

## Civil Rights

### The Harris Amendment Debate

#### Robert Kimball, Legislative Assistant, Representative John V. Lindsay of New York

Robert Kimball recounts a dramatic moment during the floor debate on the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

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When [Oren] Harris got up and offered it, I think both [John] Lindsay and [William] McCulloch—you know, Lindsay was on the floor, was quite surprised. And he was particularly amazed when Hale Boggs, who of course was, you know, senior Member but also part of the leadership on the floor, got up to support it. And he immediately signaled to McCulloch, who was off the floor at that moment, to come back and get involved in this, and he did. And McCulloch was really upset, as, as we know, because he then said that if it were agreed to, he would withdraw his support for the legislation, which really stunned everybody. At that moment Roy Wilkins was up in the gallery, and I was right there with him. And he was talking to Mrs. McCulloch and praising William McCulloch. And Mrs. McCulloch said to Wilkins and to me and to others who were right around here that when Bill McCulloch came back onto the floor his face was really red, his neck was red particularly. And she said, "When Bill's neck is red, he's really upset." And immediately, of course, the threat was stopped. Celler came on. The leadership got concerned, and the Harris Amendment was overwhelmingly defeated. And that was really I guess the major threat on the legislation, it would have modified Title VI. And it was an interesting moment.