The original documents are located in Box D17, folder “Kellogg Community College, Battle Creek, MI (telephone speech), March 31, 1965” of the Ford Congressional Papers: Press Secretary and Speech File at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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Telephone speech for Kellogg Community College, Battle Creek, Mich.
8:30 a.m. March 31

Speak 20 minutes, answer 10 minutes of questions

Subjects: Voting rights and aid to education

Among the major issues in the Nation today are voting rights and

One has been in the headlines for weeks. The other is given somewhat
more restrained
attention in the news media.

We have seen the marches, read about them, been appalled at the violence,
hopeful that peace would return to the battleground of voting
rights.

Climaxing a series of turbulent events, the President gave a special
message to a joint session of Congress recently. A few hours later the
Administration sent a proposed voting rights bill to Capitol Hill following
the President’s urgent request for quick adoption of the legislation.

Although there are differences of opinion among both Democrats and
Republicans as to the exact language of voting rights legislation, I believe
we are generally agreed that a law must be passed insuring that all qualified
citizens, wherever they live, can cast their ballots by 1966.

I certainly cannot speak for the Democrats. But, I can tell you that
early in this 89th Congress—before the demonstrations across our land—
Republicans in the House introduced at least 20 bills all aimed at insuring
voting rights.

We believe that we can develop a bill within the framework of the
Constitution and without being the target of long legal debate that will
and the bitter dispute over voting rights for all qualified Americans.
I emphasize that republican action on voting rights was not
triggered by demonstrations of social revolution. Our
own consciences were aroused by the need to have stronger legislation
and we moved ahead without trumpeting fanfare to tackle the job.

Working quietly and earnestly under the leadership of Rep. William
McClurin, chairman of the Republican task force on voting rights and
ranking member of our Party on the Judiciary Committee, Republicans are
hammering out a bill we hope will solve a vitally important social problem
in our country.

When the President's bill came to Congress, it would have been simple
easy for Republicans as the loyal opposition to riddle the proposal with blistering
criticism.

This is not to say that we haven't found holes, weaknesses and even
apparent violations of the Constitution in the Administration's proposed answer
to the problem of voting rights.

For example, the first article of the Constitution gives states the
authority to decide the qualifications of voters. The Administration bill
would violate the Constitution by blocking the rights of certain states to
establish such qualifications.

Under a complex formula in the Administration's proposed bill, Federal
authorities would have the right to abolish voter qualifications and to
supervise voter registration.

In actual practice, the formula would apply only to Alabama, Louisiana,
Mississippi, Georgia, South Carolina and Virginia.
The law the President virtually demanded that Congress hurriedly
illiterate
adopt would give
Democratic
citizens in these six states more voting
rights than they would have if they lived in New York.

Another provision would make
law registered by Federal
authorities:

Meanwhile, Republicans are working on constructive alternatives
to the President's bill that was spawned in secrecy. It is a tough, demanding
and complicated job. The Administration bill also is undergoing extensive
investigation by the House Judiciary Committee.

At this point, I can tell you that Republicans in the House will
support legislation to achieve maximum registration and voting by the target
date of 1966.

Turning now to centralization of power in Washington, I believe
a crushing over-balance of strength in either party for too long a time makes
a mockery of our traditions of government, weakens and softens the voice of the
people, and places control in the hands of a comparatively small majority.