

N.C. NAACP ramps up general election plans

BY CASH MICHAELS
FOR THE CHRONICLE

It's looking less and less like Gov. Pat McCrory's attorneys will be able to cajole the U.S. Supreme Court to stay the recent U.S. Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals ruling dismantling the state's 2013 voter ID law, espe-



cially after the federal appeals court turned the Republican governor down last week.

That means the N.C. NAACP is "full speed ahead" with strategies to maximize voter registration, voter education and getting-out-the-vote in time for the November general elections.

On Saturday, Aug. 6, hundreds of activists from NAACP chapters and coalition groups across the state gathered at Christian Faith Baptist Church in Raleigh not only to celebrate their recent federal court victory, and commemorate the 51st anniversary of the signing of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, but also to plot the way forward now that 17-day early voting, same-day registration, out-of-precinct provisional balloting and pre-registration for 16 and 17-year-old prospective voters

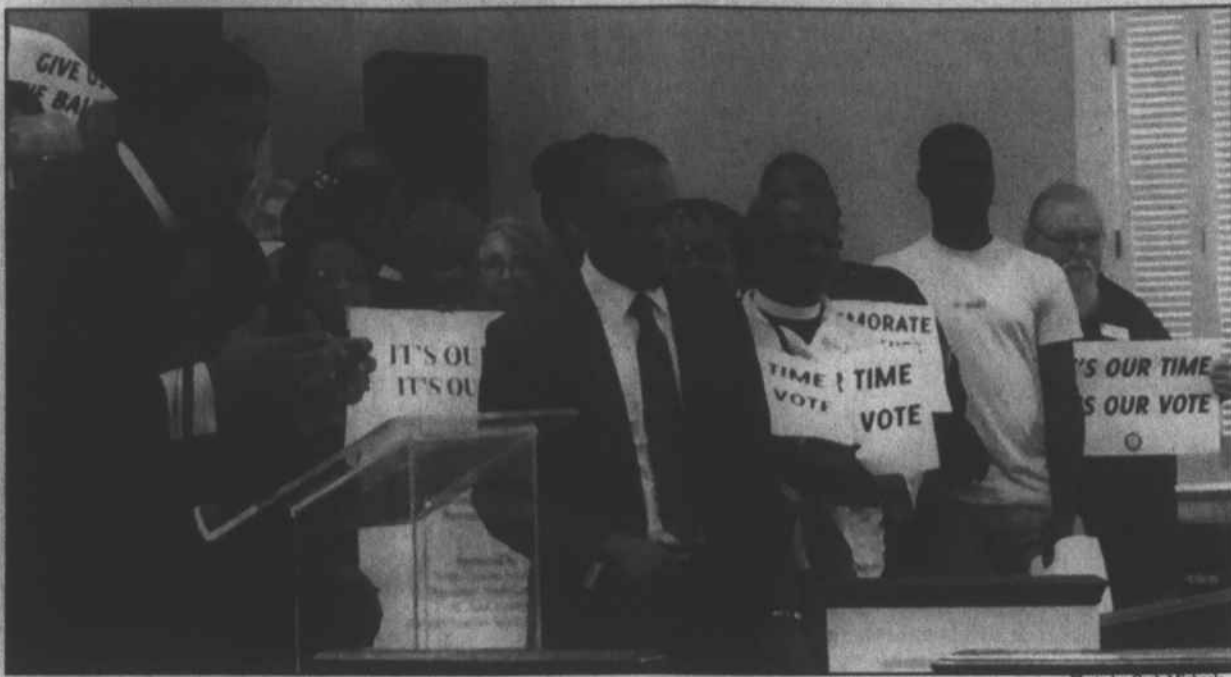


Photo by Cash Michaels

As Senior Pastor Kenneth Cooper, right, of Christian Faith Baptist Church in Raleigh and various NAACP and coalition members listen, the N.C. NAACP president, the Rev. Dr. William Barber II, extols those gathered last Saturday, Aug. 6, to work harder to maximize voter participation in November.

has been legally reinstated. The N.C. NAACP and Democracy N.C., a non-partisan advocacy group, estimate that as a result of the federal appellate court ruling, at least 100,000 more North Carolinians will now be eligible to vote in November.

"It takes all of us to win these battles," declared a jubilant, but cautious N.C. NAACP president, the Rev. Dr. William Barber II.

"We must be mindful that we must continue to mobilize ... so we must activate mobilization plans to ensure that we continue to protect this franchise

because this struggle is still real," said Derick Smith, Political Action chair of the N.C. NAACP.

According to Barber, the N.C. NAACP is coordinating over 1,300 churches, synagogues, temples and mosques to be a part of the Sunday "Souls to the Polls" early voting effort. Thousands of volunteers across the state have been recruited for both voter registration and education of the issues, and during the early voting period and on Nov. 8, there will be volunteers assigned to voter protection, making sure that the letter of the

law is being carried out to ensure a fair election.

The first priority for NAACP and coalition members was to pressure their local county boards of election (BOE) across the state to institute new plans that expand early voting sites and accessibility starting Oct. 20. Barber vowed that the NAACP would "show up at every" local BOE meeting, "Because we will not have a ruling by the courts that calls what you have done 'unconstitutional,' and then allow you to play mischief with it and still suppress the right to vote."

In Guilford County on Monday, over 300 activists heeded the call, storming the BOE meeting there, demanding that the board to do away with plans to drastically cut a dozen of 25 designated early voting sites, including at N.C. A&T University and UNC - Greensboro. Under pressure, the GOP-led board capitulated, allowing sites to stay at the two schools, and not cutting any other sites.

But for the first seven days, early voting will be only held at the Guilford County Board of Elections. Later that evening in

Wake County, the local BOE met by teleconference, thus disallowing any public input, deciding to also extend the initial seven days of the 17-day early voting period, starting Oct. 20, only at the downtown Raleigh BOE office. Prior to the decision, NAACP activists objected to that option, saying that in a county as large and populated as Wake, having only one early voting site for the first seven days was most inconvenient.

One Republican Wake BOE member, Edwin Woodhouse, cousin to Dallas Woodhouse, executive director of the N.C. Republican Party, proposed eliminating Sunday "Souls to the Polls" voting that African-American churchgoers favor, and the voting site at N.C. State University. Both motions were rejected 2-1.

New Hanover County's BOE will meet Aug. 18 at 3 p.m. to make its decision.

On Saturday, Barber told those gathered at the N.C. NAACP meeting that, "Now that we have won the case, we must use what we've won, and we must protect what we've won. We must have millions to march to the polls, and hundreds to march to these boards of elections."

"Our excitement..." Rev. Barber added, "...must now be turned into effort."

Voting

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County Democratic Party, said "Shame on them." An online petition has since been circulated to have the WSSU site reopened.

Last week, the state BOE instructed local BOEs in all 100 counties to revise their early voting site plans in lieu of the federal ruling. At a meeting Saturday in Raleigh, the Rev. Dr. William Barber II, N.C. NAACP president, warned attendees that all local BOEs might be resistant to

adopting the 17-day mandate, and might try to cut the number of sites or hours of operation as a result.

Since studies prove that African-Americans favor early voting, social activists like Mendez say fighting to have more sites and hours is one battle. But it's all for naught if there aren't strong voter education and get-out-to-vote efforts as well.

"We have to do everything we can to get people out to vote," says Mendez. "That's the biggest challenge."

"We do not want, and cannot afford to

have a repeat of Reconstruction," he insisted.

Mendez is confident that Winston-Salem/Forsyth County will have a good voter turnout in November. But voter education is essential, he said, also challenging every church to have a "social action ministry" committee to not only register people in the church, but also in their communities.

"I plan to hit these streets myself, and

go into a lot of these communities, talk to folks, and really try to get them to come out and vote," Mendez told *The Chronicle*, emphasizing that people really need to know what's at stake.

"There can't be an excuse for anybody not to get out to the polls," Mendez said, later adding, "They have to realize that their behinds are at risk. If Donald Trump gets elected, it's going to be doubly open season on black folk and people of color."

Allen

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ers. During its public meetings, Tsujii had the three-member Forsyth BOE look over disputed voter signatures that staff determined didn't match the signature on their voter registration and the board ruled some were valid.

Tsujii estimated that close to 3,000 out of the 3,636 signatures would have counted if the verification process hadn't ended. He said Allen had turned in an additional 2,000 signatures last month that weren't processed before she ended her unaffiliated bid.

In her withdrawal letter, Allen accused the Forsyth BOE of "negligent handling" of the petitions and giving her "misinformation." During an interview with *The Chronicle* last week, she said she believed the mistakes to be intentional, accusing BOE staff of bias.

Tsujii denied these accusations.

"It was clerical human error, but nothing of negligence or intentional mishandling," said Tsujii.

Tsujii said 10 different BOE staff, including temporary workers, spent hundreds of man hours entering the information on petitions into computerized modules provided by the State BOE for verification. He said staff followed statute and direction from the State BOE, which Tsujii consulted throughout the process. Tsujii and local board members have said repeatedly in meetings they tried to be as fair and transparent as possible in the process.

Though Allen filed a form for a write-in candidacy, mayor is a position that always has a write-in blank for voters to write in whoever they like.

Allen said that she chose to run as unaffiliated because she believes voters shouldn't follow political parties, and instead look at who is the best person for the job.

Local author details troubled childhood in varied memoir

BY TIMOTHY RAMSEY
THE CHRONICLE

A troubled childhood is a common theme with many American youths. For some they are never able to overcome the trauma they endured; for others it motivates them to succeed. In the case of Latisha R. Stuckey, it propelled her all the way to a master's degree and to become an author.



Stuckey

On Friday, August 19, at the Enterprise Conference and Banquet Center, Stuckey will officially release her book titled "Cast Down but not Destroyed, Destiny's Child." The book is a collection of letters, Scriptures, poems and memories written to her birth and adoptive parents.

"I initially decided to write the book to give a voice to children who have gone through similar trou-

ma and childhood issues such as myself," said Stuckey. "I have really vivid memories to abuse my brothers and I sustained when we were younger and my book chronicles a lot of that from the eyes of a child."

In the book she recalls her encounters with Child Protective Services from the age of four. She details the issues her mother was dealing with, of being a young mother of multiple children without the assistance of the father in the home. She goes on to describe how her mother would leave her and her siblings with others or alone in the home altogether. They were taken from their mother by the courts and spent time in different homes until her aunt adopted them.

Once being placed with her aunt, she gained the stability she had longed for.

At the age of 14 she had the idea of writing a book. That idea remained with her for the next 20 years, until she sat down and put pen to pad. The Glenn High School graduate stated from her work with individuals in mental health and substance abuse, it sparked her to finally fulfill her dream of writing the book.

Following her graduation from Glenn, Stuckey has gone on to obtain her B.S. in Human Services from Gardner-Webb University, as well as her Master's in Human Services, and Marriage and Family Counseling from Liberty University. She wants her book to bring healing to those who have gone through similar issues in their childhood.

The book release will begin at 6:30 p.m. and will be open to the public. There will be spoken word and liturgical dance, along with a soloist.

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