Inserted Part III** of the questionnaire has been satisfactorily completed and signed by the applicant.

PLEASE INSERT PART III HERE

PART IV

OATHS

STATE OF ALABAMA

_____ COUNTY

Before me, _____, a registrar in and for said county and state, personally appeared _____, an applicant for registration as an elector, who being first duly sworn deposes and says:

“I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that the foregoing answers to the interrogatories are true and correct to the best of my knowledge, information and belief. (15) I do further personally swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of Alabama; that I do not believe in nor am I affiliated with any group or party which advocated or advocates the overthrow of the United States or the State of Alabama by unlawful means. (16) I do further solemnly swear (or affirm) that in the matter of this application for registration I have spoken the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help me God.”

(Signature of applicant)

Sworn to and subscribed before me this the _____ day of _____, 19_____

(Signature of Board Member)

EXPLANATION AND REMARKS

(Board members interviewing applicants may place here any special explanations, such as residence status, or other remarks for purpose of clarification. If person is blind or is otherwise physically handicapped to such an extent that he cannot fill out this application form, the circumstances are to be recorded here, along with an explanation of the method used to determine the person is, in fact, literate and can spell words and recognize those spelled to him, or can read large block letters and words in the case of persons with sight handicaps.

PART V
ACTION OF THE BOARD

STATE OF ALABAMA

_____ COUNTY

The applicant, _____, appeared before the board of registrars for said state and county in a regular session and executed the foregoing application in the manner prescribed by law. The Board, having further examined said applicant under oath, touching his qualifications under Section 181, Constitution of Alabama, as amended, and having fully considered the foregoing application for registration, questionnaire and oaths, adjudges said applicant entitled to be registered this, the

_____ day of _____, 19_____

Signed: _____

Chairman

Member

Member

(NOTE: The act of actually determining an applicant entitled to be registered is judicial. A majority of the Board must concur. A majority must be present. The power cannot be delegated. Each member must vote on each application. Not until this is done may a certificate be issued the applicant.)

The Applicant, _____, due to failure to meet the requirements of state law for registration as an elector, is hereby rejected on this, the

_____ day of _____, 19_____

Signed: _____

Chairman

Member

Member

PART VI

EXAMINATION OF SUPPORTING WITNESS

(The witness shall be placed under oath to tell the truth, the person administering the oath being a Board member or other person authorized to administer oaths and acting under the direction of the Board.)

Name of Witness _____ (17) _____

Address _____

Place of Voting _____

“I have known the applicant _____ for _____ years and _____ months and I have personal knowledge that his place of residence is _____

And that he has resided in the State of Alabama at least one year and in _____ County for at least six months.”

Signature of Witness

Sworn to and subscribed before me this the _____ day of _____, 19_____

(Person Administering Oath)

Date _____

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NOTES:

- (1) The assumption was that people of mixed race were Negro. Even if only one great-grandparent was black, the registrar still considered the registrant to be Negro.
- (2) In many counties the White Citizens Councils informed white landlords whenever their African American tenants tried to register to vote. Evictions often followed.
- (3) In some cases, counties with a military base allowed non-white soldiers and spouses to register, but only if the base commander or higher-ups in the service made an issue of it. Unfortunately, in many cases the brass did not follow through and insist that their personnel be allowed to register.
- (4) Southern colleges were still mostly segregated. The Negro colleges were largely dependent on the state or on white benefactors for funding. In many cases students at such colleges were threatened with disciplinary action or expulsion for the “crime” of attempting to register to vote.
- (5) Answers to this question could be used to retaliate against the husband or wife of an African American who dared to try to register.
- (6) Before statewide and national computer records, this data was used to locate arrest records of black applicants from other counties and states.

(7) The White Citizens Councils frequently informed employers when black employees tried to register. Immediate dismissal was expected. White employers who failed to fire such “trouble-makers” could find themselves the target of a white business boycott or even Klan violence.

(8) Past employers were also informed, lest they inadvertently try to rehire someone fired for trying to register.

(9) Bad-conduct or dishonorable discharges were often used to deny registration to black applicants.

(10) In many cases African Americans who resisted the humiliations of segregation were declared “insane” and forcibly committed to institutions where they could be “cured” of their aberrant behavior. Such persons could then be legally barred from registering to vote.

(11) Naturally, anyone listed here would become the focus of White Citizens Council and/or Klan interest.

(12) The purpose of Question 16 was to smoke out anyone who had attended a Civil Rights Movement voter registration class. The voter registration forms and literacy test questions on the Civil Rights Movement Veterans’ website (<http://www.crmvet.org/info/litapp.pdf>), where we obtained this information, came from SCLC Citizenship schools.

(13) Under Alabama law, anyone convicted of a crime, whether felony or misdemeanor, could be denied the right to vote. Since many African Americans had been arrested for refusing to accept Jim Crow abuse, either individually or through civil rights demonstrations, this was a common method of disfranchising a large sector of the black community.

(14) Part III was the “literacy” test, which came in three parts: A, B, and C.

(15) Given the racist reality of the Alabama judicial system at that time, this oath was, in effect, a form of intimidation because it carried the penalty of perjury. Many applicants were afraid to answer all questions truthfully because of their legitimate fear of retaliation. And even if every answer was true, Alabama courts routinely convicted African Americans on blatantly false charges. Therefore, swearing to this oath, whether the answers were true or not, put the registrant in danger of facing jail time.

(16) On more than one occasion, Southern sheriffs and judges construed non-violent resistance to Jim Crow legislation as an attempt to overthrow the state by unlawful means. At times Civil Rights organizations such as CORE, SNCC, SCLC, and the NAACP were accused of advocating the overthrow of particular states such as Alabama. Thus if an applicant belonged to one of these organizations and swore this oath, he/she risked being jailed for perjury.

(17) This section was for the “voucher” system. A voter who had already registered had to testify under oath (“vouch”) that he or she still met the residency requirement.

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Our sincere gratitude to Civil Rights Movement Veterans for their permission to use these voter registration materials from their extraordinary website: <http://www.crmv.org/>