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**Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday is celebrated Jan. 18.**  
See events on page 3.

## Trial in suit against Ferguson-Florissant district to begin

By Jim Salter

ST. LOUIS (AP) - Problems with racial bias have already led to reforms of Ferguson's police department and municipal court. Next week, attorneys for the American Civil Liberties Union will argue in federal court that a school district serving Ferguson students also needs an overhaul of the process for electing board members.

A federal trial started Jan. 11 in a lawsuit filed by the ACLU on behalf of the Missouri NAACP and three residents who live within the Ferguson-Florissant School District in north St. Louis County.

The suit alleges that the district's practice of selecting the seven school board members at-large makes it more difficult for black candidates to win election.

It was filed in December 2014, just months after 18-year-old Michael Brown, who was black and unarmed, was fatally shot during a street confrontation with white Ferguson officer Darren Wilson. A St. Louis County grand jury declined to charge Wilson, who resigned in November 2014.

Brown's death led to several protests, was a catalyst in the national Black Lives Matter movement and prompted a federal investigation into the city's police department and municipal court. The U.S. Department of Justice's scathing report, released in March, led to the resignations of Ferguson's city manager, police chief and municipal judge, and resulted in several police and court reforms.

The Ferguson-Florissant School District serves about 12,000 students in parts of 11 municipalities. While the residents of the district are nearly evenly split between black and white, 77 percent of students are black, in part because many white parents send their kids to private and parochial schools.

Five of the district's seven board members are white. Members serve staggered three-year terms and are chosen at-large in April elections.

The ACLU believes the process violates the Voting Rights Act, and blacks would be better served by election by ward or subdistrict.

"Under the circumstances of this district, at-large voting has the effect of diluting African-American votes and making it more difficult for them to elect candidates of their choice," according to ACLU attorney Tony Rotherth said.

In a statement, school district attorney Cindy Ormsby said Ferguson-Florissant's practice of electing board members at-large mirrors that of most districts in Missouri and does not violate the Voting Rights Act.



Lilah Steadman, 3, embraces President Barack Obama as her sister, Addison, 4, gazes up at the President while holding on to her mother, Emily, following a promotion ceremony for their father, Military Aide Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Steadman, in the Oval Office, Jan. 8. His mother Bonnie Steadman and brother Ryan Steadman, center, also attended. (Official White House Photo by Pete Souza)

## Goals Of NCNAACP 'It's Our Time, It's Our Vote' Campaign

By Cash Michaels  
Contributor

It was announced on Dec. 1<sup>st</sup>, the sixtieth anniversary of the day civil rights icon Rosa Parks refuse to sit in the back of a Montgomery, Ala. bus. And it is with that spirit, says NCNAACP President Rev. William Barber, that the "It's Our Time, It's Our Vote" campaign will move forward in 2016 registering record numbers of North Carolinians to vote, and mobilizing them to the polls.

The campaign, led by the NCNAACP and the Forward Together Movement, has been underway now for just over a month. A few weeks ago, black newspapers represented by the NC Black Publishers Association and the National Newspaper Publishers Association joined forces with the NAACP in North Carolina in the major 2016 voter mobilization effort, and to promote the upcoming 10th Annual Moral March on Raleigh/HK on J People's Assembly on Saturday, Feb. 13<sup>th</sup> in Raleigh.

More than 80,000 people from across the state and nation participated last year.

Rev. Barber says there are over 180 coalition partners representing from civil and economic to environmental and educational rights advocacy involved in the nonpartisan campaign. The NC Council of Churches has also joined forces in the GOTV (get out to vote) effort. Leaders in North Carolina's Hispanic community are also members of the coalition.

Per the NCNAACP, over 120 adult, youth and college branches statewide are involved, and the overall training for the campaign is being conducted by the state civil rights organization and Democracy North Carolina, a nonprofit, nonpartisan public policy advocacy group.

"Our goal is long-term, issue-based voter registration, voter education, voter mobilization, and voter protection," said Rev. Barber.

The "It's Our Time..." campaign is just one prong of the NCNAACP's voting rights battle. Ever since the NC Legislature passed the 2013 Voter ID law that effectively rolled back previous voting rights expansions, the NCNAACP and its partners have gone to state and federal courts to challenge its constitutionality.

"We have called for an injunction against the implementation of the voter ID [law], because even though we have won a lot of concessions from the state, and forced them to change the original [law] that they had through our protests and legal action, it is still quite confusing...misinformation has gone out into the community..." Rev. Barber says.

"We're still headed to court because of the constitutionality of the law itself, because we already know from the Texas case that Voter ID on its face is unconstitutional. The courts have pretty much said that."

Rev. Barber also indicted that the NCNAACP will be appealing the 2011 redistricting case after the NC Supreme Court in December upheld the skewed voting districts the Republicans in the NC General Assembly created that "stacked and packed" black voters into limited districts so that they could dominate close races with white Democrats.

The NCNAACP is also waiting on the ruling from the federal judge in Winston-Salem involving same-day registration/early voting, heard last July. Same day registration and early voting are still in effect until that ruling because the US Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals issued an injunction maintaining it.

Meanwhile, Jan. 25<sup>th</sup> is when the NCNAACP will be back in court to argue the unconstitutionality of voter photo identification. Last June, state lawmakers softened the requirement of using only a government-issued photo ID while voting, realizing that they could lose in court.

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**George White**  
George Henry White (Image courtesy of National Archives and Records Administration)



**Rep. G.K. Butterfield**  
CBC Chair

## Duke University to honor NC black congressman George White

NEW BERN (AP) - Duke University is planning a banquet later this month to remember George Henry White, the last black U.S. representative in Congress at the turn of the 20th century.

The Sun-Journal of New Bern reports the banquet will be held Jan. 29, marking the 115th anniversary of White's farewell address to Congress. In that speech, he said blacks were bidding a "temporary farewell to the American Congress" but that they would "rise up some day and come again."

White served two terms, leaving Congress in 1901. It took 28 years for another black representative to follow him.

U.S. Rep. G.K. Butterfield will be the keynote at the Duke banquet. Butterfield is a former justice of the N.C. Supreme Court and chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus.

## Sergeant in NYPD chokehold death faces departmental charges

By Colleen Long

NEW YORK (AP) - A sergeant has been stripped of her gun and badge and charged internally in the July 2014 chokehold death of Eric Garner, the first official accusation of wrongdoing in the case that helped spark a national movement on the role of race in policing.

New York Police Department Sgt. Kizzy Adonis was one of the supervising officers at the scene of Garner's death on Staten Island during an arrest on suspicion of selling loose, untaxed cigarettes. She was not part of the team out investigating that day but heard the radio call and was nearby and responded to the scene. Adonis is black and so was Garner.

Officials said Jan. 8 that Adonis was charged with failure to supervise, an internal disciplinary sanction. Sgt. Ed Mullins, the head of her union, called the charge ridiculous and political.

"She didn't have to go there - she chose to go there to help out and look what happens," he said, adding it was Commissioner William Bratton, not Adonis, who is to blame. "This incident stems from failed policies that ultimately led to the death of Eric Garner."

The encounter, caught on video by an onlooker, spurred protests about police treatment of black men.

Garner, an asthmatic father of six, was seen yelling, "I can't breathe!" 11 times before losing consciousness. The medical examiner found the chokehold contributed to his death. Coupled with police killings of unarmed black men elsewhere in recent months, the death became a flashpoint in a national debate about relations between police and minority communities.

No one has been charged criminally. Officer Daniel Pantaleo, who is white and who applied the hold, remains on desk duty. A grand jury refused to indict him on criminal charges. The chokehold is banned under NYPD policy; Pantaleo has said he was using a legal takedown maneuver called the seatbelt.

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