Modern Political Collections is currently processing the papers of Robert E. McNair. When work is complete, researchers will have access to a wealth of information on post-World War II South Carolina. McNair provided South Carolina with strong and progressive leadership as a member of the South Carolina House, lieutenant governor, governor, and as a lawyer in private practice.

The collection is large and rich and documents McNair’s service in World War II, his political campaigns, and his distinguished career in public service. Robert E. McNair served as Governor of South Carolina (1965-1971).

McNair’s gubernatorial papers form the collection’s largest and most important series. McNair was elected lieutenant governor in 1962 and served until April 1965 when then-Governor Donald Russell took over the United States Senate seat of Olin D. Johnston. McNair assumed the role of governor, and in 1966 he was elected to a full term. McNair’s accomplishments as governor included important advances in education; notable improvement in coordination and cooperation among state agencies, commissions, and bureaus; the involvement of the public in planning and decision-making; a new emphasis on tourism, including the creation of the Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism; and continued aggressive industrial recruitment.

Evidence of McNair’s interest in the public welfare of the state’s citizens is present throughout the collection. To help him craft his vision for South Carolina and its government, McNair requested the compilation of a detailed analysis of the status of education, transportation, health care, and other areas impacted by the government. Published in 1968, *Opportunity and Growth in South Carolina, 1968-1985*, prepared by Moody’s Investors Service, Inc., and commonly referred to as the “Moody Report,” contained over 440 pages of constructive analysis.

The report provided exhaustive reports and financial data previously unavailable to the state’s leaders, challenged long-held assumptions, and included specific recommendations on how best
to advance South Carolina over the coming decades. Its long-awaited publication generated great debate in the General Assembly and among the public.

Of particular research interest are the files documenting McNair’s forceful response to the 1970 school integration incident in Lamar, South Carolina. A mob of protesters overturned a school bus transporting African American school children to Lamar’s public schools as part of a newly implemented integration program. The event drew national attention to the state and the subsequent trial of those arrested brought a flood of mail addressed to the governor from across South Carolina and the nation. The letters present a fascinating cross section of public opinion.

Work on the McNair papers currently at hand should be completed late this year. Additionally, readers interested in a more detailed analysis of McNair’s role in South Carolina’s history can look forward to the publication of a study authored by USC political scientist and administrator Blease Graham and former McNair staff member and current Director of the South Carolina Executive Institute Philip Grose, Jr.

With the addition of the McNair collection, the Library now has or is receiving the personal papers of recent governors Hollings, Russell, McNair, West, Edwards, and Riley.

Visitors to the Modern Political Collections’ reading room can see the desk used by McNair as Chair of the House Judiciary Committee. Gov. McNair donated the desk to the Library along with his papers.

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