

Wallace Succession Under U.S. Scrutiny On Law Compliance

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WASHINGTON, Feb. 6 (UPI)—The Justice Department said today that it was trying to determine whether George C. Wallace of Alabama illegally began a second consecutive second term in office without seeking prior Federal approval of the state constitutional amendment that allowed him to do so.

Under the Voting Rights Act of 1965, Alabama is one of six states that must submit any proposed political changes that might affect minority voting rights for prior approval either by the United States Attorney General or the United States District Court in Washington.

A spokesman for the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division said that Alabama did not submit its amendment for Federal approval before Mr. Wallace and several other state officials were inaugurated recently for their second consecutive terms. The potential error was uncovered today by the Birmingham Post-Herald.

The spokesman emphasized that the Justice Department

had made no decision on the issue.

"One major question to be answered first is whether the Alabama succession amendment is a change covered by the provisions of the voting rights act," he said.

If the Justice Department determines that the amendment should have been submitted for Federal review, he said, the state then would be required to do so.

"If it is necessary that it be submitted," he said, "the amendment will then be evaluated to determine if it has a discriminatory purpose or effect."

He did not say what would be done in that case about Mr. Wallace and the other state officials who succeeded themselves under the amendment.

The voting rights act also applied that same provision to Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina and Virginia and some isolated jurisdictions in other states throughout the nation.