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## Candidates scramble for US Rep. Mel Watt's seat

By Mitch Weiss

CHARLOTTE (AP) - The following Democrats are on the ballot for Watt's unexpired term and two-year term beginning in January:

State Rep. Alma Adams of Guilford. An educator and artist, the 67-year-old Adams has been a strong supporter of North Carolina's colleges and an advocate for the arts and culture. She also has fought to raise the minimum wage and to create jobs.

State Rep. Marcus Brandon, 39, of High Point. A political consultant, Brandon is North Carolina's only openly gay legislator. He says he doesn't want people to vote for him because he's gay - but because he's the best candidate for the position.

State Sen. Malcolm Graham, 51, of Charlotte. A business executive and former Charlotte City Councilman, he's wants to increase pay for minimum-wage workers and expand economic development opportunities by increasing investment in the private and small business sectors. "I want to make sure the citizens of the district have the opportunity to earn not only a minimum wage, but a living wage. That way they can reinvest back in their families, build stable communities and send their kids to college," he said.

George Battle III, 41, of Charlotte. A Charlotte-Mecklenburg School Board attorney, this is Battle's first try for public office. "These are serious times for our country and we need serious people who are dedicated to finding solutions to our most pressing problems. The most important issue facing the district is economic mobility. By that, I refer to the ability of folks who were born outside of wealth to even make it to the middle class," he said.

Curtis Osborne, 44, a Charlotte attorney. Saying he's not a career politician, Osborne has promised to fight attempts by tea party Republicans to limit the rights of the working class and African-Americans to vote.

James Mitchell Jr., 51, is a former Charlotte City Councilman. The economy is the most important issue. "I am incredibly passionate about generating interest and investments in our community - putting people to work and lifting them into the middle class."

The following Democrat also is on the ballot for a full term beginning in January:

Rajive Patel, 65, is the former mayor of East Spencer. A Vietnam veteran, Patel said he wants to protect the rights of veterans, support teachers and preserve public assistance programs.

The following Republicans are seeking a full term:

Vince Coakley, 48, a radio host and former North Carolina television news anchor. Coakley said he's running on a platform of "freedom," saying it's the foundation for job creation. He also supports smaller government.



First Lady Michelle Obama visits with families working on crafts at Maryland Fisher House IV at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Md., April 14, 2014. (Official White House Photo by Chuck Kennedy)



## Marian Anderson's concert dress goes on view in DC

By Brett Zongker

WASHINGTON (AP) - For the first time, the dress Marian Anderson wore to sing at the Lincoln Memorial 75 years ago after being denied access to a Washington concert hall because she was black, is going on display at the Smithsonian.

On Easter Sunday 1939, the classical singer accepted Eleanor Roosevelt's invitation to give a public concert and wrapped herself in a fur coat that cold day after she was kept out of Washington's D.A.R. Constitution Hall. Beneath the coat, she wore a striking orange-and-black ensemble and carried herself with pride, historians said.

The outfit she wore to make history was uncovered among the late singer's belongings and put on display April 15 at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History through September. April 16 marked the 75th anniversary of Anderson's Easter Sunday performance at the Lincoln Memorial.

Curators learned earlier this year that the dress had been kept hidden away all these years.

"I definitely would have loved to have had something iconic" to represent Anderson, said Dwandalyn Reece, who is building a collection for the National Museum of African American History and Culture. "But I just didn't expect for this to exist."

The two-piece concert attire is part of a collection recently donated to the museum by Ginette DePreist of Scottsdale, Ariz. DePreist is the widow of Anderson's nephew, the late music conductor James DePreist.

Ginette DePreist said the dress had been long forgotten. It was among the belongings she salvaged from Anderson's damp basement at the Connecticut home where the singer lived for 40 years before moving to Oregon to live with the DePreists. Anderson died in April 1993.

In the 1990s, Ginette DePreist decided to wear one of Anderson's dresses in her honor to a gala performance of the Philadelphia Orchestra and pulled out the orange-and-black ensemble. She had the top remade to replace disintegrated fabric. The original collar, trim and turquoise and black buttons were kept in place.

Only later, after looking at photographs, did she realize it was the same ensemble Anderson wore at the Lincoln Memorial.

Smithsonian fashion historian Renee Anderson said the outfit represents a forward sense of fashion after the singer had made a name for herself in Europe. Now it offers a look at how she carried herself, curators said.

"She was very elegant. She was very steadfast, making a statement: 'Here I am. I do matter. What I do and what I say is important,'" Renee Anderson said.

Anderson didn't talk much about the famous concert. "I'm not a fighter," she would say. She had been thrust into the spotlight but didn't see herself as an advocate.

"The only desire she had at the time was to sing," DePreist said. "She wanted to be recognized for her voice, her career - and not necessarily that page of history."

That day became national news, though, after Eleanor Roosevelt publicly resigned her membership in the Daughters of the American Revolution in protest for keeping Anderson out.

Anderson would become the first African-American to perform at the White House and sang there again when the Roosevelts entertained the king and queen of England. After years of being shut out of opera, Anderson became the first African-American to perform at the Metropolitan Opera in 1955.

When the new black history museum opens, likely in 2016, Anderson will be part of an exhibit about music.

"Because of that concert, she's forever etched in history," Reece said. "In excelling at her own craft, she stands as an example in many ways showing African-Americans performing all types of music, performing an event that was tinged with social justice as its primary tenant."

## 4 racial justice cases go to state Supreme Court

FAYETTEVILLE (AP) - The cases of four inmates who had death sentences commuted to life under North Carolina's Racial Justice Act will be reviewed by the state Supreme Court.

The Fayetteville Observer reports the court heard arguments April 14 on whether a Cumberland County judge made the right decision in removing the inmates from death row because their cases were tainted by racism.

The landmark Racial Justice Act, passed in 2009, was repealed last year. The law had allowed convicted murderers to have their sentences reduced to life in prison if they could prove racial bias influenced the outcome of their cases.

Both proponents and critics say the repeal will restart the death penalty in a state that hasn't executed an inmate since 2006.

Republicans and Gov. Pat McCrory said the law was so poorly crafted that it has allowed nearly all of the state's 156 death-row inmates to launch appeals under the law regardless of their race. They said the law impeded the will of unanimous jury decisions.

The cases before the high court involve three inmates who are black men and one who is a Lumbee Indian woman. Two of the men were convicted of killing law officers while the third killed a teenage boy. The woman was convicted in the execution-style slayings of two people.

The four were the only death row inmates to have presented evidence to a judge under the Racial Justice Act.

In December of 2012, Cumberland County Superior Court Judge Gregory A. Weeks commuted the sentences of three of the inmates saying prosecutors in each case made a concerted effort to reduce the number of black jurors.

He cited evidence that included handwritten notes of prosecutors indicating they worked to get blacks eliminated from the pool of jurors, resulting in panels that were overwhelmingly white.



President Barack Obama, accompanied by First Lady Michelle Obama, places a presidential coin as they pay their respects during a memorial service for the victims of the Fort Hood shootings, at Fort Hood in Killeen, Texas, April 9, 2014. (Official White House Photo by Pete Souza)