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adele ferguson reports:

Fletcher's Vote Was A Lesson for Nixon

Art Fletcher's winning of the Republican primary race for lieutenant governor says something to Fletcher and it ought to say something to Richard Nixon.

"Namely," said Fletcher, "that you can go out and talk about implementing programs like mine and you're not going to alienate the white voters."

Fletcher is not white. By now he's probably the best known Negro in the State of Washington, and he's the only Negro ever to be nominated for a statewide office.

He isn't really very surprised, because he's felt it coming.

"I think among other things, one of the things that captured the public's imagination was my proposing to be a fulltime lieutenant governor and I'm going to stay with that issue," he said.

"It isn't JUST being a fulltime lieutenant governor either, but someone there fulltime with the capacity to do a specific thing. It appears to me that this is the one thing that was a very, very decisive factor in my being elected."

There were tipoffs along the way that showed he was gaining among the voters, Fletcher said.

"One was interest in the national Republican platform and my appearance before the platform committee. Time and again, people would ask, 'Did you get it in the platform—your self help program? Are you satisfied with what they've done?' I can answer that by the fact two bills are in the hopper right now, one in the House of Representatives and one in the Senate on it shows we were being heard."

Another tipoff that things were getting better and he was picking up, he said, "was on questions in reference to my meeting with Nixon. It showed they were reading about me. Their questions were pointed and specific."

The vote he got, he said, could be interpreted as the result of talking directly to the people and offering a solution to a problem.

The people are deeply concerned about domestic problems, Fletcher said. "Oh, they're concerned about Vietnam, but if you talk about Vietnam and the home front, it's the home front that really has their attention. I think we're going to get more and more of this from Nixon now. I think we're going to see him roll up his sleeves and go to work on the domestic issues."

Nixon previously had said, and in disagreement with Gov. Dan Evans, that foreign relations and the domestic problems were of equal priority in the need for solution. Evans felt the home front was the most important.

Nomination of Art Fletcher shows that the people want someone who offers a positive and promising program to take care of the problems at their front and back doors, and what color the someone is really isn't important.

Now what Nixon should do is quit worrying about what's going to scare off the white voters, and go out and convince the equally concerned black and white people of this country that he's got a positive program and what color anybody is doesn't matter if he needs a hand up.