

NAACP NEWS

Newsletter of Alexandria, VA Branch #7043

Winter 2010

NAACP prods Obama on job losses

With unemployment among blacks at more than 15 percent, the NAACP joined several others on Nov 17 to call on President Barak Obama to do more to create jobs.

The organizations - including the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, AFL-CIO, and the National Council of La Raza, a Hispanic advocacy group - made it clear that they believe the president's \$787 billion stimulus program has not gone far enough to fight unemployment.

They call for increased spending for schools and roads, billions of dollars in fiscal relief to state and local governments to forestall more layoffs and a direct government jobs program, "especially in distressed communities facing severe unemployment."

"It's time for us to really stoke this issue up," said Hilary O. Shelton, the NAACP's senior vice president for advocacy and policy. "We're not so much trying to convince him to do something he doesn't want to do, but urging him to move forward on an issue we have agreement on."

When the recession started 23 months ago, the unemployment rate for blacks was 8.9 percent. Hispanics unemployment rate is now 13.1 percent and 9.5 percent for whites.

The groups call for spurring private-sector job growth through tax credits and loans to small and medium businesses.

ANNUAL BANQUET HELD

Rev. Dr. Joseph Echols Lowery, renowned civil rights leader, was keynote speaker at our 76th Annual Life Membership and Awards Banquet held Oct. 25. Community service awards were given to James Lightfoot IV, life member; Hoop Academy International, Inc., a non-profit organization that provides constructive alternative activities for the youth in the Alexandria community; Virginia Parent Leadership Institute (working in partnership with the Connecticut Commission on Children, Hopkins house, and the City of Alexandria, in collaboration with the Alexandria City Public Schools and many Alexandria community organizations). The President's Award was presented to S. Howard Woodson, III, Esq., past president of Alexandria NAACP.

ANNUAL VETERANS DAY PROGRAM

The Alexandria Branch NAACP hosted its annual veterans day program at the Alexandria Black history Museum on Nov. 11. The speaker U.S. Air Force Col. Charlie M. Johnson talked about her success in the military that led to her position as vice commander of the air force Legal Operations Agency, which carries out the responsibilities of the air Force's criminal justice system.

Considered one of the foremost attorneys with the Department of Defense on air Force matters,

Johnson spoke about her rise through the ranks before giving her memorial message for Veterans Day.

Louis C. Hicks, Jr., Director of Alexandria black History Museum, which also co-sponsored the event served as moderator. Reflections on the holiday was given by U.S. Force Reserve Major Alexis N. Stackhouse, Esq., the branch chair of Armed Services and Veterans Affairs Committee. U.S. Air Force Major R. Kenyatta Booker, Secretary of the Air Force/Chief of State-Execution Action Group, gave the Table Before Us presentation which contained the flags of all the military services. Soloist Latham Gunn, a senior at the George Mason School of Music at George Mason University, sung the National Anthem and Go Down Moses. Rev. Dr. Howard-John Wesley, pastor of Alfred Street Baptist Church, gave the invocation and prayer for peace.

VIRGINIA STATE CONVENTION NEWS

Everett Lewis represented the branch at the Virginia State Convention held Oct. 23-25 at the Richmond Marriott. The results of the election of officers is Rev. Dr. J. Rayfield Vines, Jr. of Henrico County was re-elected President of Virginia State Conference NAACP. Sylvia Wood of Richmond was re-elected Vice President and Janette Boyd Martin was elected At-Large member elected by the Convention. Rovenia Vaughan of Powhatan County ran unopposed to serve as treasurer. The officers and at-large member took the oath of office on Oct. 25 and are elected to serve for two years. The office of secretary is vacant.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

LEGAL REDRESS: CHAIR, S. Howard Woodson, III, Esq.

Assistance from the branch was requested in the following matters:

Sent letter to School Superintendent Dr. Morton Sherman on behalf of a former employee of the school system. She alleged she was justly terminated after coming to meet with the principal of her school. At the time she came to meet the principal, she was intoxicated. She alleges she did not report to work that day but she was terminated for coming to work under the influence. She has filed a grievance about her termination. At this state, it does not appear that she was the victim of discrimination. The principal states that she did in fact report to work and was referred to employee assistance and then subsequently terminated...

Sent letter to chief of Police Earl L. Cook concerning an incident at McDonald's on Duke Street. Incident involved an African American youth who was assaulted by someone at the restaurant after he complained about the treatment he received from one of the restaurant workers. When the police arrived the youth alleged they were rude and disrespectful toward him and his friends. We are also sending a letter to the McDonald's Corporate Headquarters asking them to investigate the youth's allegation that he was discriminated against based on his race and age. The person who allegedly assaulted the youth was arrested based on a criminal complaint the youth filed.

POLITICAL ACTION: Nov. 2 Virginia Election Results: governor-elected Robert F. McDonnell (R) 58.65% vs R. Creigh Deeds (D) 41.23%; Lieutenant Governor - elected William T. Bolling (R) 56.51% vs. Judy Wagner (D) 43.50% and Attorney General - elected Ken Cuccinelli (R) 57.53% Stephen Shannon (D) 42.38%.

Democratic candidates won every precinct in every race throughout Alexandria, keeping delegates David Englin (61.16%), Charniele Herring (63.99%) and Adam Ebbin (95.74%) (uncontested) in the house of Delegates for another term as representatives of the state's 45th, 46th and 49th districts, respectively.

About 35,000 - 42 Percent - of the city's 80,045 active registered voters showed up to

Alexandria's polls, according to the unofficial returns.

HOUSING: The City of Alexandria has been awarded \$7.7 million from the Virginia Housing Development Authority (VHDA) to help make homeownership more affordable for household with members who live or work in the City. This funding is being provided through VHDA's Sponsoring Partnerships and Revitalizing Communities (SPARC) Program.

The funding will be used in conjunction with the City's Homeownership Assistance Program which assists lower income household with annual incomes of up to \$82,160 for a family of four, and Moderate income Homeownership Program, which assists households with incomes of up to \$102,700 for a family of four.

EDUCATION: Co-chairs Joyce Sanchez and Sallie Craft

Dr. Ronald F. Ferguson, Director Achievement Gap Initiative, at Harvard University, was featured speaker at Alexandria City Public School Board's Parent and Community Forum and a Community Stakeholders Meeting on Oct. 19 and 20 to discuss raising the achievement of all students. The programs were held in partnership with Alexandria NAACP, Northern Virginia Urban League, PTA Council of Alexandria, Tenants and Workers United and concerned citizens.

For the third year in a row, the Alexandria Public School System did not meet the federal government's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) standard, according to results released by the Virginia Department of Education in August. The AYP is the series of ever-rising benchmarks set by the No Child Left Behind legislation that ultimately reach 100 percent passing by 2014 - but for the first time ever the city's middle schools made the grade in English and math. The AYP is different than the state's accreditation standard but based on the same standardized testing.

YOUTH COUNCIL: Jeanette Lightfoot, Advisor

Held an "Introduction to Debating" forum at Charles Houston Community Center on Nov. 14.

ACT-SO: Kick-Off day is Dec. 19 at the Mt. Vernon Recreation Center. (Rescheduled)

RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS: Rev. Dr. Earl attended the National NAACP Religious Leaders Summit held in Washington, D.C. in December. Also attending were NAACP President/CEO Ben Jealous, Vice Chair Roslyn Brock, Nation of Islam leader Min. Louis Farrakhan, etc.

WIN (Woman in the NAACP): U. S. Air Force Major Alexis Stackhouse, Esq. volunteered to be our first WIN chairperson.

PRISON BRANCH SUPPORT: Jackie Surratt volunteered to chair our first ever prison branch support committee.

ARMED SERVICES & VETERANS AFFAIRS:

Little-known benefit can help older vets, spouses - On Dec. 19, 2006, then-Veterans Affairs Secretary Jim Nicholson issues a press release "to inform wartime veterans and surviving spouses of deceased wartime veterans about an underused, special monthly pension benefit called 'Aid and Attendance.'" The Aid and Attendance pension benefit may be available to wartime veterans and surviving spouses who have in-house care or who live in nursing homes or assisted-living facilities. Eligible veterans need not have served overseas or in combat, they must have served during the period of a war: World War II, Dec. 7, 1941 - Dec 31, 1949; Korea, June 26, 1950 - Jan. 31, 1955; Vietnam, Aug 5, 1964-May 7, 1975; Persian Gulf War, Aug 2, 1990 to a date not yet determined. The benefit is meant for the veterans or surviving spouses who have unreimbursed medical expenses. It is most ideally suited for someone who needs assistance at home and is paying for an aide or is in assisted living. Assisted-living charges are considered by the VA as a medical expense. Assisted living is not supported by Medicaid. The person's home is exempt, and the VA will do an "age analysis" to determine if the veterans (or surviving spouse) has sufficient assets to pay for his or her own care. The basis requirement

is that the veterans requires on-going aid and attendance for the performance of activities of daily living. The requirement is waived if the veterans are in a nursing home. The 2008 maximum benefit for a married person \$1,842 a month and \$1,555 for a single person. The benefits are tax-free and needy surviving spouses may get more generous benefits. 1-800-827-1000, or visit www.va.gov

ACLU OF VIRGINIA GRASSROOTS LOBBYIST ALERT

Urge Governor Kaine to Restore Voting Rights Before Leaving Office!

Before leaving office, Governor Tim Kaine has an opportunity to restore voting rights to hundreds of thousands of formerly incarcerated persons who have served their sentences and are now productive, tax-paying members of our communities.

We are asking individuals and organizations all over Virginia to contact Governor Kaine immediately and ask him to issue an executive order restoring voting rights to former felons in Virginia.

Facts about felon disenfranchisement in Virginia:

-Every state in the nation - except Virginia and Kentucky - has shed its outdated disenfranchisement law and now provides for automatic restoration of voting rights for most or all ex-offenders.

-More than 300,000 Virginia residents cannot vote due to this law.

-Virginia's felon disenfranchisement law is a shameful legacy of Jim Crow that was intended to prevent African Americans from participating in the political process.

-Former felons who vote are half as likely to be re-arrested as those who do not vote. Governor Kaine has the power through executive order to restore voting rights for former felons and create a process for continuing to restore rights for others as they complete their sentences before he leaves office. Urge him to act now.

Send an email to the Governor or call the Governor at (804) 786-2211

To learn more about voter restoration in Virginia, visit www.restoreourvote.org

MEETINGS

ADULT MEETINGS: First Wednesdays, Executive Committee at 7 p.m. and regular Membership Meeting at 8 p.m.; Charles Houston Recreation Center, 901 Wythe Street, Alexandria, VA

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