

## Cooper

from page A1

efforts that the state Republican Party, as well as McCrory's campaign in the roles they've played in basically trying to basically delegitimize primarily black votes. That's the whole reason the [recount effort] was focused on Durham County, and if you look at some of the other places where they challenged votes — Bladen and other counties, it's always aiming at some hidden implications that people are trying to commit fraud in the voting process."

Sen. Blue continued, "Well, when you think that, and you go single out primarily black areas and black voters, the logical extension is that you're trying to imply that black folk are committing voter fraud. And it's simply not so."

Even with that controversy, Democrats are happy with the win.

State Sen. Paul Lowe (D-Forsyth) told The Chronicle that he was certainly excited that "we're going to have a Democrat

in the Governor's Mansion, and we're pushing for the best, no question about that!"

However, that excitement stopped at the GOP edge, perhaps portending a rocky relationship between the new Democratic governor and the Republican-led General Assembly.

"We hope Gov.-elect Cooper is willing to work with us to continue improving public education and cutting taxes on families and job creators — policies championed by Gov. McCrory that have generated budget surpluses, robust economic growth and hundreds of thousands of new jobs," said Senate President Pro-tem Sen. Phil Berger (R-Rockingham). "Given that Gov.-elect Cooper won his new office with a razor-thin plurality, it is clear there is no groundswell of public support for his campaign pledge of a massive income tax increase on our state's citizens and businesses."

But what will have Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper, particularly to poor communities of color that, under Gov. McCrory,

saw their voting rights corrupted, Medicaid not expanded, and unemployment benefits reduced?

In an exclusive interview conducted just before Election Day, Roy Cooper made clear that he would be a governor devoted not only to helping the middle — class, but also the working poor.

"We've got a lot of work to do to get [Gov. McCrory and Republican lawmakers'] emphasis off helping those at the top and fostering some type of trickle-down economics, and [instead] investing in public education, and in healthcare," Cooper said.

When asked how African-Americans and Latinos would benefit from his administration, Cooper said, "It's important for us to have a state government that looks like the people that it represents."

"I will recruit people of color in important leadership positions in this state. I will lead efforts for us to work hard to engage in meaningful dialogue that results in action to help us fight discrimination at all levels. People in many communities feel targeted

and discriminated against, and they want to be heard and respected," then candidate Cooper said.

"We have a lot of work to do to increase that effort to have mutual respect between state government and people, between law enforcement and people, between our education system and people. I want us to be moving forward in the fight to improve race relations, instead of backward, and it's pretty clear that over the last four years" Cooper noted, "... North Carolina has been moving backward."

During a Democratic Party debate before the March 15th primaries, Roy Cooper vowed even then to recruit a diverse cabinet and administration once elected governor.

"That's what we should be about, being inclusive," then-candidate Cooper said then, indicating that he already has a diverse office as state attorney general. "The first thing we have to admit is that racism does exist."

He blasted the Republicans for legislation that gave "big tax giveaways to out-of-state cor-

porations at the expense of the middle-class and our public schools," further accusing the GOP of supporting a "tax structure that makes it harder on everyday hard-working people."

Cooper promised to bring an end to tax breaks for the rich, promising instead to make sound investments in public schools, pay teachers more, and promoting economic development in communities of color and rural areas.

Regarding the high unemployment rate among African-Americans, Cooper said beyond investing to improve public education, he would push for a living wage to help lift people out of poverty, and better employment opportunities.

When it came to voting rights, the future governor said he "strongly" supported efforts in Congress to fully reinstate the 1965 Voting Rights Act, later saying in October that he totally agreed with the findings of the U.S. Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals when it struck down North Carolina's 2013 voter suppression law.

Though Roy Cooper got strong support from the black community during the election, many in Forsyth County were still angry with him for refusing, as state attorney general, to step into the Calvin Michael Smith case.

Smith, who was recently released from prison after almost 20 years for a brutal beating of a store assistant manager, maintained his innocence, and sought a new trial based on evidence of sloppy police work. But Cooper refused to join Smith's defense attorneys in petitioning the court.

Gov.-elect Cooper's transition team did not wait for McCrory's concession speech Monday, having been up and running for weeks, putting the pieces of his administration in place in time for taking office on January 1, 2017.

Meanwhile outgoing Gov. Pat McCrory promised a smooth transition from his administration to Cooper's.

## DNC

from page A1

and was appointed by Sanders to the committee that crafted the Democratic Party platform this year. He is co-chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, which champions things like universal healthcare, civil rights and environmental protection.

Keith announced his bid for party chair last month and was endorsed by Sanders, Sen. Elizabeth Warren, incoming Senate Minority Leader Sen. Chuck Schumer, and current Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid.

"My friend Keith Ellison is a terrific leader and a strong progressive who knows how to get things done," Reid said in a statement. "Now is the time for new thinking and a fresh start at the DNC. Now is the time for Keith."

## Firestorm of criticism

Keith's bid has also drawn its share of detractors who are accusing him of anti-Semitism because of his criticism of Israel and the United States policies supporting the Jewish nation. Critics also point to his defense of Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan in the 1990s. Keith attended Farrakhan's Million Man March in 1995, but was never a member of the Nation.

Eric said he also attended the Million Man March, along with the Rev. Jesse Jackson and thousands of others. Crowd estimates vary widely, but at least 400,000 people attended the march to bring light to issues like unemployment and poverty in the black community. Eric said attendees came because of those issues and not as an endorsement of the anti-semitic things Farrakhan has said over the years.

Keith told NPR he regretted defending Farrakhan decades ago and hoped that he'll be judged on his record as a lawmaker.

"I was very proud to be part of the Million Man March," he said. "I think it's one of the best things that I ever did. Just the fact that, you know, at the time I didn't pay close enough scrutiny to some of the other things that he was saying. You know, that's something I just live and learn."

Eric said his brother has been strong on Israel and supporting a two-state solution. He said people

were trying to smear Keith because of his religion.

It's familiar territory for Keith, who had similar accusations involving his faith brought up when he was sworn into Congress a decade ago. In November, the Anti-Defamation League issued a statement saying that despite sometimes disagreeing with Keith on Israel, he is "a man of good character" and that "there is no room for innuendo or slander because of his faith or his race." The ADL has since said they oppose him being DNC chair after 2010 remarks surfaced of Keith stating that United States policy in the Middle East is "governed by what is bad or good" for Israel while not giving other countries enough consideration and urging Americans with roots in the region to get involved. Keith responded with a letter to the ADL reiterating his support of Israel and saying he's "always fought anti-Semitism, racism, sexism and homophobia."

## A new direction for Democrats

The fifth district Keith represents in Minnesota had the lowest voter turnout in the state and now has the highest, which is impressive in a state with the nation's best voter turnout. He said he'll try to replicate those results nationwide for Democrats.

Eric said he believes Keith will be a "grassroots" leader that will make the party less "top heavy." Eric said he anticipates Keith will bring the party further left and make it more progressive. He said that such a shift is needed now because Democrats have tried to be "Republican-lite" and it didn't work.

"Democrats recognize whatever we were doing in the past, it was insufficient because now we have President-elect Donald Trump," said Eric. "So we have to try new methods. If we're Democrats, we need to be true to our values, we need to be true to our progressive values and need to come up with an economic message that will resonate with working class people."

Former DNC Chair Howard Dean has dropped out of the race. The remaining announced candidates are New Hampshire Democratic Party Chair Raymond Buckley and South Carolina Democratic Party Chair Jaime Harrison.



Rep. Keith Ellison, who is now running for Democratic National Committee chair, speaks to local Democrats at a 2014 event.

## Novant Health Summit Sleep and Neurology

We welcome Corey Lamar, MD, to our team to help provide our community increased access to expert neurology care. Dr. Lamar joins Novant Health Summit Sleep and Neurology, and is board-certified in neurology and neurophysiology.



Corey Lamar, MD

Our providers treat all neurological conditions with a special emphasis in neuromuscular medicine, sleep medicine, headache management and seizure disorders, including:

- Epilepsy
- Multiple sclerosis
- Parkinson's disease
- ALS
- Insomnia
- Sleep apnea
- Neuropathy
- Carpal tunnel syndrome
- Migraines or chronic headaches

Call 336-277-2200 today to schedule an appointment.

2025 Frontis Plaza Blvd., Suite 120, Winston-Salem  
 nhsummitsleepneurology.org

**NOVANT**  
HEALTH

**Have a Story Idea?**  
 Let us Know  
 news@wschronicle.com