

Besse picks up another endorsement in his bid to be Lt. Gov.

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

The N.C. Chapter of the Sierra Club has endorsed Democrat Dan Besse for Lieutenant Governor.

In announcing the endorsement, Chris Dowdle, chair of the N.C. Sierra Club political committee, said, "Dan Besse has distinguished himself as a champion of environmental stewardship."

The Sierra Club made its decision following a review of candidates' records, their responses to a detailed issue questionnaire, and direct interviews. The Sierra Club has more than 20,000 members across North Carolina.

Dowdle added, "Dan Besse is a thoughtful, pragmatic and capable leader whose environmental leadership will translate well in the office of Lieutenant Governor."

"I am honored to receive the support of the Sierra Club," said Besse. "They speak for the millions of North Carolinians who understand that our health and our future depend on clean water, clean air and our green and productive land."

Besse is currently an elected member of the Winston-Salem City Council. He chairs the Piedmont Triad Early Action Compact, which this year has been recognized for its role in helping the Piedmont Triad meet federal clean air standards for ground-level ozone (the major ingredient in urban smog).

As a member of the City Council, Besse has worked for energy conservation, stronger stormwater management, public transit, pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods, clean air and recycling.

An environmental attorney who has worked with environmental groups since 1978, Besse has also been endorsed by the Conservation PAC, and by the Progressive Democrats of North Carolina.

Waters

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first democratic elections, she was a member of the official U.S. delegation to attend the inauguration of President Nelson Mandela in Pretoria.

Congresswoman Waters has continued to be a friend to the people of South Africa, as well as oppressed people across Africa and throughout the world. For the past nine years, she has led congressional efforts to cancel the debts of the world's poorest countries. In 1999, she worked with the Clinton Administration and her colleagues in Congress, to develop the Enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative to reduce the debts of poor countries in Africa and throughout the world, thereby enabling them to invest their resources in health care, education, poverty reduction and other programs that meet human needs. On July 13, 2000, Waters offered an amendment on the Floor of the House of Representatives to increase

funding for this important initiative from \$69 million - an inadequate amount supported by House Republican leadership - to \$225 million. The passage of the Waters amendment led to the full funding of the HIPC Initiative by the Republican Congress.

The Congresswoman was also a leader of congressional efforts to restore democracy and protect human rights in Haiti and Liberia, and she is now working to expedite complete debt cancellation for these two needy and deserving countries. Congresswoman Waters also leads congressional efforts to address the HIV/AIDS epidemic, which infects over 18 percent of the adult population of South Africa. She is currently the Co-Chair of the CBC Task Force on HIV/AIDS. She has introduced legislation to allow people in developing countries like South Africa to have access to generic HIV/AIDS drugs at affordable prices, and she is working with her colleagues to increase funding for international HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention programs.

Spending

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services. The figures come from the N.C. Institute of Minority Economic Development's research.

Grandberry said he believed that most of those in attendance at the lunch and learn, which included several business and community leaders, were surprised that minority dollars pack such a punch.

"I don't think people know that; I really don't think that they understand the power that they have," he said. "We have so much that we could be doing in this community, and I'm glad that the Urban League is part of the solution."

Mayor Pro Tempore Vivian Burke was among those who braved dreary conditions to attend the three-hour event.

"I love the dollar because I know the dollar demands respect," Burke said as she greeted the group. "You should make sure that your dollar is respected and that you're not taken for granted."

The audience members murmured in agreement.

The N.C. Institute of Minority Economic Development enlisted the help of Dr. James Johnson Jr., of UNC Chapel Hill's Kenan-Flagler Business School, to gauge minority spending habits across the state. Johnson compiled the data derived from research he and Dr. John

Kasarda, also a UNC professor, conducted.

Johnson and Kasarda have been crisscrossing the state to present their findings to the public.

"I think it's both a form of enlightened self interest for (black people) as a community and politically it makes good sense because ... there's an assumption out there that we cost more than we contribute in the economy," Johnson said of the research. "Someone has to set that record straight."

Johnson spoke at length about the Hispanic population's impact on the greater economy, even debating the pros and cons of illegal immigration with audience members.

"I think the most important thing is to recognize that our native-born population is aging, aging out of the childbearing years and the viable working ages. We're not reproducing at a rate in this country that we'll have a well-trained, viable workforce in the years ahead," he asserted. "My hope is that we understand the nature of demographic change and that the tolerance is tied to also another important word - competitiveness - we need people; we need talent ... if you can't develop it on your own, you figure out how to import it."

For more information about the NC Institute of Minority Economic Development, visit www.ncimed.com.



City Council Member Dan Besse



Photos by Layla Farmer

Liberty Plus customer Shannon Fair, from left, with store cashier Wendy Ferguson and Manager Shannon Moya.

Below: Raul Gonzales and Louis Melendez of Martinez Repairs.

Merchants

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have to worry about all this parking," he said of Liberty Street, where his shop, Cutt Creator Barber Shop, now stands. "I felt like Liberty was a good area; it wasn't a shop-around so, competition wasn't all that stiff, and just to help the community."

Though Cunningham is comfortable on Liberty Street, he's aware that not everyone shares his sentiments.

"I have some customers ... that really they want to get their hair cut before it gets dark because they figure that's when the crime, all that stuff starts," he said.

The Liberty Street CDC has been working on the corridor for the past five years, tearing down old buildings, encouraging new business, and tackling the ever-present crime rate. Cunningham says he has seen a real difference since the CDC moved in.

"They have really cleaned up this area," he said. "I know it's going to take a slow



process, but they are really doing a great job."

The corporation recently announced the formation of a Merchants' Association, where shop owners like Cunningham can work together to improve the conditions in the area for their businesses.

"We felt that (through the association) the business people on Liberty Street would be able to communicate with

each other, be able to help each other and then assist Liberty CDC in bringing other businesses to town and fixing up the older businesses on Liberty Street," said Board Chair Jim Shaw. "We got some good response the last two meetings and hope we can get them involved in participating in the meetings and doing some new things on Liberty."

The presence of the organ-

ization is welcome news for Becky Flowers. She and her late husband J.D. Vickers purchased a swath of land along Liberty Street in the 1980s and have operated several different businesses there since.

"This is really a growing area through here. We get a lot of traffic that passes by," she said. "It's really kind of stayed the same for a long time... but lately, it is really booming."

Flowers is an active member of the Merchants' Association. She currently owns the Liberty Plus gas station and convenience store. Her Cruise One travel franchise is housed in the adjacent building, which she also owns. The remaining square footage is rented to other business owners. She says she is excited about the upward mobility of the area, which she credits largely to the efforts of the CDC.

"It's just growing; I would say in the next few years, it's going to be the place to be," she happily declared. "There's still room for improvement but it's getting there."

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