

Note

No perjury charge for Burris

SPRINGFIELD, Illinois (AP) — An Illinois prosecutor says the U.S. Senator appointed to fill President Barack Obama's vacant Senate seat will not be charged with perjury.

State's Attorney John Schmidt said Sen. Roland Burris will not be charged because while the circumstances surrounding his controversial appointment to the Senate by then-Gov. Rod Blagojevich were vague, they wouldn't support a perjury charge.

The Illinois Democrat still faces an investigation by the Senate Ethics Committee, which is looking into the circumstances of Burris' appointment to the Senate. That committee, however, hasn't voted to oust a sitting member since the Civil War era.

Burris, 71, was appointed by former Gov. Rod Blagojevich after the FBI arrested the governor on corruption charges, including allegations he tried to sell the seat for political donations.

"I am obviously very pleased with today's decision by State's Attorney John Schmidt. His investigation was both thorough and fair, and I am glad that the truth has prevailed," Burris said in a statement.

Burris initially told the committee he had no contact with Blagojevich or his supporters, but later revealed he had talked to several aides and had discussed hosting a fundraiser.

ACLU, city settle over slur citation

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — A Louisiana city agreed to pay damages to an author who claims police violated his civil rights when they cited him for having a sign with a racial slur on his car, officials said last Thursday.

The American Civil Liberties Union of Louisiana Executive Director Marjorie Esman said the financial terms of its settlement with the city of Amite wouldn't be disclosed. The city also agreed to reimburse the ACLU for its costs of representing Johnny Duncan, Esman said.

Duncan, an Amite resident, sued the city and its police department after officers ticketed him for violating the state's obscenity law.

The lawsuit says Duncan, who is black, was parked outside a restaurant in August 2007 when officers confronted him about a sign on his car advertising a book he wrote called "You Might Be a N—r." Duncan wasn't arrested, and the ticket was later dismissed.

"Free speech in this country means that the police are not allowed to arrest or detain someone simply because they do not like what the person says," Esman said in a statement. "Johnny Duncan, like anyone else, has the right to advertise a book in words that, whether or not they may offend, are not illegal or obscene."

Christopher Moody, a lawyer for Amite, said the city agreed to the settlement to avoid costly litigation.

Staffer reprimanded for racist e-mail

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Senate Speaker Ron Ramsey said last week that a "strong letter of reprimand" was the proper action to take against an employee of a Republican lawmaker who used a state computer to send a racist e-mail about President Barack Obama.

Sherri Goforth, a legislative aide for Senate Republican Caucus Chairwoman Diane Black, sent the e-mail last month to other staff for Republican senators. It shows a portrait or photo of each U.S. president except Obama, who is depicted with wide eyes in a black background.

Black acknowledged that Goforth's action was a policy violation and that a letter of reprimand was placed in the aide's file. However, Democratic legislators say Goforth should be fired.

Goforth said she was forwarded the e-mail by an acquaintance with no political ties.

"I should have deleted it upon receipt," she said. "Again, I am deeply sorry and offer a sincere apology to anyone offended." Black said she didn't know about the e-mail until another staffer informed her. She said it does not reflect her opinions or beliefs. She said she decided after consulting with state human resources staff to reprimand Goforth verbally and place a written reprimand in her file, adding that Goforth is a 20-year employee who has had a good record.

Democratic Sen. Thelma Harper of Nashville said a reprimand was not enough.

"I can't speak for other senators ... but she would no longer be a state employee in my office," Harper said.

HUD receives record number of discrimination claims

WASHINGTON (Afro-American Newspapers/ NNPA) — More than 10,000 housing discrimination complaints were filed in 2008, according to a report released last week by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The report, which is produced for Congress each year, shows 44 percent of the 10,552 cases were filed by persons with disabilities. Thirty-five percent, or 3,699, of the complaints alleged discrimination against African Americans and other people of color based on race.

"Despite progress, housing discrimination continues in America... We must put a stop to it and stand up for anyone who is unlawfully denied a home of their own," said John Trasviña, HUD assistant secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity. "Fighting against housing discrimination and affirmatively furthering fair housing are twin priorities of HUD and the Obama administration."

A copy of the report can be found at HUD.Gov.



Trasviña

The Chronicle (USPS 067-910) was established by Ernest H. Pitt and Ndubisi Egemonye in 1974 and is published every Thursday by Winston-Salem Chronicle Publishing Co. Inc., 617 N. Liberty Street, Winston-Salem, N.C. 27101. Periodicals postage paid at Winston-Salem, N.C. Annual subscription price is \$30.72.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: The Chronicle, P.O. Box 1636 Winston-Salem, NC 27102-1636

Slain Holocaust Museum guard remembered at funeral

BY DOROTHY ROWLEY AND LATOYA TOOLES
AFRO-AMERICAN NEWSPAPERS

WASHINGTON (NNPA) — In an emotionally-charged eulogy that took place on a radiant afternoon, Stephen Tyrone Johns, the special police officer who was recently slain at the U.S. Holocaust Museum, was remembered as a gentle giant with a big heart and warm smile.

Hundreds of mourners, including local and national dignitaries, museum staff, law enforcement officers, and a host of Holocaust survivors, poured into the massive Ebenezer A.M.E. Church in Fort Washington, Md., to pay their final respects to a man also described as having uncommon valor and compassion.

In the hour-long eulogy, delivered by the Rev. Dr. John L. McCoy, senior pastor at The Word of God Baptist Church in Washington, mourners were encouraged to live in racial harmony and to not tolerate blatant acts of racism such as that which claimed Johns' life.

"Tolerance isn't a valid or godly response to racism, polite silence is no longer a viable action," said McCoy, who reminded the congregation that Johns' last act was one of kindness.

"He fell victim to a senseless and barbaric act as he extended an act of kindness," said McCoy. "[But] don't retaliate against racist acts with racism [as] we must not stoop to hating the racist."

Referring to the Holocaust, McCoy added that the hope of the museum is that the world never again experiences such crimes as those of World War II.

He went on to say that Johns "was a victim



Photo by Khalid Naji-Allah
Stephen Johns Jr., son of slain guard Stephen Johns Sr., holds the American flag presented to him at his father's funeral on June 19.

U.S. soccer star suing another player over racist taunts

SPECIAL TO THE NNPA FROM GIN

During eight years of professional soccer in Europe, American-born Oguchi (pronounced Gooch) Onyewu had grown accustomed to monkey noises and racial remarks made by fans

toward Black players.

But racist taunts at a recent match in Belgium finally pushed the former Howard University student to action. In what many consider an overdue reaction to racism in sports, Onyewu is suing his White opponent Jelle Van Damme over inflammatory remarks made on May 21, when Van

Damme allegedly called Onyewu a "dirty ape."

In a legal complaint filed in a Belgian court, Onyewu claims Van Damme violated the country's laws against public insult and criminal defamation.

"I just wanted to make it public," Onyewu, 27, said in an interview. "People have got to be aware that certain things in sport are not acceptable."

Onyewu is not seeking monetary damages but simply "moral compensation" — in other words, a public

apology. Van Damme has denied making any racial remarks during the match and has said he is not a racist.

Said Onyewu's lawyer: "You have players of African origin who are regularly pushed by opponents with words to provoke or

unsettle them. Most don't have the professional status to come in the open and say, 'I've had enough of that.' Oguchi is a big guy, mentally and physically. He's well established. With this action, he is saying, 'If I don't do it, who is going to do it?'"



Onyewu



Van Damme



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