

Hilliard denies nonprofit group based in House office

BIRMINGHAM, Ala.—Rep. Earl Hilliard said a nonprofit group that received thousands of dollars in taxpayer money never operated out of his district office, despite records that indicate the opposite.

Hilliard, D-Birmingham, would not say whether there was a link between his office and the organization, the National African American Center Inc.

Government funds that went to the National African American Center and other groups has come under scrutiny because of reports the money, handed over by Jefferson County Commissioner Jeff Germany, was routed through different agencies and not fully accounted for.

The National African American Center Inc. received \$10,000 in January 1999 and \$11,500 in February 2000, according to The Birmingham News.

The contact listed for the larger grant was Hilliard. One of Hilliard's employees and his office phone number were given as contacts for the center. Hilliard said the center "is not and never has been located in my congressional office."

But asked if there was any connection between the center and his office, Hilliard said: "I didn't say there was and I didn't say there wasn't."

Ethics rules prohibit the use of congressional resources for anything but official House business.

The National African American Center was dissolved in July 2000. Elvira Williams, who works in Hilliard's Birmingham district office, was listed as its director and treasurer at the time.

Ethics rules do not prohibit a congressional staffer from holding outside employment. The rules would not let a staffer use congressional resources on an outside job, however.

Hilliard said he had spoken with Germany and was giving him information requested from Williams.

Sweet Honey in the Rock releases D.C. vote anthem on latest CD

WASHINGTON, D.C.—On its newest release—"Give the People Their Right to Vote!"—Sweet Honey in the Rock, D.C.'s own Grammy Award-winning a cappella sextet, has created a new theme song for the drive for full voting representation in Congress for residents of the District of Columbia.

D.C. Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton calls the song's lyrics—composed by Nitanju Bolade Casel—"a musical history lesson that encompasses all the indignities that have been heaped upon District residents since the founding of the nation's capital."

The song, in Norton's words, will make it "easier to educate people across the country and around the world about our drive for full congressional voting rights and full democracy for District residents, who suffer the unhappy and unique distinction of being the only residents of a capital city that are denied their rights of full citizenship and representation." The song's chorus declares:

No taxation without representation!
Two hundred years of exploitation
In the capital of this nation!

No representation!
In the capital of this nation
Two hundred years of exploitation
Give the people their right to vote!

The spirited chant "We want the vote!", the other selection on the compact disc, was composed by Ysaye Maria Barnwell. "I just felt it was important. Sweet Honey is based here; we were formed here. D.C. is truly the last colony, and as we travel around, there is no reason why we can't musically talk to people about this issue. It has come before the public before; it was voted down. When it comes before the public again, it needs to be voted up, and we want people to participate in this by voting for people who will vote for us to have a vote."

Speaking of "Give the People Their Right to Vote!", on WAMU's syndicated talk show "Public Interest," hosted by Koko Nnamdi, political commentator Mark Plotkin observed that "it should be our state anthem.... Every movement needs a great song. It's a long time coming but this is the right group to have done it. I hope it means the movement takes off—now that we've got a song."

Groundbreaking for Maryland African-American museum set for August

BALTIMORE—Groundbreaking on what is expected to be the second-largest African-American history museum in the country is scheduled for August in the city's touristy Inner Harbor area.

The \$33 million, 80,000-square-foot Maryland Museum of African-American History and Culture will feature artifacts, interactive exhibits, historical documents, clothing, tools and art spanning 350 years.

The museum will not just include slavery-era exhibits but also information about little-known events and individuals with which visitors may not be familiar, said Sandy Bellamy, director of development for the Maryland African American Museum Corp., a state agency created to head the museum effort.

The facility would be the largest on the East Coast and second nationwide only to the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History in Detroit. Two other black history museums in Fredericksburg, Va., and Washington also are being planned.

The state museum agency has committed \$3 million to the effort, including \$2 million in private funds. The state is paying the \$33 million construction cost, all of which has been allocated except for \$9 million expected to be approved this year, said Sen. Barbara A. Hoffman, chairman of the state Senate Budget and Taxation Committee.

The state will pay 75 percent of the museum's annual \$2 million operating costs for the first two years. After that, Maryland will be responsible for 50 percent of the costs, but Hoffman said she hopes the attraction will be self-sufficient.

The five-story museum is scheduled to open in 2004. Officials said they expect about 300,000 people to visit the museum annually.

Ford eyes Tennessee Senate seat

BY DUNCAN MANSFIELD
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

KNOXVILLE, Tenn.—U.S. Rep. Harold Ford Jr. said Friday he's prepared to endorse fellow congressional Democrat Bob Clement for the U.S. Senate but remains interested in running for the office himself.

"If Bob runs, I will support Bob," Ford said on arriving in heavily Republican East Tennessee for a full day of exploratory campaign meetings with everyone from the PTA to the NRA.

However, the three-term congressman from Memphis clearly is stumping for higher office and wants to widen his exposure.

"I hear there is an appetite for a new kind of leadership and that Tennessee is ready for it," he said. "I hope the people give me a chance to present my case and why I want to be your United States senator—if it is this time or another time."

Clement, who has not officially announced his plans, has scheduled a news conference Monday in his hometown of Nashville.

Republican Fred Thompson announced March 8 that he would not seek re-election to the Senate, touching off a flurry of activity among potential candidates for what had been a one-man race.

Former Gov. Lamar Alexander, apparently with the support of the White House, and U.S. Rep. Ed Bryant of Hendersonville are vying for the Republican nomination.

Meanwhile a large field of potential Democratic candidates has thinned to Clement



Harold Ford Jr. addresses the 2000 Democratic National Convention in Los Angeles. Ford served as the keynote speaker for the event.

and Ford after Tipper Gore, wife of former Vice President Al Gore, decided Sunday not to run. Ford was active in the Al Gore presidential campaign.

Jim Hall, former National Transportation Safety Board chairman, and U.S. Reps. John Tanner and Bart Gordon have said they won't seek the nomination but will back Clement.

But Clara Osborne wants to see Ford make the race. A supporter from Morristown, she said Ford offers "something our party needs—a mixture of experience, a hard worker and youth."

Ford, the only black in Tennessee's congressional delegation, acknowledges he

must overcome more than name recognition to win votes so far from his West Tennessee roots.

"There are some perceptions and some stereotypes that I want to take head-on," he said. "I am an African American. I am 31 years old. I come from Memphis. And my last name is Ford."

However he described himself as more of a moderate than a liberal and said that East Tennesseans will find that he shares many of their values.

"I am a different kind of Democrat. Somebody once said, a different kind of West Tennessean," Ford said. "That is the purpose of this trip."

Supporting that notion was Carl Perkins, state president of the 8,200-member Fraternal Order of Police. Perkins, an investigator with the Knoxville Police Department, greeted Ford at the Knoxville airport.

"We won't endorse anyone until after the primaries, but Congressman Ford is a friend of ours," said Perkins, noting Ford has championed pro-police legislation, including giving trained officers the right to carry weapons anywhere in the country.

Ford even praised Thompson as "one of the great independent voices in the Senate" and a model for anyone who follows him.

Pickering back at work after rejection

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

HATTIESBURG, Miss.—U.S. District Judge Charles Pickering says he worked in his chambers in Hattiesburg as the Democratic-controlled U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee scuttled his nomination for a federal appeals court post.

Pickering said Friday his immediate reaction to the vote was disappointment.

As for the immediate future, Pickering said he would "do the things I been doing—I will continue with my judicial duties."

Pickering said he would not withdraw his name from consideration for the appeals post. That could mean another vote in the future.

Senate Republican leader Trent Lott on Friday threat-

ened to retaliate against Democrats for defeating President Bush's nominee to the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans.

"I'm not going to let go of it for a long time," Lott said.

The NAACP and other liberal rights groups, a core constituency of the Democrats, strongly disapproved the nomination because they said Pickering supported segregation as a young man and had an ultraconservative voting record as a Mississippi lawmaker.

Rep. Bennie Thompson, D-Miss., said it was these con-

cerns that convinced a majority of the committee to reject the nomination.

"The vote not to confirm Pickering is evidence of the extensive record the judge has amassed and his insensitivity to civil rights concerns," said Thompson.

Pickering said he refused "to let what has happened to me during this process embitter me or shape the balance of my life. Life is too precious."

"I am extremely disturbed that judicial confirmation has degenerated into such a bitter and mean spirited process," he said. "I sincerely hope that

no other nominee has to go through what has happened to me. The price of public service should not be so high."

State GOP Chairman Jim Herring said the rejection of Pickering would make Republicans campaign even harder to return the judge's son, U.S. Rep. Chip Pickering, to Congress.

Mississippi lost a congressional seat and districts represented by Pickering and U.S. Rep. Ronnie Shows, D-Miss., were combined. Both have qualified in the new district ordered by a federal three-judge panel.



Lott

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