

**Owen F. Monfils Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 1/15/1966**  
**Administrative Information**

**Creator:** Owen F. Monfils  
**Interviewer:** Charles T. Morrissey  
**Date of Interview:** January 15, 1966  
**Place of Interview:** Madison, Wisconsin  
**Length:** 18 pages, 9 addendums

**Biographical Note**

Owen F. Monfils is a Wisconsin political figure and the chairman of the Brown County Democratic Party. This interview focuses on the 1960 Democratic primary campaign in Brown County, Wisconsin and Wisconsin Democrats' support for John F. Kennedy, among other topics.

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**Suggested Citation**

Owen F. Monfils, recorded interview by Charles T. Morrissey, January 15, 1966 (page number), John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program.

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Owen F. Monfils

Date: Sept 14, 1971

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Oral History Interview

with

OWEN F. MONFILS

January 15, 1966  
Madison, Wisconsin

By Charles T. Morrissey

For the John F. Kennedy Library

MORRISSEY: Let me start by asking how you got involved in that 1960 primary race.

MONFILS: I'm a lawyer from Green Bay. I was active in Democratic Party politics mainly through my acquaintanceships with John Reynolds. As a result of that, I was elected Brown County chairman, and later Eighth District chairman. The Eighth District then was comprised of nine counties in northern Wisconsin: Brown, Kewaunee, Door, Outagamie, Marinette, Forest, Florence, and I think that's all. My first recollection of any activity as far as then Senator Kennedy was concerned was a series of correspondence from him in early May or June or March, I guess, around there in '59, indicating an interest in Wisconsin politics.

I think really the reason that I was active on Senator Kennedy's behalf was because of a contact from the then state party Chairman, [Patrick J.] Pat Lucey, and his request that I come to a meeting. I think it was at Eau Claire. The first one was in behalf of. . . . A committee was then being formed to promote the candidacy of Senator Kennedy. I've forgotten all the people who were there. I can remember Ivan Nestingen. I think we met in the Elks Club in Eau Claire. And I'm reasonably certain that Pat Lucey was there. I think there were eleven people originally. A man by the name of John Duffy came with me from Green Bay. We were all there for one purpose, and that was to support Jack Kennedy in his bid for the presidency. But Pat Lucey, I think, was the man that carried the ball as far as winning me over, and convincing me to be a supporter of the Senator.

MORRISSEY: Had you never met Kennedy?

MONFILS: Not prior to that, no.

MORRISSEY: I've often heard it said that Hubert Humphrey served as Wisconsin's third senator for so many years. Did you feel any inclination to support Humphrey?

MONFILS: I have to say that, yes, I had been at a convention at Superior--and I can't recall the year but I think it must have been '56 or maybe '57--at which Hubert Humphrey was the featured speaker, and the man impressed me no end as far as his knowledge and his speaking ability and his general demeanor. I thought he was an outstanding man, an outstanding candidate. I felt a certain amount of loyalty to him. I think it was a sense of respect for Lucey's opinion and Lucey's decision that really sold me on Kennedy and Kennedy's behalf.

MORRISSEY: So what did you start doing on Kennedy's behalf in the Green Bay area?

MONFILLS: Oh, it was probably the most enjoyable experience I've ever had in politics, mainly because Green Bay in Brown County is a strong Republican area, has been since 1946, 1944, around there sometime. One of the Democratic Party's problems always has been the lack of funds and a lack of organizational direction. The organizational direction, to some extent, was alleviated when Pat Lucey was elected state chairman. He gave us more direction, I believe, than we've ever had prior or we have had since.

But other than that, during the Kennedy campaign--prior to the Kennedy campaign--the feeling, or the entire campaign was based on the premise if you had a reasonable solution as to how more votes could be garnered for the man you were supporting, there was no reason why the organizational and the money end couldn't be taken care of. If you had a pet project that you knew that if this person was contacted, or this person was asked to take an active part, or this number of phone calls could be made and would cost that amount of money, or if this number of pamphlets could be distributed for that amount of money, that would win the votes--any project you might have had in mind was in the realm of the possible. And it made politics, for me at least--I say it was a green campaign, and anything you wanted to do could be done if it was reasonable and met with [Timothy J.] Ted Reardon's--who was assigned to the Eighth District and was in Green Bay at that time--if it met with his approval. It was interesting to me to be able to run a campaign for once with funds, and with know-how, and with more than enough volunteers who believed in the Senator and who wanted to work for his behalf.

MORRISSEY: Where did those volunteers come from?



MONFILS: Oh, to give an example, after it was found that the Senator was coming to the Green Bay area--and I hesitate to cite this as an example, maybe because it might be interpreted as religious prejudice. But I don't think it was. Maybe it was, I don't know. I am a Protestant; I want that known, too. And I didn't support him because of anything religious. I supported him, as I said, mainly because my friend Lucey asked me to, and because, after reviewing his record and after hearing and seeing this man, I couldn't believe that anybody could vote against him. I thought he'd win.

But beside the point, after he declared that he was coming to Green Bay, I got a phone call one day from-- I've forgotten the lady's name, but she was a Sister in the St. Joseph's Academy, a girl's academy in Green Bay. And she asked if it would be possible if the Senator could stop at their school on his tour from--he was going to be at St. Norbert's College in the morning and then go to a meeting in Green Bay in the afternoon--if it was possible if he could stop the bus so there would be an opportunity for the young ladies in the school to see him. So I discussed this with, I've forgotten who, but some member of the group, about arranging the program, and they said certainly he could do it.

So he came out on a Greyhound bus, I remember, and there were many newsmen along with him, and the Senator and the staff men. The bus stopped at this school and I told the Sister--Veronica, I think her name was--I told her that he would stop if it just were to say hello and then to leave. And there were snow drifts outside in the school yard, and it was all but impassable, but the sidewalks were shoveled. There was snow all over and these young girls--what, from 10 to 15 I would guess--they were ankle deep in snow and all over the yard and just ecstatic in seeing the man and wanting him close to them. I've never seen a reaction before or since like that.

And when you ask where do the volunteers come from, it just seemed that there was an explosion. Volunteers wasn't the problem; it was what to do with those that had volunteered, because it was an experience I hadn't had before or since. And volunteers in that campaign were no problem. We had a project of distributing a tabloid, maybe eight or ten sheet tabloid. It was, I think, the basic tabloid they used in other campaigns but altered for Wisconsin. Another project was to see that every household in Brown County received one of these tabloids. Well, we arranged for the--we rented buses and the day the tabloids were to be distributed we had one adult who was in charge of each bus. And the bus was directed to go to a certain area of the city, and we had a busload of teenagers to pass them out for certain blocks. On the day of the distribution--it was a Saturday--we had teenagers lined up. You would think they were being allowed to see the Beatles for nothing the way they were there. It was just a fantastic response. There's no explanation for it other than the man's personal magnetism and his appeal and the way that they reacted to it.

MORRISSEY: The fact that a lot of these volunteers were Catholics interests me. One, it's understandable but two, on the other hand, a lot of newspaper men traveling with John Kennedy seemed to emphasize the Catholic-Protestant dichotomy, and I was wondering if they did this in your areas?

MONFILS: The Eighth District and Brown County particularly, I can't give the exact figure but I would think Brown County must be at least 70 percent Catholic and possibly higher. And the Eighth District is a good 60 percent, I would guess. No, the newspapers in that area did not. . . . The religious issue was never played up to the point that I hoped it would be. I thought that in that area, if we had ever anything going for us--I would think it would be. And even the AP [Associated Press], UP [United Press International] stories that were--and maybe I was being overly cynical or overly critical but the wire stories I'd read in the Milwaukee papers were oddly, from my opinion, played down in the Green Bay area as far as the religious question was concerned. No, there was no mention there.

But there was an awful lot of enthusiasm for him, and I don't think that it was. . . . I don't think that the people that came there, and the students that came, came there because they were Catholic. I think that he was a figure that they identified with and wanted to assist. And because of the organizational ability, because there was a job to do, they felt a part of the campaign. Often in a campaign you get volunteers, but you can't provide them with jobs because of a lack of funds in the area. But here was a well-thought-out organization with something to do if they wanted to do it. Everything meshed at the right time, and it was a fantastic experience.

MORRISSEY: I understand that in your part of the state a lot of the Catholics are Republicans?

MONFILS: Oh, I would say, yes. It's the Chamber of Commerce, your downtown Kiwanis Club. . . . I'm a Kiwanis Club member, forty-five men in the club. I don't know the exact figure but I would guess of the forty-five there aren't more than five of us who are Protestants. And there aren't more than two of us that are--I know that there are two that are Democrats and that's it. I know the political breakdown better than the religious breakdown, but I know that there aren't more than five that are. And of those men in the club, I would say that--and I know them well; I've been with the club for, well, fourteen years now--I would say that, oh, at least half of the Catholics, or better than half, 75 percent, voted for Kennedy in the primary and none of them voted for him in the general.

MORRISSEY: Did Nixon carry your district in the general?

MONFILS: Yes, decidedly.

MORRISSEY: And did Kennedy carry it by a substantial margin in the primary?

MONFILS: He carried Brown County in the primary by--I looked at the figures before I got here--two hundred and forty-eight votes, I think. He carried the county, but barely.

MORRISSEY: Tell me about the times that Kennedy came into your district.

MONFILS: He was in Green Bay for a reception. His brother came first to set it up, Bobby [Robert F. Kennedy]. And then Ted [Edward M. Kennedy] was there once and stayed at our house, as a matter of fact. They had a reception for him in Appleton. I've forgotten the date, but he was in the Masonic Temple, I remember that. Then they had a reception in the Northland Hotel in Green Bay. He and his wife were there. I think we were in Appleton in the early evening, but I'm

not certain. And then he was in Green Bay for a Sunday afternoon, or a Sunday noon breakfast they called it. I wasn't there that time. I was out of the state.

He was in Green Bay on one other occasion; I've been trying to think what it was or what it was for. I knew he flew out of the Green Bay airport on the Caroline, and the most vivid recollections I have of him is when after we'd-- and I've forgotten what we were doing all day. I don't think his wife was with him that day, but we were campaigning and doing something, and he had to leave. It was late in the evening. Ted Reardon and myself took him to the airport. It was a cold evening, and he had a grey scarf around his neck. And we'd been talking all the way out to the airport on how we could improve things, and what the campaign, how it progressed in the Eighth District, and what we could do. He was--it always impressed me--he was so conversant with the personalities and with the problems in the district. I was the Eighth District chairman and this man could come in--and he either had beautiful communications or he had a retentive memory or something--and could know the problems and discuss them with me and actually know more about what should be done than I had probably planned myself.

And as he was leaving, he asked if I wanted to see his airplane. I said yes, I was interested in airplanes. I fly myself. So I went in and looked around. He was talking to Mr. Reardon down on the ramp, yet. I looked at the plane and he showed me around. I came down and I left. We said our good-byes. And he went in the plane. Then Reardon and I were talking and he reappeared. And the wind was blowing and the scarf was flying and he said, "Now remember, whatever happens in the Eighth District, I'm looking forward to you fellows right here. The responsibility's on your shoulders, and I have to have this district." And it seemed to me that after we'd hashed everything over as much as we possibly could, and arrived at--everyone had agreed that we were doing what we could do, and he still had to come back and impress upon everyone there just how important this was. He refused to give up.

MORRISSEY: Did the Kennedy women come into your district?

MONFILLS: No, I don't think they did. I remember we had them scheduled at onetime, and something happened. Nobody went in there. His mother was supposed to come and didn't make it because something happened. I've forgotten what it was. I remember Bob was there, and Ted was up in the northern part of the district with me.

Bobby Kennedy, I'll tell you that story if you're interested. We have a local personality in town whose uncle was then the treasurer of the local teamsters organization. His name was Emmet Terry, not that that's important but he was quite a strong political figure in town mainly because of the contributions he would make wherever he thought was in his best interest. And his relative was kind of a stringer for the downstate papers, also a news writer for the local paper. He had an *entré* into the management of the station, so when politicians came into town, he would arrange to have them on the radio station. And I would use him--he was a high school classmate of mine--to get these politicians on the station. And he had kind of strong opinions himself; he was an interesting fellow.

So one day he said, when Bob Kennedy was coming to town--one of my functions as Eighth District chairman, when a politician comes, they'd contact me, and ask me to line up radio and T.V. spots for them--so when Bob Kennedy was coming into town, I called up my contacts there and this man was one of them. And I said to him that I was bringing Bob Kennedy over for a radio tape in behalf of his brother's candidacy, and he said that he would arrange for it. But he said, "I want to advise you now that I would appreciate it if he would not say anything about the Teamsters, about Mr. [James R.] Hoffa, because you know my connection there." And I said, "Well, I'll talk with him."

So when I met Bob Kennedy I told him, "Now look, I'll tell you this right now. You can talk about anything you want to talk about on this radio station, but this fellow may say something to you about the Teamsters. So if you can talk about something else, don't talk about that." Well, he didn't say anything. So we went over there and I introduced him to my friend, and this friend thought it was important that he reiterate the same message to Bob Kennedy personally. So he said, "Now look," he said, "I want to give you a little friendly political advice, if you're going to talk in this town, don't say anything about the Teamsters." And Bob said, "Look, I'll talk about the Teamsters and Mr. Hoffa here or anyplace else. If you don't want me to talk about him, let me know, and we won't use your station." He turned around and started to walk out. Well, the guy called him back and said, "No, no, I didn't mean it that way. You can talk about him." So Bob talked and for five minutes all he talked about was the Teamsters and Jim Hoffa.

My friend followed us down the street afterward, and literally at our coattails, asking Mr. Kennedy if he could have a copy of his book, The Enemy Within. And Bob told me, he said, "Now mark that down because I want to make certain he gets a copy of the book." So I marked his name down and he did get a copy of the book. And to this day, it's funny, whenever I see this fellow, invariably the conversation will turn around to that fact and how he has a copy of the book and how that whole experience took place.

MORRISSEY: I recall that in that Wisconsin primary, John Kennedy mentioned Jimmy Hoffa occasionally in some of his speeches. Did this make any difference in your district--in the votes he got?

MONFILS: Oh, I remember, my next door neighbor is a Teamster. He works for the Olson Transportation Company up there. As a matter of fact, Jimmy Hoffa came into the district and scheduled a meeting in a downtown theater, rented the theater, and filled the theater. And I've forgotten how many people were there, but it was more than the average political emotion that was aroused. Now whether it affected votes, whether they changed them, I don't know. But the Teamsters impressed me as being awfully loyal to the man for the charges that were made, and they were willing to fight, at least. This downtown theater was filled. And I remember it was at some point in the campaign--I don't know exactly when it took place--but it was a direct effort to show power where they knew he would be strong.

MORRISSEY: Yet I gather in your area that this did not necessarily translate itself into votes against Kennedy?

MONFILS: That I don't know, but I don't think it helped any. My next door neighbor, as I said, worked for Olson Transportation, and I remember sounding them out directly--now, that's a good question. I think I will ask him how he voted in that. He'd probably tell me now. He's nominally a Democrat. But I know he went to the theater meeting, and I wouldn't have gone if I had been a Teamster and had seen and heard about it, seen and heard. . . . But he went there, and I know that enough of them went to fill the hall.



MORRISSEY: Some of the liberals in Wisconsin were critical of John Kennedy because he had never spoken publicly and critically of Senator [Joseph R.] McCarthy's tactics. And, of course, Bob Kennedy had worked on that committee at one time, and the Kennedy family in some ways was close to Senator McCarthy. Did this ever shape up as an issue in your part of the state?

MONFILS: I heard it, and the only serious reservation I ever had about him was that particular angle of the thing, personally. I don't think that the--my part of the state doesn't have that many committed intellectual liberals where if they understood the issue it would be important, nor did the papers make it an issue. So I don't think it was ever--I don't think it was worth much in northern Wisconsin, if it was an issue. No, I can't say it amounted to much.

MORRISSEY: Did you see much of Humphrey in your district?

MONFILS: I know he was there, but when, how or why I don't know. I can't recall.

MORRISSEY: Did most of the established Democratic organization support Humphrey?

MONFILS: In Brown County in the Eighth District since 1950 I can give you a list of fifty names who have been the outs and have been the ins, and the same people are always aligned as the outs, no matter what the issue is. And this Humphrey-Kennedy fight was no exception. It seemed that labor took a little, at least a more standoffish position to Senator Kennedy or President Kennedy than they ordinarily would have. But they came around. But the malcontents, or the disgruntled group, as I chose to call them, who weren't. . . . You see, Governor Reynolds was from Green Bay, and whatever organization there was centered around him. He was an early Kennedy supporter and the people who didn't feel they were turning in the same orbit as he was, they kind of hung on to the--they were Humphrey's supporters. It was a fringe labor-disgruntled group that was the Humphrey supporters.

MORRISSEY: I understand that you were involved in the fight within the delegation elected to go to Los Angeles on how many votes would be based on each congressional district. Could you tell me about that?

MONFILS: I think my memory's correct. Kennedy received enough votes. He received the majority of the votes in Wisconsin, and also enough votes to carry six out of ten congressional districts. I played a major role in the floor fight, or in the fight of the administrative committee meeting at the Knickerbocker Hotel. As a matter of fact, I found the notes before I came on today. That was on the 30th of January, 1960.

Prior to the meeting, Pat Lucey came to me and said that there was going to be a fight as to the interpretation of the way the votes would be related, either state-wise or districtwise. He fed me what he thought our line should be, and I parroted what he had told me. In all candor, I didn't have a clear understanding then what the fight was about, and I am less clear now. But I knew that it was to Kennedy's disadvantage if what the Humphrey people were pushing would go through, mainly because I think they wanted to cut the total vote, as far as the delegates-at-large, in half, and to redistribute those districtwise, and have a half a vote to give the . . . . In other words, he'd pick up two extra votes because of the four congressional districts that he'd carried. But again, Pat, as I say, fed me the speech he wanted to make, and I made the speech. But at that time, I had little or no appreciation of what I was arguing.

MORRISSEY: Are those notes you made afterwards?

MONFILS: No, those are the notes of the committee meeting.

MORRISSEY: What I was going to suggest, if you let me, is I'll make a Xerox copy of this so we can incorporate it into the transcript, and then I can return this.

MONFILS: You mean you don't have one?

MORRISSEY: I haven't seen one before. I may have one in the papers in the Archives, but let me assume that I don't.

MONFILS: If I thought that you'd be interested, I had many more things. I just went through my file hastily and pulled that out.

MORRISSEY: Other things such as correspondence?

MONFILS: Yes, I have three or four letters from the Senator.

MORRISSEY: If you'll let me borrow them I'll do the same thing, make copies for us and return the originals to you.

MONFILS: Very good.

MORRISSEY: Okay, I'll make a note of that. After the West Virginia primary and Humphrey bowed out as a serious presidential candidate, was there an effort here in Wisconsin to get a lot of these Humphrey delegates to switch and vote for Kennedy?

MONFELS: Oh, there was. Yes, there was. And the two that I can think of--and I just saw the man over in the Park Hotel, Frank Nicolay--and Gaylord Nelson. I never saw two men have more pressure applied to them and remain more adamant. And I don't think that I'm an unreasonable person. I don't think I'm being unfair to either one of them in that. I know Frank is as good a friend as I've got. But to this day I can't understand why--I can understand why Gaylord Nelson wouldn't switch, but I cannot understand why Frank Nicolay remained as true as he did and as strong as he did, remained for Humphrey right to the bitter end. Neither one of them would switch.

And this was carried through right to the Convention itself. I remember meeting in corridors and rooms and after many bottles of beer and many drinks, when everyone was being more persuasive than usual and using more energy than they ordinarily would to convince someone that they should switch, and under all conditions they both hung tough all the way. Frank I knew well enough to try to convince, and I did try. I tried seriously on at least two occasions I can think of, with no success at all. Governor Nelson I didn't know that well. I didn't feel it was my position to try to convince him. I saw others to it who actually had less of a chance on this than I think I had, but under the influence of whatever they were drinking, they did try it. But he just refused to be switched.

MORRISSEY: What was holding them to Humphrey?

MONFILS: I don't know, and I think that as politicians, contrary to a lot of discussion, they have a feeling of loyalty and I think once they had committed themselves they thought it was important then to stay there. I don't know. That's the only explanation I can think of. I shouldn't say the Governor, Gaylord Nelson, wouldn't switch because actually he, for public appearances, he remained neutral. But Frank, of course, was supporting Senator Humphrey all along and he refused to come out for Senator Kennedy.

MORRISSEY: Tell me about the reception of the news in the Wisconsin delegation of the news that Lyndon Johnson as the vice presidential choice.

MONFILS: There was anything but enthusiasm. The man that saved it was Senator [William] Proxmire, in my opinion. We met under a grandstand or something, under this--I remember there were concrete pillars and beams around, and one man from Racine, an automobile worker there--I used to know his name; I've forgotten--he refused to accept this. He would not support him at all. And that, frankly, was my initial reaction. I had no--after all the unkind things I heard him say about the President. . . . And I saw on television their joint meeting between the Massachusetts and Texas delegation. I was so impressed with the way President Kennedy handled himself and so disillusioned with the way Johnson handled himself that I was appalled to think that they would now do this. Then I thought, "Well, you don't know what politics is and this is how these things work. Maybe you should at least listen to what Senator Proxmire has to say." So he called this meeting and he would have it no other way, that the delegation had to go for Lyndon Johnson. And then Lucey, of course, and Governor Reynolds were there, and they said that's what the word was and that's how it had to be.

It was the first National Convention I had ever attended. Other than going on the Convention floor and listening to the discussion and watching the mechanics and assisting some of the Kennedy supporters in passing out material, I had no function at all. You had the feeling you were caught in this rush and you couldn't stop it anyhow, so one person was pretty ineffective. And when your leaders say, "You do this," you do that. If I wanted to protest, I wouldn't have known how to or what to do. So when Lyndon Johnson was, when they said he was the man, you had no alternative but to go along with it. And it seemed to me that no damage could be done. After all, the President was going to be there and the Vice President was not important. It's necessary for the ticket, if you're going to win--they gave that argument. So everyone accepted it, but it wasn't with enthusiasm, I'm sorry to say now. [Laughter]

MORRISSEY: Did the Kennedy and Humphrey people get back together and coordinate their efforts in the general election?

MONFILS: Oh, everyone pretends that and everyone says that, but I think that you could start a fight in twenty minutes at about 11:30 at night if you wanted to, down in this bar with any one of them if you wanted to, if any one forgot themselves. No, the scars are there. They were there, and they're still there. The best example I can think of, probably not the best friend, but at least a good friend of mine before this thing started was the same Frank Nicolay. I just met him over in the hotel a half an hour ago now, and it hasn't been the same between us. I know that and he knows it. But, outwardly, we speak and we correspond and we write and we exchange Christmas cards and all that stuff. And we're friends. But it was an emotional experience for me, and I can't believe it wasn't for him. I think it's something that I'll never get over, and I don't think he ever will.

MORRISSEY: Is there anything that I've omitted in my questions?

MONFILS: Nothing that I can think of, no.

MORRISSEY: I have a hunch when you see the transcript there might be a few places where you could put some more flesh on the bones. We are interested in that fight on the delegates. . . .

MONFILS: I was looking for the Journal article. I used to have the Journal article which I'd be happy to have in the record because it made me look so good. [Laughter] Ira Kapenstein was the reporter then. Ira was at the meeting and he did a beautiful job of writing. As I say, I went to the meeting and I didn't know what the issue was about actually, two and a half votes or five votes. Lucey said, "This is important. Now, do this." And he filled me in on what he thought the argument should be, and I didn't understand him. As I say, it's still not clear in my mind, so I know I made a poor presentation. But Kapenstein, I think, was with us, and when he wrote me up, I sounded like a genius. And if I had that article--and I'll look for it--maybe I can enter that, too. I know I've got it someplace.

MORRISSEY: Good, very good. Well, why don't we stop here. Thank you very much.

MONFILS: You're welcome.

OWEN F. MONFILS  
ATTORNEY AT LAW

11/10/11  
14  
TELEPHONE:  
435-5264  
435-5265

CITY CENTER BUILDING — SUITE 210A  
P.O. BOX 1251 • 308 MAIN STREET  
GREEN BAY, WISCONSIN

January 21, 1966

Mr. Charles T. Morrissey  
Chief, John F. Kennedy Library  
Oral History Project  
National Archives and Records Service  
Washington, D. C. 20408

Dear Charlie:


I have your letter of January 18th. Thank you for returning the material. I enjoyed meeting and talking to you.

I am enclosing xerox copies of the letters I talked about and some other related material. If you wish, you may make xerox copies of it and return it to me and if that is inconvenient, you may keep the originals.

The next time you see Senators Nelson and Proxmire, tell them you think that Brady looks like an ideal postmaster.

Looking forward to seeing you soon in Green Bay.

Best personal regards,

  
Owen F. Monfils

Enclosures

OM/cb

P. S. I am wondering if you have an opinion as to whether or not the signatures on my letters are originals or is the work that of a staff member.



File: Monfils  
20

January 25, 1966

Mr. Owen F. Monfils  
Suite 210A  
City Center Building  
308 Main Street  
Green Bay, Wisconsin 54302

Dear Owen:

I have made copies of the items you enclosed in your letter of January 21, 1966, and I am returning them herewith. Thanks for your prompt cooperation in this matter.

The next time I see Nelson or Proxmire I'll tell them that Brady is an ideal postmaster.

After thorough research and consultation with J. Edgar Hoover, not to mention a survey of the stars and planets, I have concluded that the person signing your letters is Owen F. Monfils.

Sincerely yours,

Charles T. Morrissey  
Chief, John F. Kennedy Library  
Oral History Project

JOHN F. KENNEDY  
MASSACHUSETTS

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, D.C.

21  
COMMITTEES:  
FOREIGN RELATIONS  
LABOR AND PUBLIC WELFARE  
JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE

December 28, 1959

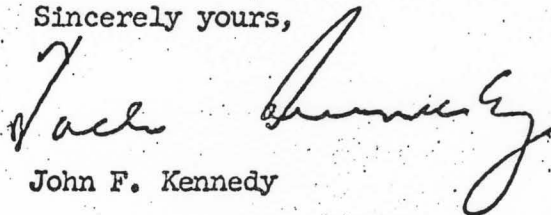
Mr. Owen F. Monfils  
308 Main Street  
Green Bay, Wisconsin

Dear Owen:

Because of your past interest and friendship,  
I am sending the attached statement to you for your  
information and to solicit any thoughts you might have  
concerning it. I would appreciate your comments and  
suggestions and would be very grateful for your support.

With kindest regards, I am

Sincerely yours,



John F. Kennedy

JFK:cjr

JOHN F. KENNEDY  
MASSACHUSETTS

22  
COMMITTEES:  
FOREIGN RELATIONS  
LABOR AND PUBLIC WELFARE  
JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE

## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, D.C.

May 3, 1959

Mr. Owen F. Monfils  
308 Main Street  
Green Bay, Wisconsin

Dear Mr. Monfils:

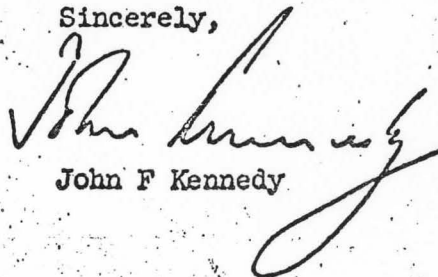
The action of the Senate -- in the Democratic 86th Congress -- in passing by a vote of 90 to 1 the Kennedy-Ervin Labor-Management Reform Bill ought to make final one fact: That the Republicans will never again be able to denounce our Party as the protector of labor bosses and racketeers.

Because of your prominence in the affairs of the Democratic Party, I am taking the liberty of enclosing my final remarks on the Senate's action, in the hope that they might be useful to you in explaining the bill, in refuting Republican attacks on this familiar theme of "the Democrats and Labor", and in maintaining public enthusiasm for final action on the bill.

You might be particularly interested in noting the comparison between this strong but fair Democratic measure -- supported by the AFL-CIO -- and the so-called Rockefeller Bill, which some papers praised while criticizing our measure. Your comments will be both welcome and helpful.

With every good wish, I am

Sincerely,



John F. Kennedy

JFK:ps  
Enc

JOHN F. KENNEDY  
MASSACHUSETTS

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, D.C.

23  
COMMITTEES:  
FOREIGN RELATIONS  
LABOR AND PUBLIC WELFARE  
JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE

January 9, 1960

Mr. Owen Monfils  
308 Main Street  
Green Bay, Wisconsin

Dear Mr. Monfils:

I very much enjoyed participating in your State Convention in Milwaukee. I was impressed with the vitality and vigor of the Democratic organization and am confident that you can increase and solidify the great gains you have already made.

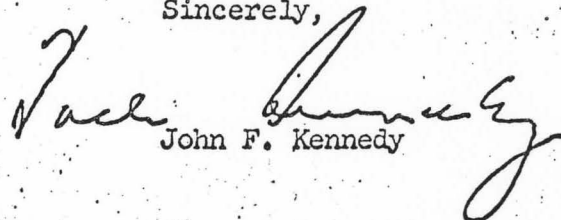
The challenges of the sixties demand new ideas, new action and new faces. After my visit, I am convinced that the people of Wisconsin will turn to you for these qualities and that 1960 will be the year when the Democrats will receive a vote of confidence from the people.

However, since we are faced with a whole new set of problems, we cannot invoke the answers of the past but must offer the voters constructive new solutions. The Democratic Party must sharpen its image and its issues. We must prepare ourselves for the responsibilities of victory.

Because of the importance of the task which lies ahead, I would appreciate hearing from you with any ideas you may have about the ways in which we can strengthen and improve our Party.

With every good wish, I am

Sincerely,

  
John F. Kennedy

JFK:jm

P. S. Please excuse the delay.

JOHN F. KENNEDY  
MASSACHUSETTS

24  
COMMITTEES:  
FOREIGN RELATIONS  
LABOR AND PUBLIC WELFARE  
JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

January 22, 1960

Mr. Owen F. Monfils  
Attorney at Law  
City Center Building  
Green Bay, Wisconsin

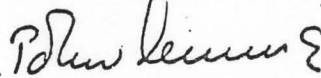
Dear Owen:

Many thanks for your letter of recent date concerning an invitation for me to speak at a meeting of the student body of St. Norbert's College sometime during March.

I do appreciate your writing me and I would like very much to speak to this group. Unfortunately, however, I have no plans at the present time for a visit to the state which would allow acceptance of your very kind invitation. I will keep it in mind, however, and perhaps at some later date it will be possible for me to fit in a visit to St. Norbert's College in my schedule.

Again thanking you and with kind personal regards,  
I am

Sincerely yours,



John F. Kennedy

JFK:el

NEW HEADQUARTERS (New to us, anyway)

Eau Claire	519 S. Barstow	Temple 4-1040
Lake Mills	Mulberry Street	
Marinette	1705 Stephenson Street	RE 5-3414 or RE 5-0249
Oconomowoc	Towne Hotel	
Watertown		
Kastenmeier HQ	Washington Hotel	1150
Kennedy HQ	418 E. Main Street	843
Wausau	111 Grand Avenue	
Whitewater	Center Street	

TV GUIDE

The famous thirty-minute television program with Senator Kennedy answering questions from ministers in Houston has been scheduled in Wisconsin as follows:

Monday, October 10	8:00 P.M. (check time)	WEAL	EAU CLAIRE
Monday, October 10	6:30 P.M. (check time)	WBAY	GREEN BAY
Tuesday, October 11	7:00 P.M. (check time)	WISC	MADISON
Tuesday, October 11	6:30 P.M. (check time)	WISN	MILWAUKEE
Tuesday, October 11	8:00 P.M. (check time)	WSAU	WAUSAU
Wednesday, October 12	7:00 P.M. (check time)	WKBT	LA CROSSE

The next debate will be a joint appearance of Senator Kennedy and Vice-President Nixon. Senator Kennedy will be in New York City and Vice President Nixon will be on the West Coast. They will answer questions of a news panel to be selected. THE DATE: Thursday, October 13, 7:30 P.M. EDT (check time)

See Senator Kennedy MEET THE PRESS on NBC, October 16 (Sunday) 6:00 P.M. EDT (TV) 7:00 P.M. (radio)

Be sure to check newspapers or stations for local times.

DOLLAR\$ FOR DEMOCRAT\$

State Finance Director Warren Sawall has asked county chairmen to conclude the DOLLAR\$ Drive as quickly as possible, gather in receipts, divide them, and forward the state and national shares to state headquarters. This is not only because the money is needed at all levels for the campaign, but also because we must clear the way for other activities in the few remaining weeks. Let's do all we can to wind this up so that we can get busy on the registration and get-out-the-vote drive.

KENNEDY-NELSON FARM RALLY

On October 16 the Wisconsin Farmers for Kennedy-Nelson will hold a state-wide farm rally. Headlining the rally will be BOB LEWIS, former assistant to Senator Proxmire and Governor Nelson, now mentioned as a possible Secretary of Agriculture, GOVERNOR G. MENNEN WILLIAMS, of Michigan, SENATOR WILLIAM PROXMIRE, and CONGRESSMAN LESTER JOHNSON. The Rally will be at 1:00 P.M., October 16 at the American Legion Hall in EAU CLAIRE. You will receive a "Get-out-the-farm-vote" kit, complete with valuable literature that must be distributed right away. This is a state-wide rally, and every county with even one farm should be represented.

HIT THE JACKPOT--We need money for bumper stickers, pins, literature, and posters for the National Ticket. A statewide appeal has just gone out. Urge your Democratic friends to respond generously; send in what you can spare. What helps the national ticket helps candidates at all levels. Hit the Jackpot now with your contribution to Jack Kennedy.

NELSON SCHEDULE

Oct. 10 Milwaukee, Racine  
 Oct. 12 Door County  
 Oct. 13 Appleton  
 Oct. 14 Sheboygan Falls  
 Oct. 15 Madison, Racine  
 Oct. 16 Madison  
 Oct. 17 Fond du Lac, Stevens Point

REYNOLDS SCHEDULE

Oct. 10 Sheboygan, Manitowoc  
 Oct. 11 Neenah, Oshkosh, Berlin, Ripon  
 Lodi  
 Oct. 12 Beaver Dam, Watertown, Milwaukee  
 Racine  
 Oct. 13 Racine, Milwaukee  
 Oct. 14 Milwaukee, Madison  
 Oct. 16 Madison  
 Oct. 17 Wisconsin Rapids, Stevens Point,  
 Wausau

NASH SCHEDULE

Oct. 13 Milwaukee    Oct. 15 Green Bay    Oct. 14, Milwaukee    Oct. 16, Kenosha

KENNEDY TOUR

Senator John F. Kennedy was a smash hit on his Wisconsin tour Sunday, October 23. In a single day, he was exposed to almost as many Wisconsin voters as saw him in the 29 days he spent in Wisconsin during the primary. Wire service estimates indicate that 65,000 Milwaukeeans alone saw Kennedy, either at the airport, en route from the airport, at the hotel reception, and at the Arena Rally.

His 7-station state-wide television network broadcast, with prime Sunday night time at 9 PM was bound to command a tremendous audience. This tour was more than a shot in the arm to our chances of delivering Wisconsin's 12 electoral votes to Jack Kennedy; it was a boost to Wisconsin Democratic candidates at all levels.

After such a triumphant sweep, there is a tendency to let down. We cannot permit ourselves this luxury. The two remaining weeks of this campaign can be decisive for a number of congressional districts, for control of the State Senate, in determining our margin of strength in the Assembly, and the size of the mandate Gaylord Nelson and the state ticket will enjoy in their re-election victory

REGISTRATION

Registration is all but over, whether the results of our strenuous effort are outstanding or only moderately successful remains to be seen. Whatever the results on Wednesday, October 26, at 5:00 P.M., this chapter of the campaign is closed. Registration is still possible, but it is much more difficult. The next big effort is to get out the vote. Everyone who receives this bulletin will receive a detailed memorandum on this subject within the next few days, especially drafted to cover the area of your effectiveness. The fate of local, state, and national candidates is in your hands. We hope that the suggestions presented will be carried out as thoroughly as possible.

MATERIALS

With today's shipment of paper posters to all headquarters, we have given out all the materials we had in stock. We still expect to receive more leaflets, and will forward them to all headquarters as soon as they arrive. Why not set up poster crews for the coming week, as the shipment of posters we are sending is substantial and will require time and effort to distribute properly.

ADDITIONAL HEADQUARTERS

Beaver Dam	110 Park Avenue	Turner 5-5539
Eau Claire	519 S. Barstow	Temple 4-1040
Lake Mills	602 Mulberry	
Laona	James Barry	
Marinette	1705 Stephenson	RE 5-3414 or RE 5-9249
Prairie du Chien	(Marguerite Rogers, 107 S. Beaumont Rd.)	
Wausau	111 Grand Avenue	

TV GUIDE

Saturday, October 29, 7:00 - 7:30 (check newspaper or local station for time)

ABC--Senator Kennedy

Sunday, October 30, 6:00 - 6:30 P.M. (check for local time)-----Television  
8:30 - 9:00 P.M. " " Radio

CBS--FACE THE NATION--Senator Kennedy

Monday, October 31, 8:30 - 9:00 P.M. (check for local time)

NBC -- Senator Kennedy

COMING EVENTS

- Wednesday, October 26--Kenosha Candidates Card Party
- Friday, October 28--Milo Singler Farm Rally (John Reynolds)
- Saturday, October 29--Third District Dinner at Dodgeville
- Monday, October 31--Ken Traeger Dinner, Antigo

And also SATURDAY, October 29, MRS. ELEANOR ROOSEVELT will be in Milwaukee for a noon luncheon at the Kaiser-Knickerböcker Hotel. This will be a sellout, so reserve now with Mrs. John Dulka, in Milwaukee.

DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF WISCONSIN

MINUTES

Administrative Committee Meeting, Saturday, January 30, 1960, Kaiser-Knickerbocker Hotel, Milwaukee.

The meeting was called to order by the chairman, Patrick J. Lucey. The roll was called and the following members were present:

- |                   |              |                     |
|-------------------|--------------|---------------------|
| Patrick Lucey     | Ted Kurtz    | Dan Hoan            |
| Marguerite Benson | Rose Grobe   | Harvey Kitzman      |
| David Rabinovitz  | Nic Spallas  | Janet Lee           |
| Herman Jessen     | Byron Adams  | Robert Moses        |
| Vel Phillips      | Owen Monfils | Frank Nikolay       |
| Howard Meister    | Peter Dugal  | Sam Rizzo           |
| Terry Flaherty    | Carl Lauri   | Casimir Kendziorski |
| William Troestler | Edna Bowen   | Glenn Henry         |
| Harold Ristow     | Al DiPiazza  | Dan Fortuna         |
|                   |              | Dr. John Phelan     |

The Chairman announced that he did not know if Henry or Kendziorski should vote as legislative representative. He suggested a motion to settle the matter until a constitutional amendment could be adopted to lay down a permanent policy. Philleo Nash asked and received unanimous consent to give the history of the arrangement. He said that the joint caucus had originally decided to choose a representative both of the Assembly and Senate, and had intended each to serve for one legislative year rather than one calendar year. Harvey Kitzman moved that the Senate representative serve for the 12 months following the election of a new administrative committee. Rose Grobe seconded, and the motion carried.

Harvey Kitzman moved that the minutes of the previous meeting be adopted. Carl Lauri seconded, and the motion carried.

Rose Grobe moved that the Secretary be instructed to write a letter thanking the management of the Kaiser-Knickerbocker for their good service on the luncheon arrangements. Byron Adams seconded, and the motion carried.

Peter Dugal moved that the budget be considered before the question of delegate allotment. Nic Spallas seconded. Rose Grobe spoke against the motion. The motion and second were withdrawn.

Herman Jessen reported that the National Committee had sponsored a dinner in Washington on January 23. He said that there had been a move to change representation on the National Committee from 2 votes for each state to the kind of proportional representation that is used at the National Convention. Enough opposition was raised so that the motion was withdrawn, but it would be raised again at the Convention, Jessen said.

Vel Phillips said that Al DiPiazza should be commended for his work in promoting the National Committee Dinner, and that Wisconsin had been well represented at the Dinner.

Marguerite Benson reported that she has been asked to visit several counties to start women's groups. She asked that district chairmen send at least 2 women from their district to the Women's Conference in Washington on May 8, 9, and 10. The trip can be made for less than \$100.

Treasurer David Rabinovitz reported a bank balance of \$1,199.63 and unpaid bills of \$10,950.16. He felt that the situation was serious but not hopeless, as pledge appeal letters were soon to be mailed.

The Chairman reported that he had conferred with the National Committee quota appeals board in Washington, and that Wisconsin's unpaid quota had been wiped out. The 1960 quota would be included in the 1960 Party budget, he said. He reported that 11 precinct schools had already been held and that five were scheduled. He also announced a county chairmen's conference to be held February 13 and 14 at Wisconsin Rapids. He invited all members of the Administrative Committee, and urged district chairmen to make sure that counties were represented. In response to a question, he said that unit chairmen had not been invited to this conference, as their problems were somewhat different from those of county chairmen.

David Rabinovitz read the attached report of his committee on primary election laws. He said that his committee felt that the National Committee had given no mandate and would therefore make no recommendation. He moved that the report be adopted. Herman Jessen seconded. Sam Rizzo said that the report assumed that 10 votes at large was a status quo situation, whereas it had not been the situation in 1956 or in 1952. Harvey Kitzman moved that the report be received and filed. Harold Ristow seconded and the motion carried.



The Chairman read the official call to the Convention, and a wire from National Chairman Paul Butler, to the effect that the vote of the Administrative Committee would be accepted by the National Committee as final. Sam Rizzo moved that delegates be allocated as follows:  $2\frac{1}{2}$  votes per congressional district and 5 votes at large, with all votes based on  $\frac{1}{2}$  vote per delegate. Carl Lauri seconded. Rizzo emphasized his point that there is no status quo, and that the extra  $\frac{1}{2}$  votes should go to the districts. David Rabinovitz contended that 2 votes per district is a status quo situation, as the allotment has never been otherwise.

Owen Monfils moved to amend the motion to state: delegate allotment to remain at 2 votes per district with 10 votes at large. Rizzo raised a point of order; namely that the amendment destroys the original motion. The amendment was withdrawn.

Chairman Lucey asked that three points be considered: 1. Nothing in Wisconsin law provides for votes for national committee members, 2. Should  $\frac{1}{2}$  votes be allowed? 3. How should votes be allocated?

Harvey Kitzman moved that  $\frac{1}{2}$  votes be used and the maximum number of delegates sent to the Convention. Marguerite Benson seconded, and the motion carried. Herman Jessen moved affirmation of the National Committeeman and Committeewoman as automatic delegates, not on the ballot. Bill Troestler seconded, and the motion carried.

Sam Rizzo moved that delegate votes be allocated on the basis of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  votes per district and 5 votes at large. Bill Troestler seconded.

Herman Jessen said that the National Committee wanted all the states to adopt the  $2\frac{1}{2}$  votes per district allocation system, but they left it open because some states have different ways of choosing delegates.

Harold Ristow agreed that the system was intended by the National Committee, and added that the people in the districts were in favor of it.

Owen Monfils asked the Committee to "lay the cards on the table" concerning the issues involved. He said that the Minnesota National Committeeman had been instrumental in working for the motion on the floor. Harold Ristow objected, urging that the National Committee did want the proposal. The Chairman commented that they had never expressed that position.

Owen Monfils mentioned the position of the Governor in the matter and asked that more populous areas not be penalized. Harvey Kitzman said that he had supported the Governor and would again, but disagreed with him on this issue. Sam Rizzo asked that speakers refrain from suggesting an ulterior purpose in the motion. He expressed regret that the Governor had been brought into the debate. He felt that the Governor did not know the facts on the question, and that it should be argued on its merits, and with no mention of benefit for anyone.

Nic Spallas expressed the opinion that the motion under consideration was against the principle of majority rule.

Peter Dugal asked for the question. The Chairman asked permission to speak on the motion. He warned that a change might be misinterpreted, since both candidates had entered the primary with the understanding that previous arrangements would be in effect and it would appear unsportsmanlike to make a change now. He insisted that the Governor was not uninformed, and gave two arguments which could be advanced for electing all delegates at large: Wisconsin's primary will continue to be attractive to candidates, and there will be no more split delegations. He said he had not proposed a change to election of all delegates at large because he felt it would be unfair at this time. Under the proposed formula, he said it would be quite possible for the delegation to be evenly divided. He expressed the view that this primary would mean sudden death for the losing candidate, and that a change should not be adopted which would blur the outlines of victory for the winning candidate.

Harvey Kitzman moved that the vote be by secret ballot. Bill Troestler seconded. The motion carried. The motion carried, 14-12, and the Secretary was instructed to inform the National Committee of the decision.

Budget Committee chairman Owen Monfils presented the 1960 Housekeeping budget. He said that a campaign budget would be brought in on July 1, 1960. Carl Lauri moved that the budget be adopted. Al DiPiazza seconded, and the motion carried. The Chairman announced the appointment of the following persons to the Executive Committee: Patrick Lucey, Chairman, David Rabinovitz, Marguerite Benson, Herman Jessen, Vel Phillips, Robert Moses, and Harvey Kitzman. He also announced the following members of the New Wisconsin Democrat Editorial Board: Tom Miglautsch, chairman, Eunice Benson, Robert Moses, Richard Loftus, Gerald Bruno, Marian McBride, Frank Wallick, Edwin Bayley.

Harold Ristow read the following resolution and moved its adoption:

WHEREAS, Ezra Taft Benson has repeatedly claimed that Vice-President Nixon supports his agricultural program wholeheartedly, and  
WHEREAS, Benson's aides have accused Nixon of being behind Republican efforts to oust Benson for the sake of political expediency, and  
WHEREAS, Nixon has at various times taken shifting stands both for and against Benson's policies,  
THEREFORE, Be It Resolved, that the Administrative Committee of the Democratic Party of Wisconsin respectfully requests that Nixon tell the voters of America where he stands on the issue of Benson's ruinous farm policies.

Robert Moses seconded, and the resolution was adopted.

Carl Lauri reported that the Ann Arbor leadership conference had been very useful and felt that more members should have attended.

Marguerite Benson announced that the Midwest Conference would be March 25 in Detroit and asked that as many as possible attend.

David Rabinovitz moved that the next meeting be in Milwaukee. Sam Rizzo moved that the motion be amended to read Saturday, March 5, in Milwaukee. The motion carried, with amendment. The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,  
Eunice Gibson, Secretary

This committee was instructed by motion at the meeting of the Administrative Committee on October 10, 1959, to investigate the Stalbaum Bill and meet with the proper parties concerned and further to investigate any legal problems involved in the new quota system developed by the National Party.

Your committee has met and makes the following recommendations:

1. As to the Stalbaum Bill

The Stalbaum Bill provides that the delegation of a presidential candidate, at the National Convention, can release itself after the first ballot by a vote of two-thirds of the delegation.

Your committee had previously recommended this bill in its original report when they made a study of the entire problem. Your chairman has consulted with members of the Senate and Assembly a number of times, with Claude Jasper, Chairman of the Republican Party, and Governor Nelson and others and the bill has now been signed into law by Governor Nelson. Your chairman spoke to the Governor Thursday about the implications of the bill.

In the event Senator Humphrey gets part of the delegation by districts or otherwise and Senator Kennedy gets part of the delegates, how will the two-thirds vote be applied? Must it be of the entire delegation of Wisconsin, or can it be two-thirds of each candidate's delegates?

The Governor and others believe that unless the delegates could agree to vote as a state unit, which probably is impossible, the vote would have to be taken of each respective delegation.

2. The Additional Half Vote to the National Committeeman and Half Vote to the National Committeewoman.

Your committee agrees with the recommendation of the Democratic National Committee that there be an automatic half vote allowed to the National Committeeman and National Committeewoman.

3. Apportionment of Votes in 1960 National Convention

After consultation with authorities on the subject, it is the opinion that the State Administrative Committee has the authority to act on this problem. There are three alternatives to this problem:

a. The committee can take action to provide that the "winner take all", meaning that the candidate who gets the largest vote on a state wide basis gets all the delegates at large and all the district delegates.

b. To allow the plan to remain as is, that is, ten delegates at large, two for each district and one-half vote to the National Committeeman and half vote to the National Committeewoman.

c. To change the plan by decreasing the delegates at large and accordingly increasing the votes of the district delegates.

The Democratic National Committee by Paul Butler, in a memorandum to all National Committee members and State Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen stated as follows:

"The National Committee has not prescribed how the votes or delegates shall be designated, whether "at-large" or "district" votes. Your State Committee or State Convention or any other person or committee prescribed by your state laws or Party rules may determine whether all your votes and delegates are to be at-large (that is, on a state-wide basis) or whether the votes and delegates based upon the United States Senate seats shall be at-large and the votes and delegates based upon the United States House of Representatives seats shall be district."

It is the opinion of your committee that there is no directive or mandate to reduce the ten delegates at large and thereby increase the district delegates. To the contrary the Democratic National Committee points out that all the delegates are to be delegates at large or by district.

- 2 -

This committee has consulted with various persons to obtain their view-points on this subject. Governor Gaylord Nelson in a Press Conference on Thursday, stated that it was his opinion that the matter remain in the status quo and no change be made for the following reasons:

a. That this plan is traditional in Wisconsin, for the past elections and has functioned fairly and properly.

b. That both Humphrey and Kennedy entered the primaries with full knowledge of the existing plan.

Your committee makes the observation that when both Humphrey and Kennedy entered the state, plan B with the exception of the half vote for the National Committeeman and the Committeewoman were in effect.

This committee is aware of the fact that on the Administrative Committee are advocates of Humphrey and Kennedy and that many on the committee have strong feelings about this matter. We therefore believe that it would be meaningless to make a recommendation on this controversial subject. We therefore have attempted to analyse the situation and state the facts without making any recommendations. It is for the Administrative Committee to make a decision in this matter.

Respectfully submitted,

Preferential Primary Committee

By David Rabinovitz, Chairman

James Doyle

Vel Phillips