

To Thomas C. Hennings

18 July 1958
Atlanta, Ga.

King addressed identical telegrams to each member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, including chair James Eastland. Committee member Estes Kefauver thanked King on 11 August.

SENATOR THOS C HENNINGS JR=¹
CHAIRMAN JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
SENATE OFFICE BLDG
WASHDC=

WE NOTE THE THIRD HEARING HAS BEEN SCHEDULED FOR FRIDAY JULY 18 ON THE LONG PENDING NOMINATION OF ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL W WILSON WHITE AS HEAD OF THE NEW CIVIL RIGHTS DIVISION OF THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT STOP² WE URGE IMMEDIATE ACTION ON MR WHITES APPOINTMENT WHICH HAS BEEN HANGING FIRE IN THE COMMITTEE SINCE JANUARY 13TH STOP IT IS TRAGICALLY IRONIC THAT THE SENATE SHOULD FIND ITSELF IN THE EMBARRASSING POSITION OF BEING UNABLE TO IMPLEMENT SO IMPORTANT AN ARM OF OUR DEMOCRACY AT THE VERY MOMENT WHEN THE WORLD SEEMS ON BRINK OF WAR NUMBER THREE TO PROTECT THE BASIC FREEDOM WHICH A CIVIL RIGHTS DIVISION PROMISES TO ENSURE

1. Chairman of the Civil Rights Subcommittee of the Judiciary Committee, Thomas Carey Hennings, Jr. (1903–1960) was born in St. Louis. He received a B.A. (1924) from Cornell University and an LL.B. (1926) from Washington University. A Democrat, Hennings served as U.S. Senator from Missouri from 1951 to 1960 and worked to expedite the 1957 Civil Rights Bill through the Judiciary Committee.

2. William Wilson White (1906–1964) grew up in Philadelphia and received his B.A. (1930) from Harvard University and an LL.B. (1933) from the University of Pennsylvania Law School. As assistant attorney general, White wrote Eisenhower's legal defense and executive order for using the military to enforce school integration in Arkansas. In December 1957 Eisenhower appointed White to serve as the first head of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division, but his confirmation was held up by southern Democrats on the Judiciary Committee for seven months before they voted to send it to the Senate for final approval. White resigned the post in 1959 facing criticism from African Americans, who charged that he was slow to protect black civil rights.

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project

TO MILLIONS OF LOYAL NEGRO AMERICANS STOP THE LONG AND CONTINUED DENIAL OF CIVIL JUSTICE TO SOUTHERN NEGROES ESPECIALLY CRIES OUT FOR ACTION. AS DOES THE BLOOD OF NEGRO SERVICEMEN WHO HAVE DIED HELPING THEIR COUNTRY DEFEND THE FREEDOMS WHICH TODAY THEIR CHILDREN ARE DENIED STOP MAY THESE CRIES NOT BE IN VAIN=

23 July
1958

REV MARTIN L KING JR PRESIDENT SOUTHERN
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PWSr. TCHP-MoU.