

Nixon Hails Youth Vote as 26th Amendment Is Certified at the White House

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WASHINGTON, July 5—

The 26th Amendment to the Constitution, which lowers to 18 the minimum voting age in all elections, was officially certified today in a ceremony conducted by President Nixon.

More than 500 members of a singing group, Young Americans in Concert, witnessed the event in the East Room of the White House.

Mr. Nixon arrived by helicopter shortly after 3 P.M. after a weekend at Camp David, Md.

He told the young people that it was "particularly appropriate" that the ceremony, which marked the addition of 11 million potential voters to the electorate, had fallen on the official observance of the nation's 195th birthday.

The amendment's validity

was certified by Robert L. Kunzig, the General Services Administrator, who bent over a mahogany desk thought to have been used by Thomas Jefferson during the Continental Congress in Philadelphia.

The President noted later that Jefferson had also stood over the desk while writing, because of his arthritis.

Mr. Nixon and three members of the singing group signed the document as official witnesses to the certification. The three singers, selected at random, were Julianne Jones of Memphis, Joseph Loyd of Detroit and Paul Larimer of Concord, Calif., all 18 years old. The three kept their pens as souvenirs.

Afterward, Mr. Kunzig said that the amendment had taken effect the moment it was ratified last Wednesday night by

the Ohio legislature, the last of the 38 states needed for a three-quarters majority. But Mr. Kunzig added that today's ceremony was a legal requirement.

The General Services Administration is responsible for the preservation and safekeeping of the nation's historical documents.

Mr. Nixon noted that the Young Americans in Concert, who range in age from 15 to 20, were about to embark on a tour of Europe, and he asked them to pass on "some of the things that we in the United States would like the people in Europe to hear." The singing group, which is based in Princeton, N. J., includes members from all over the nation.

"You all know that America is the richest and strongest nation in the world," the President told the singers. "But it is not that that makes America the hope of the world.

"America has never in this century used its strength to break the peace, only to keep it. In the last third of this century, America's strength will be used to bring peace and keep peace in the world.

"The United States of America doesn't want an acre of territory—we don't want to dominate anybody else. We only want the people to have the freedom we enjoy, and that's what you can tell them."

Glancing around the room at the sea of blue blazers and starched white blouses, Mr. Nixon said he was sure that the young singers would "represent America well abroad and that the 11 million new votes will do well for this country at home.

"The country needs an infusion of new spirits from time to time," he said. "As I stand here, I sense that we can have confidence that America's new votes will provide what this country needs."

Although he did not say so, Mr. Nixon clearly hopes to capture many of the new voters in next year's Presidential election. But one of the young singers, David Van Dyke, 17, of Toms River, N. J., offered the President a caveat.

Would he vote to re-elect Mr. Nixon next year, the youth was asked. "Depends on if we're out of Vietnam," he replied.

Before retreating to punch and cookies, the group sang "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." One member later said that it was only the group's third public performance to-

The President listened to the performance with a fixed smile on his slightly upturned face. Afterward, he said that he had "heard 'The Battle Hymn of the Republic' at least seven or eight hundred times, but after hearing this rendition I can tell you that no group has ever sung it better, believe me."

The lowering of the voting age to 18 by constitutional amendment was made necessary by a Supreme Court decision last December modifying a law, previously passed by Congress, that gave citizens over 18, the vote in all elections.

The Court ruled that Congress had exceeded its powers by setting voting standards for state and local elections as well as national elections. It upheld only the granting of national voting rights to the teen-agers.