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by TRACY E. DANESE

Following the adoption of the Constitution of 1885, Florida joined its sister southern states in enacting a series of election laws aimed at disfranchising black voters. This statutory labyrinth, with the Democratic party's white primary system as its centerpiece, had all but excluded the state's African-American citizens from the political arena by 1913. Although virtually complete in its practical effects, that process legally operated only in the primary elections. African-American males remained technically eligible to vote in general elections if their poll taxes were paid. In the same period, women's suffrage was intruding on the existing political structure from another direction with a momentum that clearly portended ultimate success. Although both movements focused on the most fundamental dynamic of American politics, the right to vote, each ran to its historical conclusion on essentially separate courses. Yet, for a brief period between 1915 and 1916, the two converged in a confusing and almost forgotten episode of Florida political history.

The convergence of efforts to complete the disfranchisement of black citizens with the inexorable momentum of women's suffrage presented the 1915 Florida Legislature with a political dilemma. If women were granted the vote, it would undoubtedly be "state action" subject to the 15th Amendment of the Constitution. That provision precluded any differentiation in granting the franchise to women. If black women received the franchise as a result of the suffrage movement, its extension to black males was inevitable unless permissible restrictions based on something other than race could be devised.

Florida looked to other southern states for direction. The solution which appeared most suitable was in place in several of them. In the parlance of disfranchisement, it was known as the "grandfather clause." Although complex in wording, the proposal was simple both in operation and purpose. In general, potential voters would be subject to rigid literacy and property ownership qualifica-

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tions. That combination would exclude the vast majority of blacks from voting, but would also eliminate a substantial number of whites. To preserve the broadest possible white franchise, an exemption was contrived based on lineal descent from a person qualified to vote prior to ratification of the 15th Amendment. Few, if any, southern blacks could qualify for the exemption. Such clauses were intended to circumvent the 15th Amendment's proscription of race as a franchise determinant. To that end, House Joint Resolution No. 82 was introduced early in the 1915 regular session of the Florida legislature.[1] The blatantly discriminatory purpose of the measure rendered it constitutionally suspect on its face. Nevertheless, the legislature belatedly proceeded to add it to the state's array of disfranchisement mechanisms. As the Florida measure made its way through the legislative process, an almost identical provision from Oklahoma was under constitutional challenge in the U.S. Supreme Court.

The Legislature passed HJR No. 82 by a wide majority, but the voters overwhelmingly defeated it in the 1916 general election. How do we account for such a disjunction between the voters and their elected representatives? The outcome did not represent a public rejection of white supremacy. A combination of three factors affected the voters' negative decision. First, the measure was almost certain to be held unconstitutional based on the Supreme Court decision which came out just three weeks after the Legislature acted on the measure. Second, there was great confusion as to the measure's impact on large numbers of poor and illiterate whites. Third, effective disfranchisement mechanisms were already in place. The white primary, poll tax, and Australian ballot all made the measure appear redundant.[2]

With a potentially definitive Supreme Court decision imminent, and disfranchisement an accomplished fact as a practical matter, why did the Legislature proceed with HJR No. 82? The sparsity of primary evidence allows no more than reasoned surmise in that regard. Clearly, the primary motivations focused on disfranchisement. First, there was the desire to eliminate any lingering vestiges of potential Republican strength built around the black vote. Second, there was always a reservoir of political profit to be tapped by expanding the reach of white supremacy. The nebulous linkage

1. *Laws of Florida* (1915), I, 497-98.
2. Jacksonville *Florida Times-Union,* October 4, 1916; *New York Times,* June 22, 1915.

of HJR No. 82 to women's suffrage was not tactically advantageous to such purposes. In retrospect, with both issues related to the regulation of the franchise, albeit with contrary intentions, their confluence in the mainstream of legislative maneuvering was all but inevitable. Yet, when the legislature convened in April of 1915, more pressing issues all but eclipsed legislative consideration of the grandfather clause. Women's suffrage was a high-profile issue in its own right, with warfare in Europe and prohibition also in the forefront of public consciousness.[3]

There was no threat to the existing order of Florida politics. The Democratic party enjoyed a clear monopoly of power. The Republican party, with its declining membership of blacks, was powerless to challenge it. Even the fragile participation of black Republicans was vulnerable to a growing "lily-white" sentiment in the minority party. The Progressive movement did not include an enlightened vision of voting rights for blacks in the South.[4] Nevertheless, the specter of blacks bonding with poor whites under Republican auspices, or in a resurgence of independentism, such as the Populists, continued to haunt the Florida Democratic party.[5] The instinct of political self-preservation was not the only force behind the grandfather clause in the 1915 Legislature. The antipathy of whites for blacks in the period transcended the facade of paternalism erected to rationalize a distorted social system. That dimension could be seen occasionally in absurd manifestations of the racist proclivities of the era. For example, in the 1915 legislative session, a bill to prohibit black lawyers from admission to the practice of law passed the House of Representatives unanimously.[6] The measure was reported matter-of-factly in the press without comment as to the motivation of its promoters. One vague account stated that separation of the races was "in the best interest of the Negro himself . . ., and is made imperative when the relations of the races are to be preserved at every cost."[7] As to the measure's justice or injustice, the Tallahassee *Daily Democrat* said: "This question may still be

3. See the Tallahassee *Daily Democrat,* April 12, 1915. Thirteen news articles appeared on the first page, ten of which dealt with the prohibition issue.
4. Paul D. Casdorph, *Republicans, Negroes, and Progressives in the South, 1912-1916,* (Tuscaloosa, Alabama, 1981) 48-9.
5. Edward C. Williamson, *Florida Politics in the Gilded Age* 1877-1893, (Gainesville, 1976), 96-105.
6. Jacksonville Florida *Times-Union,* May 9, 1915.
7. Tallahassee *Daily Democrat,* May 8, 1915.

open in the minds of many, but it evidently is not so with the House of Representatives."[8] Ultimately defeated in the senate, the measure illustrated the racist sentiments prevailing in the white legislature. Such attitudes were reinforced and rationalized by allusions to the wrongs of Reconstruction, wrongs perpetrated on a vanquished South by "northern bayonets and black votes."[9] It was in that setting that the final effort was made to complete the elimination of Florida's African-Americans from the state's political system.

The grandfather clause began its journey through the Florida constitutional amendatory process in the first week of the 1915 legislative session. Its introduction by Marion County Representative William J. Crosby was hardly noticed in the fanfare surrounding the more momentous issues of the day. Crosby, a successful farmer from the town of Citra in central Florida, was first elected by a substantial majority in the 1914 primary election. In addition to his legislative position, he was chairman of the board of trustees of the Citra High School District.[10] There was nothing in Crosby's public image to set him apart from the collective persona of his political colleagues.

William Glenn Terrell of the small town of Webster in Sumter County introduced an identical resolution in the senate. Terrell, whose senate district embraced Sumter and Marion counties, had a constituency which overlapped that of Crosby. He was a practicing lawyer and principal of the county high school. First elected to the house in 1908, he served three terms before his unopposed election to the senate in the 1914 Democratic primary. After two terms in the senate, he would serve on the Florida Supreme Court for forty-one years, including three terms as chief justice. Senator James E. Calkins of Fernandina in Nassau county also played a prominent role in the measure's passage. As will be seen, his participation in the senate debate centered around efforts to make the amendment more restrictive in its application.

Terrell and Crosby closely coordinated their efforts to pass HJR No. 82 out of the legislature. It was clear that the impetus for the measure came from Marion County. Since their overlapping constituencies often necessitated joint political endeavors on a variety

8. Ibid.
9. Ibid., April 14, 1915.
10. Jacksonville *Florida Times-Union*, April 4, 1915.

of issues, their cooperation on the grandfather clause was not out of the ordinary. The assignment of identical bill numbers in each chamber further indicated a close degree of coordination between the two men. Yet, the measure had not been a major issue in the primary campaign. Although approximately one third of Marion county's registered voters were Republican (mostly black), there was no discernible threat of their exercising serious political power in the county. The current registration roll showed a county-wide decline of 1200 voters, of whom 1000 were black.[11] Surprisingly, in the Ocala city precinct, there were still 26 "colored" Democrats registered; not so surprisingly, there were also 236 "colored" Republicans.[12] Since over eighty percent of those purged from the county rolls were black, it was evident that disfranchisement was taking place in Marion County. Still, the potential for black political action could be reduced even more if the grandfather clause were adopted.

Terrell stated his position "in favor of eliminating the negro as a political factor" during a campaign speech at a political meeting in the small rural community of Blichton.[13] It was significant that the Blichton precinct had 47 registered Democrats and 114 Republicans, most of whom were probably black. Thus, it was one of the few precincts where a black voting presence might manifest itself in a close election. Crosby appeared at the same meeting, but did not address the issue. The sparse press coverage of the 1914 primary campaign does not reveal any later specific pronouncements by him on the clause. Crosby's opponent, incumbent S. Louis Light, had previously announced his endorsement of disfranchisement at the opening political meeting of the campaign.[14] Nevertheless, it is impossible to infer from such campaign statements any strong public clamor for enactment of the grandfather clause. These remarks were more in the nature of obeisance to the pervasive principle of white supremacy, a principle accepted by virtually all who mattered politically-white male Democrats.

A tenuous linkage of the grandfather clause to the women's suffrage issue might be inferred from one of Crosby's comments early in the campaign. At the same meeting at which his opponent

11. Ocala *Evening Star*, April 20, 1914.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid., May 16, 1914.
14. Ibid., May 14, 1914.

voiced support for disfranchisement, Crosby expressed disapproval of women's suffrage, but said he might favor it "under improved circumstances."[15] There is no direct evidence as to what "improved circumstances" Crosby had in mind at the time. But, early in the following year, a political columnist for the Jacksonville *Dixie*, Charles E. Jones, made repeated references to the necessity of a grandfather clause if women's suffrage was to be seriously considered in Florida. Alluding to the upcoming legislative battle over that issue, Jones said that the greatest obstacle white women had to overcome was "the enfranchisement of an army of negro women [that] would stimulate the negro men to greater political action."[16] If Crosby was of similar persuasion, and he most likely was, then his concept of "improved circumstances" in the context of women's suffrage could easily have meant a grandfather clause in the form in which he subsequently introduced it.

As seasoned Democratic politicians, Crosby and Terrell were certainly conversant with the line of reasoning articulated in Jones's articles. Terrell an attorney, would have clearly comprehended the 15th Amendment's impact on "state action" giving women the right to vote. He would have realized that if women were to be granted the vote, the expanded franchise could not differentiate within the newly enfranchised group on the basis of race. The dominant current of southern legal opinion held that literacy and property restrictions joined to the grandfather clause were not based on race. With that line of reasoning, the clause's effect could be reconciled with the 15th Amendment, or so it was thought. In addition to providing finality to the process of disfranchisement, the grandfather clause had the additional benefit of safeguarding against indirect black intrusion at the polls through women's suffrage. Was the grandfather clause thus obliquely joined to the women's suffrage issue in Florida? Absent a well marked documentary trail, there is only the line of circumstantial evidence outlined here on which to build an affirmative inference. Nevertheless, the historical clues provide an intriguingly plausible nexus between women's suffrage and the grandfather clause.

The Marion County house member took the initiative in moving the proposal through the house before the senate took action on it. After a favorable committee report by a comfortable seven to

15. Ibid.
16. Jacksonville *Dixie*, January 23, March 27, April 10, 1915.

two vote, Crosby's measure was ready for floor action.[17] It passed the house in non-controversial fashion on April 23 by a 56 to six vote.[18] The political press gave the measure only perfunctory coverage. The Tallahassee *Daily Democrat* and the Miami *Metropolis* did not mention it. The St. Petersburg *Daily Times* featured it on the first page but limited the scope of the article to a recitation of the proposed amendment's details. One terse sentence in the story stated "The grandfather clause, as phrased, will eliminate a large vote in the state."[19] The Miami *Herald* gave essentially the same coverage as the St. Petersburg newspaper.[20]

In stark contrast to the perfunctory accounts in most newspapers, the Jacksonville *Florida Times-Union* contained articles by two reporters. In a masterpiece of non-sequitur, one opposing representative's views were presented. His convoluted logic, although clearly related to women's suffrage, required close reading:

> Representative Joe Hill Williams, Bradford, the county that once before 'saved the state' was not present when the resolution was up, but he said later on hearing of it that he would oppose the grandfather clause because it removed the only talking argument now in possession of the men who are opposed to women's voting because of the right it would give negro women to vote under the same terms as the men. With the grandfather clause written in the voting qualifications, he said, the negro women of the state would be placed in the same fix as the negro men in states where the clause is part of the registration requirement laws, and the white women advocates of equal franchise will have one more good argument to use for their having the vote.[21]

Williams, a staunch opponent of women's suffrage, viewed the grandfather clause as furthering that measure's prospects. Such reasoning clearly proceeded from a different perspective than that attributed to Crosby and Terrell. Nevertheless, it lends support to the theory of a linkage between the two issues. The second article

17. Florida, *House Journal* (1915), I, 418.
18. Ibid., 742-744.
19. *St. Petersburg Daily Times,* April 24, 1915.
20. Miami *Herald,* April 24, 1915.
21. Jacksonville *Florida Times-Union,* April 24, 1915.

in the same newspaper described some legislators as confused over the disfranchising aspects of the resolution. The confusion probably arose from their realization that the new suffrage requirements might result in elimination of white voters from the rolls as well as blacks.

If the *Times-Union's* speculation and the comments of Representative Williams even closely approximated how the clause was understood, there was potential for rampant confusion. A letter from a proponent of disfranchisement which appeared in the Ocala newspaper indicated the confusion must have been the subject of widespread political conversation in Ocala The letter writer, seeking to quell white anxiety over the issue, stated emphatically that the measure would have no affect on "any white man whomsoever."[22] He also opined that it would not disfranchise certain individuals identified as "colored men of intelligence and property" in the community. This may have been an allusion to the 26 blacks who remained registered as Democrats in the Ocala city precinct. Yet, there was no confusion on the part of anyone as to the intended effect on the mass of black voters.

The earlier comments of Representative Williams were given an almost prophetic tone when an unequivocal effort was made in the senate to bind the grandfather clause to the women's suffrage issue. Senator John B. Jones of Pensacola moved to amend the resolution by striking the word "male" from the first section. The effect would have been to grant the vote to female "lineal descendants" on an equal basis with men under the terms of the savings clause. Apparently a proponent of women's suffrage, Jones had made a surprise move. There is no way to ascertain the seriousness of his efforts, but he subsequently withdrew the amendment without a vote.[23] The momentary consternation on the senate floor at the time may be easily imagined, and the matter was temporarily postponed. Although Jones was not finished with the issue, his actions do not fit into the pattern of thought attributed to Crosby. More likely, as a supporter of women's suffrage, he sensed the prevailing adverse sentiment on that issue. His ploy was to amend it onto a measure seemingly assured of passage. After that turn of events, consideration of HJR No. 82 was delayed while the Senate went to another order of business. When debate resumed on the

22. Ocala *Evening Star,* May 20, 1915.
23. Florida, *Senate Journal,* (1915), 772-73.

measure, its exclusionary reach was materially expanded. Senator Calkins offered an amendment to require the ability to "interpret" as well as read and write the constitution. His obvious purpose was to vest greater discretionary power in poll officials to turn away undesirable voters. His amendment passed on a voice vote.[24] Senator Jones made one more effort to add female suffrage to the measure, and this time, his amendment went to a floor vote. It failed on a 21 to five tally, and HJR No. 82 was in correct parliamentary posture for final passage.[25] The grandfather clause passed the senate by a 24 to three vote during the last week of the session.[26] Senator Jones, having made his unsuccessful effort to merge the two franchise issues, joined the majority in voting for it.

The measure that emerged from the legislative process was lengthy and complex. It required an elector to be able to read, write and *interpret* any section of the state constitution and own property worth at least $500 as reflected on the current tax rolls of the county. The grandfather clause exempted from the new requirements any "person or lineal descendant of any such person" who was entitled to vote on January 1, 1867 under the laws of any state, territory or recognized foreign government.[27] The common use of the deceptively benign sounding word "grandfather" derives from the "lineal descent" language in the clause. Since southern blacks did not have the right to vote on January 1, 1867, they could not claim exemption through a "grandfather."

Confusion about the effects of the exemption on white voters became more defined shortly after the legislature completed its work.[28] Because large numbers of Florida whites were both poor and illiterate, there was concern for removal of white voters from the rolls during factional strife within the Democratic party. Such strife was commonplace in Florida's single party system, particularly after the advent of the primary system.[29] There was suspicion by many white southerners about the overtones of class distinction implicit in literacy and property requirements for voting. As the operative exclusionary mechanisms in HJR No. 82, those restrictions

24. Ibid., vol. 2, 1685.
25. Ibid., vol. 2, 1686.
26. Ibid., vol. 2, 2047-49.
27. *Laws of Florida* (1915), 498-499.
28. *Miami Herald*, June 3, 1915.
29. V. O. Key, Jr., *Southern Politics in State and Nation,* (New York, 1949; reprint, Knoxville, 1984), 16-17.

engendered white apprehension notwithstanding the supposedly curative effects of the grandfather clause.

According to historian J. Morgan Kousser, seven southern states and nine states outside the South made literacy a requirement for voting between 1889 and 1913.[30] The dangerous potential for disqualifying white voters during intra-party conflicts had long been recognized. The use of such tests specifically aimed at black voters was apparently first considered in 1880 by the South Carolina Election Commission. Realizing that some 12,000 whites would be excluded by literacy tests, the proponents of disfranchisement concocted an exemption to protect the white illiterate. The commissioners had derived the concept of exemptions from literacy requirements from the 1857 Massachusetts state constitution. That document had exempted previously registered illiterates from newly imposed literacy requirements. The South Carolinians must have relished the irony of using the constitution of an uncompromising abolitionist state as a model for a disfranchising device. In the event, the perversion of the Massachusetts provision, as well as the reaction of whites who feared its being turned on them, caused the South Carolina commissioners to reject the grandfather clause for a more subtle approach.[31]

When the Florida legislature was considering the clause in 1915, their use to preclude blacks from voting was a subject of national discussion. There was some support for southern motivation to avoid excluding whites while achieving maximum disfranchisement of blacks. One example of such support appeared in a national journal in late June after the Supreme Court's invalidation of the Oklahoma grandfather clause.[32] The approving tone of the article focused on the enhanced quality of the electorate resulting from literacy and property qualifications, while minimizing the racial discrimination inherent in the exempting clause.

While there was debate in Florida about the grandfather clause's effect on white voters, its impact on blacks was clearly recognized as extreme. A Tampa newspaper described the senate action on the measure as follows: "Grandfather Clause Will Kill Negro Vote."[33] Census data inferentially verifies the full reach of

30. Kousser, *Shaping of Southern Politics, 57.*
31. Ibid., 86.
32. *The Outlook,* June 30, 1915, 486-7.
33. *Tampa Morning Tribune,* June 1, 1915.

the clause. The U.S. Census of 1910 gave Florida's black male population over 21 years of age as 89,659, and 26 percent (23,219) were classified as illiterate.[34] Even that number would not have defined the extent of disfranchisement under the literacy provisions. The constitutional interpretation requirement was unlimited in its potential for arbitrary disqualification of voters and could have been applied to whites as well as blacks.

The property qualification was yet another real threat to blacks, and a potential threat to poor whites. The $500 property requirement added an absurdly disproportionate dimension to its intended purpose. Literate but poor whites not saved by the grandfather clause would be subject to large scale disfranchisement. Confusion and doubt that the grandfather clause would preserve the white franchise was magnified by the reach of the property requirements. Undoubtedly, this injected some element of class tension into the already murky situation. Such concerns could overcome the widespread disfranchisement sentiments that would ordinarily have favored ratification.

The effect on black voters was virtually absolute. Using 1910 Census figures, there were slightly over 75,000 "homes of negro families" in Florida. Almost 50,000 of them were rented and would not have been on the tax rolls in the name of the tenant.[35] If there was one black male over 21 years of age in each, this alone would have disfranchised close to 60 percent of the eligible black population. The census did not provide explicit figures on black income and wealth during that era, but with the aid of information from other sources, some relevant conclusions can be drawn. The average income of an agricultural worker in the United States was estimated at $330 per year in 1915.[36] There were 52,000 black male agricultural workers in Florida. Since there were approximately 90,000 black adult males, it was clear that the vast majority of potential black voters were employed in agricultural work. Considering the average income of agricultural workers in the United States, it was unlikely that a Florida agricultural worker had either

34. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Negro Population*, 1790-1915, (Washington, 1918; reprint, New York, 1968) 421.
35. Ibid., Table 18, p. 478.
36. National Bureau of Economic Research, Inc., *Income in the U.S.*, (New York, 1921) 275.

real or personal property on the tax roll sufficient to meet the $500 requirement.

The value of black owned urban homes was not included in the 1910 Census, but information on black farm properties provides a reference point. Structures (some of them outbuildings) on black owned farms had an average value of $177.57.[37] To meet the $500 threshold, black owned urban homes would have to have been assessed at almost three times the average value of all farm buildings on a black farm. Such a difference in black owned rural and urban properties was highly improbable. The property qualification by itself would have disfranchised the overwhelming majority of blacks in Florida. The rare black who met the property requirement would have likely been disfranchised by the literacy and interpretation requirements.

The almost casual attitude of the Florida Legislature in passing HJR No. 82 stood in contrast to the more penetrating attention it received in another, higher public forum. In the spring of 1915, the constitutionality of the Oklahoma grandfather clause, substantially similar to the Florida version, was before the U.S. Supreme Court. The use of grandfather clauses to effectuate black disfranchisement had been a subject of debate in legal and academic circles since their inception before the turn of the century. One academician observed that most adult white southerners dismissed the Fifteenth Amendment as without moral sanction and nonbinding on their consciences.[38] That perspective was described and implicitly condoned in a *New York Times* editorial following the Supreme Court's invalidation of the Oklahoma clause.[39] Observations to that effect are germane to a perspective of the southern forthrightness in pursuit of disfranchisement.

While subject to some disagreement, especially among southern lawyers, scholarly legal opinion generally viewed the grandfather clauses as unconstitutional.[40] By 1915, it was clear that the cases pending in the Supreme Court involving the clause would shortly resolve the issue. Oklahoma had amended its constitution in 1910 by adding literacy requirements and a grandfather clause

37. Ibid., Table 49, p. 592.
38. John C. Rose, "Negro Suffrage," *American Political Science Review* 1 (November, *1906) 18.*
39. *New York Times,* June 23, 1915.
40. Julien C. Monnet, "The Latest Phase of Negro Disfranchisement," 26 *Harvard Law Review*, (November, 1912), 59.

to its suffrage provisions. The conviction in federal court of a state poll official for enforcing the provision provided the backdrop for a constitutional test. The Supreme Court declared the Oklahoma grandfather clause invalid just three weeks after the 1915 Florida Legislature adjourned.[41] Ironically, the opinion was written by Chief Justice Edward Douglass White who had fought for the Confederacy and was a veteran of Louisiana's notorious post-Civil War Democratic politics. There was little surprise recorded in Florida over the ruling, and even less comment on its effect on the proposed Florida amendment. The *Tampa Tribune* made no reference to the ruling, but newspapers in Jacksonville and Miami noted the Court's opinion and the historical nature of the ruling.[42] If public indifference can be inferred from the muted newspaper coverage, such would support the conclusion of widespread belief among Floridians that the amendment was unnecessary. News accounts to that effect from various southern states, including Florida, appeared in the *New York Times* the day after the Court's decision.[43] In fact, the Court's ruling rendered the Florida clause incurably defective in the legal sense. Yet, the state's constitutional amendatory process, once set in motion, required the proposal to be submitted to the people in the next general election. Press commentary preceding the election turned decidedly adverse compared to the seeming indifference during the legislative phase. The Supreme Court opinion on the Oklahoma clause contributed in large measure to this attitudinal change in the press. Fear and confusion concerning the measure's impact on white voters also played a less defined but significant role.

One editorial in a Jacksonville newspaper termed the proposal "A Useless Amendment." The effect of the Australian ballot in eliminating "the negro vote as far as this can be accomplished without violating the constitution of the United States" was cited as the basis for that judgment.[44] There was no disagreement as to the desirability of disfranchisement, only as to the redundancy of the proposed amendment as a means. Two weeks later, the same newspaper ran a second editorial condemning the proposal as un-

41. *Quinn v. United States*, 238 U.S. 347 (1915).
42. Miami *Metropolis*, June 23, 1915; Jacksonville *Florida Times-Union*, June 22, 1915.
43. *New York Times*, June 22, 1915.
44. Jacksonville *Florida Times-Union*, October 4, 1916.

constitutional and unenforceable based on the ruling in the Oklahoma case.[45]

Negative reaction to the proposal also occurred in more rural settings. The Jasper *News* declared that reasons to oppose the amendment were so obvious they needed no elaboration. The *News* printed the amendment in full, urging its readers to decide for themselves.[46] The people of Hamilton county must have agreed for they voted over 15 to one against it. At Ocala, the birthplace of the Florida clause, the Ocala *Evening Star* editorialized on the eve of the election that the proposal was unconstitutional. Even though reaffirming its belief that "both negroes and white people would be better off 'if blacks did not vote, the *Evening Star* urged its readers to reject the measure.[47]

Although the Supreme Court's opinion did not diminish the hold of white supremacy on the state, no broad popular support for the measure developed. The Miami Herald gave expression to what was probably one of the major concerns of whites about the amendment. It found no fault with the literacy provisions but took issue with the property requirements. It noted that the actual property value necessary to meet the test would have to be at least $1500 due to the endemic underassessment practices throughout the state.[48] In 1915, such a sum could induce undercurrents of elitism. One politically astute individual, O. W. Barrett of Lakeland, was afforded space in the Jacksonville *Florida Times-Union* to articulate his strong opposition to the amendment. His reasoning was similar to the *Miami Herald's,* except that he foresaw an actual property value of $2000 needed to qualify under the proposal. Barrett also noted the potential for arbitrary disqualification of whites under the interpretation provisions and cited a letter from veteran state Senator H. J. Drane of Lakeland outlining that lawmaker's opposition to the proposal.[49] There was no reference to the senator's favorable vote for the measure when the matter was before the Florida senate a year earlier.

When the voters spoke to the issue in the general election of 1916, the amendment failed by 10,518 to 19,688 votes-an almost

45. Ibid., October 18, 1916.
46. Jasper *News,* September 29, 1916.
47. Ocala *Evening Star,* November 2, 1916, 47.
48. *Miami Herald,* June 3, 1916.
49. Jacksonville *Florida Times-Union,* October 25, 1916.

two-to-one margin. The county results do not afford insight to voter reasoning other than an overall negative attitude toward the proposition. Only five counties voted in favor of it: Dade (743 to 419), Franklin (70 to 61), Lafayette (218 to 178), Palm Beach (279 to 268) and Pinellas (536 to 268).[50] The home counties of Crosby and Terrell voted against it, but that did not affect their standing with the voters. They were re-elected. In 1917, a women's suffrage amendment passed the Florida senate, but failed to receive the required three-fifths majority in the house. Both men voted for it.[51] The grandfather clause had little or no impact on the internal politics of the Florida legislature. One of the three dissenting senators, J. B. Johnson of Suwannee County, was chosen senate president the following session, and a strong proponent, J. B. Calkins of Fernandina, was elected president in 1919.

In the years since 1915, the ambiguity which surrounded the voters' rejection of Florida's final effort to disfranchise its black citizens has endured. The defeat of HJR No. 82 did not loosen the iron grip of white supremacy on the state's politics. It would be two more generations before dismantlement of that structure was clearly fixed in state and national policy. If there had been no invalidating opinion in *Quinn v. Oklahoma* prior to the general election, the vote would almost certainly have been different, even with the confusion as to the impact on poor and illiterate whites. Still, the clause would have made little practical difference with the existing disfranchisement scheme in Florida's single-party politics. In either event, the student of Florida history is left to reflect on the futility of the legislature's belated efforts to insert the grandfather clause in the state constitution.

50. Florida, *1916 Report of the Secretary of State,* Official Vote, General Election 1916.
51.Florida, *House Journal (1917),* 820; *Florida Senate Journal* (1917), 531.