

Coleman strives for lieutenant governor spot again

BY CASH MICHAELS
FOR THE NCBPA

Editor's note - There are a large number of African-American candidates running for office in North Carolina during the 2016 election, certainly one of the largest ever. During this campaign season, we will focus on several of the campaigns so that our readers know more about them.

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For Linda Coleman, it's about the issues and whether North Carolina families are being treated fairly by this economy and their government. With a life steeped in public service, Coleman believes as lieutenant governor, she can make a difference for those families, which is why she is vying again this fall for the office.

"Public service is what I love," Coleman once told a questioner while campaigning in Greensboro in 2012.

First Ms. Coleman has to win the March 15 primary against Democratic opponents Holly Jones, Ron Newton, and Robert Wilson. If she wins that, Coleman will be on the November ballot, along with Libertarian J.J. Summerell, seeking to unseat first-term Lt. Governor Dan Forest, who defeated Coleman by a slim margin in 2012.

She wants that rematch. "The Republican majority running things in Raleigh continues to unravel so much of what built our great state ...," Coleman says on her campaign website, "... and all the while they've had a cheering partner in our lieutenant governor. It's time for a different approach."

Lieutenant governor is an elected position separate from governor in North Carolina, meaning theoretically Republican Gov. Pat McCrory could win re-election, and Coleman, a Democrat, could be elected as lieutenant governor.

Beyond being the next in line constitutionally in case, for some reason, the elected governor is unable to fulfill his duties, or presiding over important events in the governor's absence, the N.C. lieutenant governor also presides over the N.C. Senate, voting there only to break a tie. The lieutenant governor also chairs various state boards and commissions, including the state Board of Education and Board of Community Colleges.

"Of course education is very key to our future and our children's future," Coleman told the African-American Caucus of the N.C. Democratic Party last November in Chapel Hill. "And community colleges are important because they connect businesses to the workforce training that's done for this state."

Beyond all that, service as lieutenant governor can be a springboard for a possible run for governor in the future, political observers say. Indeed, Gov. Beverly Perdue first served as a state lawmaker, then as a lieutenant governor before finally winning the top seat in 2008, making history as the first woman governor in North Carolina history.

If Coleman indeed wins in November, she would be only the second African-American in the history of the state to be a member of the N.C. Council of State - a constitutional panel of the state's nine top elected officials, chaired by the governor, who make important decisions about the borrowing of money, the sale of state property, and other matters.

When both governors Perdue and Pat McCrory wanted approval of the Dorothea



Candidate Coleman

Dix property in Raleigh, they both brought the matter to the N.C. Council of State, where the governor, lieutenant governor, secretary of state, attorney general, commissioner of agriculture, commissioner of insurance, commissioner of labor, superintendent of public instruction, state treasurer and state auditor then voted on it.

The only African-American ever to serve on it was the late Ralph Campbell Jr., the state auditor from 1993 to 2005.

Coleman is the mother of two, a grandmother of two, and "a proud product of the public school system of this state."

She was born and raised in Greenville, earning her B.A. from N.C. A&T University in Greensboro. She later earned a master's in public administration from the University of Pittsburgh's Graduate School of Public and International Affairs.

In her public life and after teaching in the classroom, Coleman was elected to the Wake Board of Commissioners, chairing

that body. She was then elected to the N.C. House, serving three terms, helping to pass the Earned Income Tax Credit "which helped put money back into the pockets of working families," she says.

As a state lawmaker, Coleman also helped to pass the Racial Justice Act, which helped correct racial-biased death penalty sentences. Both laws have since been repealed by the Republican-led N.C. General Assembly.

Coleman is also proud of what Democrats accomplished in giving women access to affordable health care in the state, tax incentives to small businesses, in addition to more funding for education.

Indeed Coleman has blasted Lt. Gov. Forest for suggesting that public education in the state can be funded through the sale of license plates, like the special one he has on his car.

"It is the General Assembly's job to fund education, and that's what we need to do," Coleman said recently.

Coleman then went on to lead as the director of the Office of State Personnel from 2009 to 2012. She left that post in 2012 to first run for lieutenant governor. She lost by a razor-thin 6,800-vote margin to Dan Forest with 2.1 million votes cast for her statewide.

"Raleigh is just not working for us anymore. We are working for Raleigh to fund the wealthiest among us," Coleman told the AAC-NCDP in November, noting how Republican tax reform has shifted the tax burden from the rich to working families, and eliminated the childcare tax credit.

"We need somebody to go to Raleigh and say, 'Listen, let's start working for the people of North Carolina,'" Linda Coleman says about her candidacy for lieutenant governor. "Let's bring North Carolina back."



Submitted photos

Linda Sutton of Democracy North Carolina speaks to the Winston-Salem Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc.



Linda Sutton of Democracy North Carolina, middle, is flanked by Elizabeth Newton, left, and Denise Adams of the Winston-Salem Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc.

Deltas partner with Democracy NC to host voter education forum

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

The Winston-Salem Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc. partnered with Democracy North Carolina to host a Voter Education Forum on Saturday, Jan. 16.

The forum was held at the Delta Arts Center in Winston Salem and hosted by the Chapter's Political Awareness/Social Action Committee.

Linda Sutton, Special Voter Registration for Democracy North Carolina, led the forum. Sutton provided information on new N.C. voting laws that will take effect this year.

Beginning March 15, 2016 during the primary election, a photo-I.D. will

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be required to vote. There are some exceptions including voters who swear they have a religious objection to being photographed and/or voters who use curbside voting because of their age or physical disability.

These voters may show a utility bill, bank statement, paycheck, or government document with name and current address in lieu of a photo I.D.

However, if there are voters who do not have a photo I.D., they can vote

via provisional ballot.

Voters should ask for the provisional ballot at the polls. These voters will need to provide their birthdate and the last four digits of their Social Security Number.

"With the primary election on March 15, we have a moral obligation to educate ourselves and our community on new voting laws that will affect all of us," said Elizabeth Newton, President of the Winston-Salem Alumnae Chapter.

The event was free and open to the public. Denise Adams is the chair of the Political Awareness/Social Action Committee. For more information regarding future education forums, contact Elizabeth Newton at 336-784-6508.

Volunteers to help with free tax returns

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

Certified volunteers with Forsyth Free Tax will provide free tax preparation for various 1040 return forms beginning Tuesday, Feb. 1.

Interested individuals are asked to bring a picture ID, Social Security Card for themselves and each dependent they are claiming, all W-2s and/or 1099s, employer ID number or Social Security number of childcare providers, and last year's tax returns (if itemizing).

For direct deposit of any refund, please bring a check or savings account informa-

tion. Some locations and times for the free tax preparation are as follows:

*10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Mondays through Fridays and 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturdays at Experiment in Self-Reliance, 3480 Dominion St.

*4-7:30 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays at Goodwill Industries, 2760 Peters Creek Parkway

*4-8 p.m. on Wednesdays and Thursdays at Goodwill Industries, 2701 University Parkway

For a complete list of places, go to: <http://eistr.org/programs/forsyth-free-tax/>.



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