Texas students gather in Houston to organize lower voting age drive

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Initial steps were taken last Saturday toward statewide organization of student support for lowering the voting age requirements in Texas to 18.

Members of a five-man steering committee for the movement were selected by students from Rice, Texas A & M, Texas Southern, St. Thomas, the University of Houston, Houston Baptist College, Sacred Heart, and San Jacinto Jr. College at a meeting in the Rice Memorial Center. Rice's Barney McCoy was among those chosen.

Vickery Bill

The aim of the group is to gain the adoption of a bill introduced before the Texas House of Representatives in January by Representative Glenn Vickery of Houston.

The bill would place an amendment to the Texas constitution effecting the lower voting age limit on the ballot of the 1968 general election.

Vickery, who spoke at the meeting, pointed out that a similar proposal has been introduced in the U.S. Senate, but as an amendment to the U.S. Constitution it will require ratification by three-fourths of the states before becoming effective. This could involve a delay long past 1968.

Texas Lagging

At present the setting of age requirements for voting is left to the states to decide, and Georgia and Kentucky have set the age limit at 18, while Alaska has set it at 19, and Hawaii at 20.

He estimated that about 406,744 new voters would be given the ballot in Texas when his amendment is adopted.

Support Needed

The bill must be recommended by the Constitutional Amendments Committee, then passed by the Legislature before it can be put to a popular vote in 1968. Vickery hopes to have the hearing on the bill the last week in March or the first week in April of this year.

In the interim he hopes for demonstrative support, especially from college students, who have the means of communication and organization through their various intercollegiate links, such as TISA.

Mr. Vickery noted that the most effective tactics for influencing legislators and committee members are phone calls and face-to-face personal urgings of support. He would also like to have student supporters of the bill at the committee hearing.