

## **Civil Rights**

### **Registering the First Black Voters**

#### **The Honorable William Jackson (Jack) Edwards**

#### **U.S. Representative of Alabama**

Registering African Americans for the first time in the aftermath of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

*Interview recorded August 23, 2012*

And so when the Voting Rights Act passed, and the marshals were preparing to come, I went down to see the leaders of the courthouse, all white of course, and I just said, "We've got to start registering black folks down here." And nobody wanted to be the first person to vouch for the first black voter. So we finally got, as I recall, the president of Tuskegee Institute to come across the state and vouch for the black high school principal, and then he could vouch for others after that. The joke around there was that every time we got a black registered, I lost a vote as a Republican. And when they got the majority of voters in the county, I lost the county {laughter} and I never carried it since. But I mean those are the kinds of places, and days, and situations that nobody can understand.