In 1864 when the days of both slavery and the Confederacy appeared numbered, northern statesmen began to consider the postwar settlement. Determining what policy should be applied to the white southerners, and whether Congress or the President should apply that policy were in themselves hard enough questions. But a more formidable problem was presented by the Negro, whose role in society would have to be redefined in the face of southern opposition, northern prejudice, and abolitionist idealism. Especially perplexing was the problem of political rights. Could and should Negroes vote? The provision of a political identity for four million slaves was a complex and controversial task, and the same problem faced northern states, for only New Englanders, except in Connecticut, allowed Negroes to vote without special discrimination.

Debate on the most important issue, Negro suffrage, began in earnest in 1864 and continued until 1870. Though emphasis shifted at times in the course of the debate, whether and how best to secure this suffrage remained the central concern throughout. Many opposed Negro suffrage in any form; others favored it. Some supporters argued that suffrage was a natural right, while others contended that it was only a political privilege. Some advocated maintained that suffrage should be impartial and qualified; others felt that universal and unrestricted suffrage was the solution. Some reformers emphasized Negro suffrage; others

1 See the fine study of abolitionist advocacy of Negro suffrage in James M. McPherson, The Struggle for Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1964), p. 327. Reconstruction terms characterizing the sort of suffrage desired were used loosely, but “equal” or “impartial” suffrage usually could mean either unrestricted or qualified suffrage. Both terms, however, meant suffrage open equally to both races. “Universal” suffrage meant unrestricted manhood suffrage except
insisted that women’s suffrage must come either first or simul­
taneously. Some favored federal control of suffrage, while others
wanted to keep state regulation. Many reformers wanted a con­
gressional act; others preferred a federal constitutional amend­
ment. The conflict between doctrinaire principle and political
expediency ran deep and did much to divide Republicans through­
out the country and in Congress.

During the end of 1865 and through the following year contro­
versy centered on Negro suffrage as a vital element in a Recon­
struction settlement with the South. The breach between the
White House and Capitol Hill was widening enough to develop
into open conflict, as President Andrew Johnson ineptly prepared
to declare war on an infuriated Congress over the control and
terms of the peace treaty ending the Civil War. Fear spread
among Republicans that if a coalition ever formed and succeeded
between Johnson administration conservatives, northern Demo­
crats, and unrepentant southerners, the very war aims would be
jeopardized. Thus preservation of the Union under such a sub­
versive coalition would be in question if rebels ever returned to
to power in Washington, assumed the rebel debt, and mouthed
doctrines of state rights. Similarly, abolition of slavery and caste
would be undermined if southerners refused to grant their former
slaves political and civil rights, and reduced them to peonage
under the Black Codes. Thus, in a peace settlement, Negro
suffrage was central to Northern war aims, for Republican control
of Congress might be imperiled if the southern states were re­
admitted without being required to enfranchise Negroes; especially
since by counting all former Negro slaves for apportionment
roughly fifteen southern seats had been added to the House of
Representatives. Freedom for the freedman, moreover, was mean­
ingless unless he had the ballot to protect himself. Republicans
felt that security for both the Negro and the Republican party
must be achieved at a time when they identified Republican victory
with the national interest. Under such pressing conditions in a
deepening national crisis, the Republican Congress, through the
Joint Committee on Reconstruction, attempted to fashion a four­
ten amendment as their peace treaty, dictating congressional
terms of readmission of the southern states to the Union.

for age and residence requirements. The term “Negro” suffrage could mean either
universal or impartial suffrage.
After much discussion and dissension in a meeting on January 20, 1866, the Joint Committee on Reconstruction recommended a moderate proposal concerning Negro suffrage, drafted by Representative James G. Blaine of Maine. Instead of prohibiting racial discrimination, it provided for reducing the congressional delegation of any state that disfranchised any portion of its Negro population by subtracting the entire Negro population from the basis for representation. In short, the resolution looked forward to future, not present, Negro suffrage. The resolution, slightly modified, then passed the House of Representatives on January 31 as follows:

Representatives shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union according to their respective number of persons in each State, excluding Indians not taxed: Provided, that whenever the elective franchise shall be denied or abridged in any State on account of race or color shall be excluded from the basis of representation [sic].

The Senate gave the House resolution a frigid reception. Veteran antislavery men denounced it as a halfway measure because it failed explicitly to enfranchise the Negro and allowed exclusion of the Negroes at the polls to continue, under a possible penalty. Senator John B. Henderson of Missouri introduced a much stronger, more explicit amendment that “no State, in prescribing the qualifications requisite for electors therein, shall discriminate against any person on account of color or race.” Henderson’s version, which did in fact prohibit racial discrimination, was somewhat similar to the final form of the Fifteenth Amendment, but it was significantly voted down by a decisive margin. Also defeated decisively was the proposal of Massachusetts’ Senator Charles Sumner, which had an even broader scope in banishing racial caste by “no denial of rights, civil or political, on account of color or race.” It was clear by these defeats that a majority of Senate Republicans were not yet ready for national enfranchisement of Negroes, who, although championed by a Republican minority, were unable to muster a two-thirds majority to accept proportional reduction of representation with explicit

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3 Ibid., pp. 362, 702.
4 Ibid., p. 1287.
mention of race or color. The House resolution (Blaine proposal) was thus rejected as well, on March 9.\(^5\)

The congressional stalemate was broken when Representative Thaddeus Stevens of Pennsylvania moved, in the critical meeting of the Joint Committee on April 28, to strike out reformer Robert Dale Owen’s proposal, which provided for Negro suffrage after 1876 but allowed suffrage discrimination to continue until then under penalty, and instead helped to insert a new provision that simply excluded from the basis of representation eligible male citizens to whom the vote was denied. In short, both immediate and prospective Negro suffrage would be scrapped. Stevens, under mounting pressure from the New York, Illinois, and Indiana congressional delegations, had gone along to kill Negro enfranchisement.\(^6\) The adopted plan of proportional reduction in representation, because of racial prejudice, significantly, deleted “race or color” which had been included in the original House resolution. Indirection thus weakened the second section of the Fourteenth Amendment:

Representatives shall be apportioned among the several States according to their respective numbers, counting the whole number of persons in each State, excluding Indians not taxed. But when the right to vote at any election for the choice of electors for President and Vice-President of the United States, Representatives in Congress, the Executive and Judicial officers of a State, or the members of the Legislature thereof, is denied to any of the male inhabitants of such State, being twenty-one years of age, and citizens of the United States, or in any way abridged except for participation in rebellion, or other crime, the basis of representation therein shall be reduced in the proportion which the number of such male citizens shall bear to the whole number of male citizens twenty-one years of age in such State.\(^7\)

Accepted along strict party lines in both chambers on June 13, 1866, it was sent to the states for ratification, which was secured on July 28, 1868.

This compromise, the best amendment that congressmen could devise and still get an amendment passed and ratified, was a

\(^5\) Ibid., p. 1289.


\(^7\) U. S., *Constitution*, Amdt. 14, Sec. 2.
modest but incomplete step toward Negro suffrage, in allowing southerners to continue excluding Negroes from voting at the possible risk of taking the unpleasant penalty of roughly fifteen less seats in the House of Representatives and thus the equivalent votes in the electoral college. Most congressmen apparently did not intend to risk drowning by swimming against the treacherous current of racial prejudice and opposition to Negro suffrage. They therefore designed a measure that would avoid the Negro issue in the North, yet exert indirect pressure on the South to accept Negro suffrage. The proportional reduction of the representation feature "was intended to reduce southern representation until the Negro would be in a position to divide, if not dominate, the political power of the South."\(^8\) The practical need of the southern Negro vote, then, was recognized, but so too was the unpopularity of Negro suffrage everywhere. Such compromising sentiments were voiced by radical Republican Senator Jacob Howard of Michigan in presenting the report of the Joint Committee to the Senate on May 23, 1866:

The committee were of [the] opinion that the states are not yet prepared to sanction so fundamental a change as would be the concession of the right to suffrage to the colored race. We may as well state it plainly and fairly, so that there shall be no misunderstanding on the subject. It was our opinion that three-fourths of the states of this Union could not be induced to vote to grant the right of suffrage, even in any degree or under any restriction, to the colored race.\(^9\)

So a way was found in the second section indirectly to help Negroes in the South without antagonizing whites in the North. Voters in the North, in referendum after referendum, rejected Negro suffrage by a generally substantial vote. Such unmistakable opposition, nearly always in the majority, understandably intimidated Republican politicians, for in state after state the verdict was the same. During 1865 five jurisdictions voted down Negro suffrage in popular referendums. Then, in September, it was defeated in the conservative Republican Territory of Colorado by a vote of 4,192 to 476, or a majority of 3,716. In October, a very conservative Connecticut cast 33,489 votes (57.17 per cent) against Negro suffrage to 27,217 (44.83 per cent) for, which was a negative majority of 6,272, with the forces opposed to suffrage

\(^8\) James, Framing, p. 180.
\(^9\) Globe, 39th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 2766.
carrying every county but the abolitionist stronghold of Windham. During November two northern states with firm Republican loyalties produced the same result. Wisconsin opponents in thirty-four counties cast 55,454 ballots (53.28 per cent) against 46,629 (46.72 per cent) in twenty-three counties in favor—a negative majority of 8,825, while the state Republican ticket ran nearly 12,000 ahead to win the governorship with 54.67 per cent of the vote; and in Minnesota 54.88 per cent of the vote was opposed. Finally, in December, 1865, voters in the southern-oriented District of Columbia rejected Negro suffrage by 6,521 to 35 in Washington city and 812 to 1 in Georgetown. In June, 1866, settlers in the northern-oriented Nebraska Territory defeated Negro suffrage in a close vote, for the majority against the discriminatory state constitution in question was only 100 (3,938 to 3,838). During 1867 the elections were more significant, but the result was the same in Kansas, where the majority against was 9,071 or 55.05 per cent while again the vote was closer in Minnesota, where the majority against was only 1,298. But in the most important referendum in Ohio in the same year, voters decisively rejected Negro suffrage in a vote actually cast by a majority of 38,353, while twelve counties voted Republican for governor but opposed Negro suffrage. Ohio was the acid test and the answer was negative. Michigan in April, 1868, rejected the proposed state constitution, which provided for Negro suffrage—although the issue was not a separate question in the referendum—by a vote of 71,733 to 110,582, or a negative majority of 38,849. Missouri also in 1868 struck down Negro suffrage by a majority of 18,817 or 57.27 per cent. New Yorkers followed the national trend by rejecting the issue in 1869 by a majority of 32,601.

In Iowa and Minnesota only, voters accepted Negro suffrage on November 3, 1868, with Minnesotans favoring it by 56.80 per cent, Iowans by 56.50 per cent—a majority of 24,265. Significantly, victory came on a presidential election day in but two solidly Republican states, and with the use of sharp tactics in Minnesota: placing the suffrage question on the presidential ballot to discourage ticket splitting, and concealing the issue by labeling the question not "Negro suffrage" but rather "revision of section 1, article 7." Minnesota Democrats termed the referendum a swindle. In contrast, the Iowa referendum was fully described to the voters, who could agree or disagree to strike the word
“white” from five provisions of the state constitution. However, Negroes were still forbidden in Iowa to run as candidates for the legislature. In Wisconsin the state supreme court ordered Negro suffrage in a decision handed down in 1866 and based on a successful referendum in 1849. By the end of 1868, then, no northern state with a relatively large Negro population had voluntarily accepted full Negro suffrage. Although there was substantial support for it in a few marginal elections, and notable success in two states, the pattern of defeat was most conspicuous, and even the victories in Minnesota and Iowa were not of earth-shaking proportions because of their timing or tactics in monolithically Republican states with few potential Negro voters and with an infinitesimal percentage of Negro inhabitants. Unfortunately there was no ground swell of popular support or any great decisive change in public opinion between 1865 and 1868 as registered in referendums on Negro suffrage. Instead, white Americans resented and resisted it. After agonizingly grappling with the problem, politicians soon recognized that only federal action could circumvent state inaction. But such a course was hazardous and might have to be postponed until the right occasion.¹⁰

¹⁰ A comparison between the Iowa and Minnesota votes reveals no great electoral differences, despite the fact that the Iowa vote is a fairer reflection of voter choices. In fact, more was at stake in Iowa, for the Negro population was both absolutely and proportionately higher, numbering 5,762 by 1870 in a state where anti-Negro sentiment was strong enough to divide Iowa Republicans on the issue in 1865. By contrast, Minnesota Negroes numbered only 759 by 1870 in a state more New England in its orientation. Quite understandably, then, the suffrage question ran well behind the vote for Republican Presidential candidate Ulysses S. Grant by 5.42 per cent in Iowa, while only trailing the Grant vote by 2 per cent less in the obscured referendum in Minnesota.

Minnesota was the only state in the Union to vote several times on the Negro suffrage issue between 1865 and 1868. Support did increase in 1867 over the 1865 vote, and then again in 1868, but Minnesota was a strongly Republican one-party state, never electing a Democratic governor between 1860 and 1899. The hard core opposition to Negro suffrage came from ten counties along or near the Mississippi River. All these counties were strongly Democratic and voted against Negro suffrage in all three referendums. These counties were clustered in two groups: one in south central Minnesota, consisting of Ramsey, Carver, Dakota, Scott, Le Sueur, and Sibley counties; the other in the center of the state, in Morrison, Benton, and Stearns counties. Perhaps these counties were settled by Southerners or their descendants, but at any rate there is complete correlation between Democratic loyalty and anti-Negro intensity. On the other hand, there is only some evidence of a relationship between Negro settlement and anti-Negro feeling. Negroes were concentrated in usually urban areas in four counties in 1870. Two of these—Ramsey (St. Paul) and Dakota—were consistently opposed
At this juncture open war, long brewing between the executive and legislative branches in Washington, blazed forth. All attention and energy were focused on the congressional election campaign of 1866. President Johnson, opposing the Fourteenth Amendment and insisting on his policy alone, made his celebrated "swing around the circle" by train from Washington to St. Louis. Speaking extemporaneously as well as intemperately, the President was egged on by hecklers to lose his temper, and repetitions of this caused Johnson to become his own worst enemy. As a result the congressional election returns proved a disaster for Johnsonian conservatives and marked a complete repudiation of presidential Reconstruction. The Nation declared that the "conductor of the train has found out that the train has run over him, instead of

to Negro suffrage in all three elections. Winona county similarly opposed Negro suffrage in 1865 and 1867, but favored it in a close vote in 1868. Yet Hennepin county (Minneapolis), with a large proportion of the state's Negro population, was consistently progressive, favoring Negro suffrage in all three elections, though by a close margin in 1865.

It would thus appear that at least in Minnesota people opposed Negro suffrage more out of Democratic sympathy than out of fear of Negro presence. The Minnesota election returns on Negro suffrage are given below, but there is a slight discrepancy between these figures taken from Tribune Almanac and the official returns, which indicate that the 1867 majority was slightly larger and the 1865 majority slightly smaller. The unofficial returns, nevertheless, are used, because a county breakdown was unavailable in the official returns examined:

**MINNESOTA ELECTION RETURNS ON NEGRO SUFFRAGE AMENDMENT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1865</th>
<th>1867</th>
<th>1868</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Against equal suffrage</td>
<td>14,838</td>
<td>28,759</td>
<td>29,906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For equal suffrage</td>
<td>12,170</td>
<td>27,461</td>
<td>39,322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole vote</td>
<td>27,010</td>
<td>56,220</td>
<td>69,228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>2,670</td>
<td>1,298</td>
<td>9,416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% against</td>
<td>54.88%</td>
<td>43.20%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% for</td>
<td>45.12%</td>
<td>56.80%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counties against</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counties for</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

his having run away with it." 11 As a whole, the elections were a vote of confidence in congressional Reconstruction and marked, in effect, approval of the Fourteenth Amendment. The anti-Johnsonian Republican coalition that controlled Congress was reinforced and reinvigorated. Congressional Republicans of bolder stripe preferred to interpret the election results as solid support for Negro suffrage everywhere, rather than just opposition to Johnsonian policy or personality alone.

If supporters of Negro suffrage still felt they lacked enough votes in Congress to confer it directly and nationally by a constitutional amendment, they continued to press for it wherever it was clearly within congressional power, as in the District of Columbia. Just as antislavery leaders before the war had attracted support for their cause by urging emancipation in the federal capital, so advocates of universal suffrage hoped that enfranchising Negroes in the District would serve as a pattern for the whole nation. As early as December, 1865, such bills were introduced, and the bill of Representative William D. Kelley of Pennsylvania was finally passed on January 18, 1866, 166 "yes" to 54 "no." Although House Republicans earlier, in a caucus, had rejected universal Negro suffrage and instead supported a qualified form of it, on the floor Democrats using obstructionist tactics succeeded, with more radical Republicans, in passing the measure. Opposing on the final vote were only fifteen Republicans, most of whom represented the border states, some the old Middle West, and a few the Far West, but none from the East. The more conservative Senate never voted on the Kelley bill because Republicans wanted to avoid the controversial Negro suffrage issue, and there was fear that even if the bill passed the Senate it could not override a presidential veto there. Parliamentary squabbling and the excessive heat of that June of 1866 also contributed to inaction.

Significantly it was only after the decisive election returns were counted that the Senate was encouraged to approve Negro suffrage in the District, with only two Republicans disapproving, on December 13, 1866. The next day the House approved the measure, this time with only nine Republicans voting in the opposition, mainly from the border states. Observing acidly that those congressmen who supported Negro suffrage for the District of Columbia were

11 *The Nation*, November 15, 1866.
from states which prohibited it, President Andrew Johnson vetoed the bill on January 7, 1867. Concluding that neither the Negro nor Washingtonians were ready to accept Negro suffrage, Johnson felt the bill was the wrong thing by the wrong method at the wrong time. Republican congressmen retaliated by overriding the presidential veto on January 8, 1867. The Negro could now vote in the nation’s capital.12

Congress was not to be trifled with during that January, 1867. Its mood reflected the victories of the 1866 fall elections, and this development occurred before the new Congress convened. Another bill, in effect enfranchising Negroes in federal territories, had passed the House before the congressional elections on May 15, 1866 (with eight Republicans opposed—seven less than the District vote four months before), but, like the District bill, was not passed by the more conservative Senate. However, after the elections, on January 10, 1867, the Senate passed a similar measure, with only one Republican, Peter G. Van Winkle of West Virginia, in opposition. On the same day it was supported by the House. President Johnson, apparently in a state of resignation after the District of Columbia defeat, acquiesced, and Negroes after January 31, 1867, had the formal right to vote in federal territories.13

13 Globe, 39th Cong., 2nd Sess., pp. 382, 399, 994-95; E. McPherson, pp. 116-17. Negroes were voting in April in Republican controlled Colorado Territory. Presumably it was Democrats in the Dakota territorial legislature who agreed to Negro suffrage in December, 1867. Although racial discrimination in voting was now voided by congressional action, apparently Washington Territory Democrats and Republicans as well postponed action to strike the word “white” out of their laws by failing to take such action during January, 1868. Democrats were in strong control of the territorial legislatures in Idaho and Montana, and appear to have not stricken "white" from their election laws in the latter. A federal law, creating the Territory of Wyoming on July 25, 1868, prohibited racial discrimination in voting and holding office. The legislative assembly complied and went a step further by establishing women suffrage as well on December 10, 1869. However, the legislature outlawed miscegenation. Party lines seem unclear in Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah, but information is difficult to obtain concerning these areas and Idaho. In general, however, Southern mores appear strong in both parties throughout the western territories, for latent racial prejudice and overt discrimination were not uncommon, especially with many southerners migrating to ranch and mine.
Still another part of the nation was accorded Negro suffrage in January, 1867, by congressional insistence. Congress laid down as a condition of statehood that the Nebraska Territory must enfranchise the Negro. On January 30, 1867, President Johnson vetoed the measure, but Congress again ignored presidential opposition and overrode the veto on February 9. Strongly Republican, the Nebraska legislature accepted Negro suffrage and Nebraska was admitted into the Union as the thirty-seventh state. Thus in one month all the territorial subdivisions under the direct control of Congress had received Negro suffrage.\(^{14}\)

The climax of the suffrage drama in the Thirty-ninth Congress was the decision to adopt the fifth section of the First Reconstruction Act of March 2, 1867. Congress now required Negro suffrage as a condition for readmitting the former Confederate states to the Union and seating their representatives in Congress. Thaddeus Stevens had justified universal Negro suffrage in the South by concluding that "if it be just, it should not be denied; if it be necessary, it should be adopted; if it be a punishment to traitors, they deserve it."\(^{15}\) One Floridian felt that exclusion of whites and inclusion of Negroes in voting was desirable, because the guilty would be disfranchised and the deserving enfranchised.\(^{16}\) But other southerners bitterly complained of the double standard of their being forced to endure Negro suffrage with all its revolutionary consequences, while northerners refused to allow it in their part of the country, where there were not enough Negroes to cause any problem.\(^{17}\)

This brief review of the congressional record on Negro suffrage between 1865 and 1868 indicates that a very substantial Republican majority, except for those northeastern and middle western advocates of universal Negro suffrage, was completely opposed to Negro voting immediately after the war. During 1866, however, this position cracked in the House of Representatives, though border state and some older middle west Republicans remained actively hostile. By February, 1867, congressional Republicans had enfranchised the Negro in the District of Columbia, federal terri-  

\(^{16}\) O. B. Hart and C. L. Robinson to D. Richards, January 8, 1867, William P. Fessenden MSS, Library of Congress.  
\(^{17}\) McKitrick, *Andrew Johnson*, pp. 473–85; L. E. Jones to John Sherman, March 6, 1867, John Sherman MSS, Library of Congress.
tories, and Nebraska, by very substantial majorities, and the fol-
lowing month they demanded enfranchisement of the southern
Negro. But since it was the same Thirty-ninth Congress that had
first failed to act and then did act affirmatively and hurriedly after
the elections, it is an open question whether the shift of congres-
sional support came about because sincere supporters of Negro
suffrage were too timid during 1866 or because pragmatic politi-
cians, following the latest fashion and most recent election
returns, wanted a radical reputation in a hurry in 1867. In any
case, these politicians, whether stirred by idealistic impulse or
moved by political expediency, appeared—because of the timing—
to be acting under the pressure of events and the compulsions of
interest.

While congressmen could easily legislate for the District or
Nebraska, and with more effort for the South, national enfran-
chisement of the Negro—which meant Negro voting in the North
—was out of the question. The decisive disapproval of Henderson’s
amendment in the voting on the Fourteenth Amendment, and the
equally decisive approval of Negro suffrage in the District of
Columbia, would lead one to the conclusion that there was a
substantial consensus among Republicans in Congress to enfran-
chise the Negro everywhere except back home in the North.
Enfranchising the northern Negro was another matter, and there
were serious differences among Republicans over how to handle
the question. In fact, state opposition to Negro suffrage remained
strong enough to intimidate congressmen.

Probably the single most important influence to slow the pace
of the movement to enfranchise the Negro was the 1867 elections,
which stressed the issue of Negro suffrage in the North. Capturing
the heat of the Ohio campaign, Burke Hinsdale wrote that "both
sides are making their strongest appeal to prejudice—the one
[Democrats] harping on the 'nigger' and the other [Republicans]
harping on the 'copper-head.'" 18 When the returns were counted
the dimension of the devastating defeat took shape. Republicans
first received setbacks in the spring in Connecticut by losing the
governorship and almost losing the legislature. Then, during

18 Burke A. Hinsdale to James A. Garfield, August 19, 1867, in Mary L. Hinsdale
(ed.), Garfield-Hinsdale Letters, Correspondence between James Abram Garfield
and Burke Aaron Hinsdale (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan, 1949),
p. 96.
September, Maine Republicans ran poorly and a Democratic governor replaced a Republican in California. In October and November state elections Democrats made spectacular gains by capturing both houses of formerly Republican legislatures in Ohio and New Jersey, the House of Representatives in Albany, as well as all state offices in contest and a chief-justiceship in Pennsylvania. The Democracy became further entrenched in the border states, while running surprisingly strong in the Middle West. As Democrats picked up seats in Congress by special elections, they simply reversed Republican electoral majorities of 1866 with the same voter turnout. In Ohio, for example, Republicans won ten out of nineteen Congressional districts in 1866, but the Republican state ticket in 1867 carried three districts. Because of the size of the turnout in Ohio and because referendums on Negro suffrage went down in decisive defeat in Ohio, Kansas, and Minnesota, not to mention the discussion of it elsewhere, Republican losses were widely interpreted as repudiating extension of Negro suffrage in the North.19

Politicians and editors responded quite predictably to the Republican fiasco. Democrats and conservative Johnson administration men celebrated and paraded. President Johnson saluted Ohio and regarded the elections as an endorsement of his policy. New York City Democrats fired cannon, set off bonfires and fireworks, and listened to bands and speeches. Democratic Mayor John T. Hoffman told Democrats at a rally that "Radical fanaticism" 20 was repudiated and no longer would radical firebrands try to elevate Negroes by stepping on poor whites who were also trying to get ahead. Mayor Hoffman's remark brought the wildest applause of the evening. In short, Democracy was delighted, and now had great expectations.21

19 The Nation, November 21, 1867; the New York Times, October 16, and November 10, 1867; the Cincinnati Commercial, October 29, 1867; Jesod R. Grant to Richard A. Wheeler, December 27, 1867, Jesod R. Grant MSS, New York Historical Society; Selden Henry, "Radical Republican Policy Toward the Negro During Reconstruction (1862–1872)" (Ph.D. dissertation, Dept. of History, Yale University, 1963), p. 379. Henry estimates that in 19 northern and border states the Republican loss between 1866 and 1867 was 164,125 votes, or slightly less than the total Democratic gain, in 1867 over 1866, of 164,427. The total turnout was remarkably constant—3,190,537 in 1866 and slightly higher by 302 in 1867’s total turnout of 3,190,839.

20 The New York Times, October 10, 1867.

Recrimination characterized much of radical Republican reaction to the elections of 1867. The ardent abolitionist Wendell Phillips, among others, denounced what he felt was the cowardly stand of Republican politicians in the recent campaign for Negro suffrage and felt that it could have been achieved nationally when the time had been ripe in 1865 or 1866. His remedy for the fiasco was a larger dose of radicalism, by impeaching President Johnson and firing his supporters, thus distracting the people so that Congress would pass a simple law enfranchising Negroes throughout the country. The *Independent* mixed wishful thinking with realistic prediction by first reassuring its readers that since the “Party of Justice having God on its side is sure of the final victory,” Republicans cannot abandon the principle of Negro suffrage in the North; yet it also acknowledged that national equal suffrage might be delayed until after the presidential campaign in 1868. For its part, the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* turned its guns on those who were flirting with the movement to nominate the so-called political sphinx, General Ulysses Grant, as the Republican presidential candidate. One correspondent declared that expediency should not rule the hour because that meant sacrificing principle; instead, unswerving loyalty to principle was the only answer, for otherwise the “half-closed eye of expediency is more easily satisfied than the broad vision of principle.” Beneath such ostentatious confidence or righteous recrimination there appeared widespread panic in the radical ranks.

Symptomatic of the crisis and soberly anticipating it, Thaddeus Stevens started to draft a new constitutional amendment to enfranchise the Negro before the Fourteenth Amendment was even ratified. It was not the first time that Stevens shifted on the issue, for like many Republicans he was markedly cool toward the subject in 1865, appeared not its most vigorous proponent in the Joint Committee while drafting the Fourteenth Amendment, but vigorously endorsed Negro suffrage for the South in 1867, and now during the summer and fall started drafting a version of a proposed fifteenth amendment that would give Negroes the vote everywhere. Hoping to save the Republican party from defeat by granting universal Negro suffrage by an amendment, Stevens

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22 The New York Times, November 2, 1867.
23 The Independent, November 14, 1867.
wrote: "We must establish the doctrine of National jurisdiction over all the States in State matters of the Franchise, or we shall finally be ruined—We must thus bridle Penna. Ohio Ind. et cetera, or the South, being in, we shall drift into democracy." 25 By implication, other radical plans, such as Charles Sumner's proposal to merely pass a law, now appeared visionary—such was the traumatic force of the 1867 election reverses upon radical opinion.

Neither Democratic exultation nor radical desperation characterized moderate response to the elections. Without accepting the Democratic interpretation that the elections marked repudiation and the possible ending of congressional Reconstruction in the South, moderate Republicans still did agree with their Democratic opponents that the meaning of the elections was an overwhelming repudiation of extremism. Extremism had succeeded before, because Democrats were no serious competitors to Republican supremacy, and thus Republican politicians "grew too strong to be wise," 26 losing prudence and restraint after the successful 1866 elections. When radicals started ignoring arrogantly and arbitrarily the great vital center of moderate opinion; when they were manning the 1867 campaigns with exclusively radical supporters; when they were forcing the issue of Negro suffrage in the North, recklessly and relentlessly, as a party principle; when they were talking of "rights of suffrage" and "logical sequences" to people who cared nothing about rights and who didn't know what a logical sequence was; then they were earning defeat by alienating many moderate Republicans in the recent campaign. The New York Times, in an editorial, posed squarely the question of the future usefulness of the Negro suffrage issue, thus answering radical demands:

It is all very well to say that the Republican party cannot abandon it [universal Negro suffrage]—that they must "fight on," and "rally afresh to the combat," and "keep the banner of eternal justice very high," and all that sort of thing. So it may, and so it should; but it does not intend to be beaten in the next election. The party does not see very well how the cause of justice and the rights of the negro, are to be aided by the election of a Copperhead President; and it does not intend to permit any

such result. It will go in to win, and it will nominate as its candidate the man who is most sure to be elected.  

Moderates recognized, then, that for the future advantage of the party the unpopular Negro suffrage issue had been temporarily eclipsed, for "the negro has been covered up and laid away under Democratic majorities."  

Burke Hinsdale observed that "politics have taken on a conservative complexion—Republican politics I mean. The negro will be less prominent for some time to come."  

The corollaries of the election reverses seemed equally clear to Republican moderates. First, Republican congressmen would be put on their best, not their radical, behavior. Moderates were premature in view of subsequent impeachment proceedings, but clearly, such radical proposals as southern land confiscation were dead. The defeats in 1867 also provided moderates with a convenient excuse to rally their forces and use the election fiasco as an excellent weapon to stampede the nomination of Grant as a sure winner in preference to the questionable candidacy of the champion of Negro suffrage, Chief Justice Salmon P. Chase. Moderates advertised that under Grant’s leadership the Republican party would be united by a popular war hero running on a sound and statesmanlike—i.e., moderate—platform. All in all, moderate Republicans had little to complain about the defeats of 1867, for their power was thereby strengthened in 1868.

Generally, Republican politicians were either scared or shrewd enough to trim their sails and set course according to the prevailing winds, which had shifted abruptly during the fall of 1867. One Republican, writing to Senator William P. Fessenden of Maine, expressed the new consensus that prejudice against the Negro was too strong to tolerate schemes to enfranchise him in the North. Congress should march forward under the brave banner.

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27 Ibid., October 17, 1867.
28 Ibid., November 10, 1867. See also ibid., October 10, 11, 14, 15, November 7, 8, 10, 11, 1867. The Ohio correspondent minced no words about radical reaction to the Ohio campaign: "I see that some of the New-York newspapers are inclined to find many wonderful things at the bottom, which the people of Ohio do not see. The New-York Tribune gives the Republicans credit for a marvelous amount of moral courage, in leading an advance for impartial suffrage . . . but it will be some time before the Republicans make another 'advance' in the line of impartial suffrage." Ibid., October 21, 1867.
29 Hinsdale to Garfield, October 22, 1867, Hinsdale (ed.), Garfield-Hinsdale Letters, p. 112.
of equal suffrage for the South, "but the Northern states may not yet be ripe and you may have to allow them to educate for some time longer." 30 Just as the farmer at harvest may not be able to reap his grain all at once but must wait longer for some of it to ripen, John Binney concluded it was prudent to win with General Grant in the presidential election of 1868, and then "this measure of universal negro suffrage will be carried possibly soon after the Presidential election—but must not be done till then." 31

Consequently, managers at the Republican national convention, held in Chicago on May 20–21, 1868, hoped to keep the party's stand on Negro suffrage as bland and noncontroversial as the assured presidential nominee, Ulysses S. Grant. But controversy over a suffrage plank developed even before the convention assembled. Radical Republicans were worried that a weak suffrage plank would evade the issue in the North, abandon the Negro everywhere, and ultimately destroy the party. More moderate Republicans implored politicians to go slow on the issue or lose elections. Yet despite a vigorous struggle in the Committee on Resolutions, the moderate position won out in a close vote. 32 A double standard was rationalized: handing Negro suffrage in the North over to the northern states, the resolution also declared that the "guaranty by Congress of equal suffrage to all loyal men at the South was demanded by every consideration of public safety, of gratitude, and of justice." 33 The fight over the suffrage plank was confined to the Platform Committee and did not erupt on the floor of the convention, where on May 20 the platform was accepted.

Much reaction was favorable. Moderate and radical Republican newspapers sighed in apparent relief. The New York Times correspondent reported that convention delegates had praised the suffrage plank as "prudent, sagacious, and sound." And a Times editorial applauded the platform for rejecting the extremist posi-

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80 John Binney to Fessenden, March 19, 1868, November 2, 15, 1867, Fessenden MSS; Binney to Schuyler Colfax, November 2, 1867, ibid.
81 Ibid.
83 Proceedings of the National Union Republican Convention (Chicago, Ill.: Evening Journal Print, 1868), p. 84.
tion of Thaddeus Stevens and Charles Sumner and for assuming that normally each state should determine suffrage regulation. Because the Negro was free and secure in the North, argued a writer in the *North American Review*, he had no right to complain of disfranchisement, but because the opposite was true in the South he needed the ballot to protect himself.\textsuperscript{34} The logic was flimsy, but the desire to avoid the Negro issue was strong.

Criticism of the plank ranged from mild disagreement to violent denunciation. The New York *Post* suggested that northern Negro suffrage should perhaps have been included. The Democratic *World* dismissed the plank as pure politics because it provided one law for the northern white, who could deny even qualified suffrage to the Negro, and another for the southern white, who could submit only to universal Negro suffrage. The *World* charged that the Republicans feared northern voters who opposed Negro suffrage. The New York *Herald* concurred, cynically observing that the plank was as elastic as Indian rubber.\textsuperscript{35}

Veteran abolitionists were furious. Thaddeus Stevens thundered that the Chicago platform and the suffrage plank were "tame and cowardly."\textsuperscript{36} The *Anti-Slavery Standard* termed the plank a "palpable lie" and advocated an amendment to the federal constitution guaranteeing universal suffrage.\textsuperscript{37}

Republican victory was soon assured by the Democrats. Rejecting Salmon P. Chase and his idea of universal suffrage and amnesty, they nominated Horatio Seymour and Frank Blair, the latter a violently outspoken critic of Negro suffrage. The Democratic platform denounced the Reconstruction acts and warned that "any attempt by Congress, on any pretext whatever, to deprive any State of this right [the regulation of suffrage by the states], or interfere with its exercise, is a flagrant usurpation of power. . . ."\textsuperscript{38} This platform did not, however, mention Negro


\textsuperscript{36} Thaddeus Stevens to Charles L. Spence, June 24, 1868, Draft, Thaddeus Stevens MSS, Library of Congress.


\textsuperscript{38} *Official Proceedings of the National Democratic Convention, Held at New York, July 4–9, 1868* (Boston, Mass.: Rockwell and Rollins, 1868), pp. 58–60.
suffrage. It did not endorse southern Negro voting as the South Carolina Democrats wanted, nor did it denounce Negro suffrage in both the North and the South, as eleven state conventions—notably those of Delaware and the midwestern states—had asked. Instead, it declared that Negro suffrage should be left to the states, a position that had been expressly or tacitly approved by ten state Democratic conventions. The platform was thus a compromise, similar in motive if not in position to that of the Republicans. The party gave up its clear chance to attack inconsistencies in the Republican suffrage plank to enable southern Conservatives to woo the Negro voters. 39

Democratic newspapers were more partisan in praise of their party’s platform than Republican journals had been. The Washington National Intelligencer called the platform “unambiguous,” 40 while the New York World more moderately supported state regulation, concluding that Negro suffrage would remain and that it was futile to fight it. 41 The Philadelphia Age, however, was unhappy with the plank because it “was covered with the thin veil of expediency.” 42

Republican papers either ignored the Democratic suffrage plank or criticized it. The Anti-Slavery Standard assailed the entire Democratic platform because, though it ostensibly left the question of Negro suffrage to the states, all knew that Democrats would drive the Negro from each poll in every state. The Democratic platform, argued the New York Times, complained of Negro supremacy but said nothing about white man’s government; it called for immediate restoration of all states and their rights, but did not specify whether with or without Negro suffrage, concluding that such a plank provided the occasion when “trickery comes into full play.” 43

Despite the fact that both party platforms dodged Negro

suffrage, politicians in the campaign used the issue to attack their opposition. In New Jersey, Democrat Samuel J. Bayard protested the Republican scheme for "exclusive white sovereignty at the North and actual Negro supremacy at the South." "... Notwithstanding the Chicago platform," he continued, "there can be no doubt that if the people continue to place their confidence in the Radicalized Republican party negro suffrage will be forced on the Middle and Western States, with or without their consent." 44 Republican Robert G. Ingersoll in a campaign speech in Maine accepted the Democratic charge that Republicans favored Negro suffrage:

But say these Democrats, you have allowed the Negroes to vote. Yes, we have. In days of Washington, negroes voted, and the question now is, if that were so are modern Democrats fit to vote with negroes now? Is not a negro who is an honor to the black race, better than a white man who is a disgrace to the white race? ... it was our duty to see that no man who had fought for the flag should be under the feet of him who had insulted it.45

For the benefit of Negroes and radicals some Republican newspapers argued that Democratic victory would mean an end to Negro suffrage in the South. But in general candid Republican counter-offensives, like Ingersoll's, were conspicuously played down in the more moderate newspapers. Still the issue would not fade away.46

In the November elections Grant won with a plurality of only 300,000. The southern Negro vote, exceeding 450,000, was indispensable to a Republican popular, but not electoral, majority. Three southern states did not participate in the election and six others voted under so-called carpetbag régimes, which prevented many whites from voting. Republican majorities were uncomfortable in Indiana, New Hampshire, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania. In Alabama, Arkansas, and Connecticut the majorities were slight, whereas in the western states of Nevada and California, Grant's majority was infinitesimal. Had the Democrats nominated a stronger candidate, they might have won, since a small shift in the popular vote of a few key states would have

44 Broadside, 1868, Samuel J. Bayard MSS, Princeton University Library.
45 Broadside, September 7, 1868, Robert G. Ingersoll MSS, Library of Congress.
46 Coleman, pp. 287, 369-70.
changed the outcome. In any event, Democrats made gains in the new House of Representatives.47

The election spelled trouble for Republicans, who worried that the southern Negro might jump their camp. Southern Democrats and conservatives were able to recruit roughly 50,000 Negro voters in the South.48 Foster Blodgett, a Georgia politician, observed in a letter to William Clafflin, chairman of the Republican National Committee, that Democrats tried to woo the Negro voter in Georgia with barbecues, uniforms, and badges. Actually, the Democrats were successful in the second Congressional district, which "has a large majority of colored voters, [but] went against us in the last election. This has opened our eyes to the fact that Democrats can influence in various ways, many blacks to go with them."49 Republican Congressman W. Jasper Blackburn of Louisiana told his colleagues that he knew that southern Democrats, though "they have howled and are still howling against negro suffrage, stole it and appropriated it in the last election [1868] in my State [Louisiana]; and I think I know that the northern Democracy both expected and greatly desired this."50 The Washington National Republican and other newspapers also observed a tendency in many southern Democrats to woo Negro voters. Although the total number of southern Negro voters recruited to the Democrats was relatively small, the disproportionate reaction may have revealed the deep anxiety of Republican politicians.51

Republicans were even more worried about southern Negroes who might desert the polls rather than mutiny by supporting Democrats. They were told that Negroes had been coerced to stay away from the polls by bribery, threats, superstition, and

47 Grant, with 52.7 per cent of the vote, had a popular majority of only 309,000 out of 5,716,000 votes cast. Ibid., pp. 372–78, 384, 362–64; [New York] the Independent, November 12, 1868; W. Dean Burnham, Presidential Ballots, 1836–1892 (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1955), p. 101.
48 Coleman, pp. 369–70.
49 Foster Blodgett and John Caldwell to William Claflin [Chairman, Republican National Committee], July 4, 1868, Chandler MSS.
violence, particularly in New Orleans, Louisiana, and north Georgia, which voted Democratic, but also in South Carolina, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Florida.\textsuperscript{52}

Many correspondents of the secretary of the Republican National Committee, William E. Chandler, expressed doubts about the reliability of southern Negro voting. One Tennessee Republican felt that the "future of the Republican party in the South is by no means secure. Sometimes I feel discouraged when I realize fully the disloyalty, the obstinacy and the blind folly of the Southern whites; the ignorance, inexperience and the changeableness of the negroes. This element cannot be relied upon, and is going to give us trouble."\textsuperscript{53} Another Republican from Atlanta wrote Chandler that the Negroes are too dependent upon their employers to be counted upon with certainty—They are without property, and cannot sustain themselves but a few days at most, without being fed by their Masters; they are without education or sufficient intelligence to appreciate the power the \textit{Ballot} gives them, add to which a system of intimidation persistently practiced by the Rebels, appealing to their fears through their superstition, and you have a mass of poverty, ignorance, stupidity, and superstition under the influence of fears both real and imaginary, to organise and control, upon whom but little reliance can be placed.\textsuperscript{54}

Even while some Republicans came to realize that it would take further guarantees to ensure the Negro vote in the South, other leaders of the party were anxiously canvassing the returns from the northern states. Despite elaborate attempts at evasion, the Negro suffrage issue hurt border, Pacific coast, and northern Republicans. A referendum on Negro suffrage was defeated in Missouri and had not helped Republicans there either. In Ohio, Congressman James M. Ashley attributed his defeat to the Negro suffrage issue,\textsuperscript{55} and though Iowa and Minnesota had voted to enfranchise Negroes, the struggle had not been easy. In short,

\begin{itemize}
\item The \textit{New York Times}, December 2, 3, 8, 16, 1868.
\item J. M. Forney to William E. Chandler, December 27, 1868, Chandler MSS.
\item Volney Spalding to Chandler, September 1, 1868, \textit{ibid}. In a reference to the Negro vote in the South, the chairman of the Republican National Committee perhaps indicated his lack of confidence. See Claflin to Chandler, October 23, 1868, \textit{ibid}.
\end{itemize}
prospects for both northern and southern Republicans were not bright. Republicans had to do something. The Philadelphia Press inaugurated the new campaign three days after the election, advising the Republicans editorially that "victory is nothing unless you secure its fruits," one of which was the enfranchisement of the northern Negro. The Press went on to sound the first explicit call for the Fifteenth Amendment after the elections: "Let the Fortieth Congress . . . propose an amendment to the Constitution conferring the power to vote for national purposes and officers on colored men, under equal conditions with white men. . . . [Thus] where the colored men vote, there the cause of Republicanism is entirely safe, and will be." In full agreement William D. Kelley, stanch advocate of Negro suffrage, wrote that "Party expediency and exact justice coincide for once. . . ."

Moderate and radical Republicans were quick to endorse the Press proposal. The veteran National Anti-Slavery Standard championed a constitutional amendment on the ground of justice as well as expediency, contending that the Negro vote in the North, especially in the border and middle Atlantic states and in Connecticut and Ohio, would make these states safely Republican. The Independent endorsed Negro suffrage everywhere by the method of such an amendment. Moderate journals supported an amendment because it lent strength to the moderate claim that Congress did not have the power to pass a bill enfranchising Negroes in the North. It was even reported that President-elect Grant favored it. By the middle of November it was clear that probably Republicans would pass some sort of constitutional amendment, and congressmen voiced this intention in early December.

Though the need for an amendment was widely recognized in Republican circles, the form and scope were matters of disagree-

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67 Ibid.
ment. The entire debate on Negro suffrage, which had raged within and without the Republican party from 1864 to 1868, was telescoped into editorials during December, 1868, and January and February, 1869. The old and academic question of whether suffrage was a natural right or a political privilege was raised anew. A New York Times correspondent asked whether Negroes, women, former rebels, Chinamen, and Mormons should vote and, if so, at what age. The journalist concluded that suffrage was purely an arbitrary rule, not an inherent right, and that the point at issue was expediency, the practical benefits accruing to any change in suffrage regulations.  

Other issues were raised. Whether male suffrage should be universal or qualified was discussed. The New York Tribune, for example, wanted all eligible males to vote, regardless of color or Civil War record. The Anti-Slavery Standard went further, advocating universal male suffrage. Journals examined the question of how suffrage might best be secured, by congressional act or by constitutional amendment. The Tribune attacked Senator Charles Sumner for arguing that a simple law could impose Negro suffrage, pointing out that what a Republican Congress could extend, a future Democratic Congress could withdraw.

Another critical postelection debate centered on whether suffrage was a state or federal matter. The Tribune felt that consistency demanded uniform suffrage regulations. The Daily Morning Chronicle of Washington agreed that state suffrage regulations ought to be federally controlled since United States senators were elected by state legislatures. The New York Times, on the other hand, favored federal control of federal elections but not of state elections, arguing that state elections should be independent of federal regulation and free from the risk that a change in the political control of Congress would make the subject a political football. Other Republicans argued about whether an amendment should be directed chiefly toward abuses in the South or toward those in the North. The knot of Negro suffrage was hard to untie.

In retrospect, the postwar movement to enfranchise the Negro was neither steady nor progressive nor inevitable. From the Appomattox of the Confederates to the Appomattox of the Johnsonians, Republican politicians acted scared. During 1865 and through 1866 there was sustained opposition to Negro suffrage, or its federal imposition, clearly in evidence in the Fourteenth Amendment votes in Congress. But the landslide Republican victories of 1866 advanced Negro suffrage in places where victory was assured and retaliation fairly remote, such as Washington, federal territories, and the more daring experiment in the South, where southern white intransigency had forced Congress' hand. Yet advance was abruptly halted by routs of Republican tickets and suffrage amendments in 1867. Withdrawal took shape in calculated evasion in the platform plank and Grant's candidacy in 1868.

Defeat in postwar state referendums, disaster in 1867 state elections, and danger signals in the federal elections of 1868 taught Republicans that something must be done, but they were not agreed on what it should be—only that it must be done by this final session of the Fortieth Congress, before the Democrats arrived in force.