

Mitchell Promises Vigorous Defense Of Suit on Vote at 18

WASHINGTON, July 17 (AP)

— Pledging to defend "fully and vigorously" the Congressional act lowering the voting age to 18, Attorney General John N. Mitchell began today the Government's part in a suit that may bring a swift constitutional test of the new Voting Rights Law.

The Justice Department said the Attorney General was ready to act "in accord with the Congressional mandate and the obligations of this department."

This was in answer first, to a suit filed against Mr. Mitchell by five New York residents who contended the act violated New York's constitution and voting laws and, second, to a group seeking to intervene on Mr. Mitchell's side in that suit.

The suit is before a three-judge panel in the District of Columbia. It was filed by the New Yorkers June 23, the day after President Nixon signed the act.

Earlier this week, Mr. Mitchell announced other steps to test the provisions of the law, including the 18-year-old age, suspension of literacy tests and reduction of residency requirements for voting in Presidential elections.

Mr. Mitchell said Tuesday that the Justice Department would take appropriate legal action against states that did not provide by Aug. 3 written assurances they were preparing to carry out the new provisions.