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Affirmative action vote is likely in Congress

By Herbert L. White
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Affirmative action, under constant attack by conservatives as reverse discrimination, won a small victory in the House of Representatives last week.

But it's only temporary. The House Judiciary Committee voted to table the "Civil Rights Act of 1997" sponsored by Rep. Charles Canady (R-Fla.), which would have banned the consideration of race or gender in federal hiring and contracting. Four Republicans — George Gekas of Pennsylvania; Stephen Buyer and Ed Pease of Indiana and Elton Gallegly of California — defected from their party's leadership to side with



Watt

Democrats, effectively killing the bill until next year. The 17-9 surprised pro-affirmative action supporters, but committee member Rep.

Mel Watt (D-N.C.) cautions the debate isn't over.

"I don't think we should become overly confident," he said. "What it means is this piece of legislation can't be voted on in this session."

Another bill could be introduced before Congress adjourns this month, but that's not likely. Although Republicans helped table the bill, Canady expects to introduce another resolution next year.

"It's wrong to give anybody a preference," Canady said Tuesday on Black Entertainment Television's "BET Tonight." "Preferences are not right and that's what my bill will prohibit."

"I would like to hope that" the GOP leadership will have a change of heart, said Watt, a Charlotte Democrat. "But I can't assert that with any kind of confidence. There's still a lot of minority bashing on the Republican side."

House minority leader Richard Gephardt (D-Mo.) said he was "very pleased" moderate Republicans joined Democrats to table the measure, calling it a first step in defeating the bill.

"The Canady bill is an extreme measure backed by the House Republican leadership that would end all affirmative action programs in the federal government, even in cases involving the most blatant discrimination against women and minorities," he said.

"Rushing headlong into the issue without building a

See BILL on page 6A

Public outcry brings halt to slave document auction

By Wsther Iverem
THE WASHINGTON POST

In response to a public outcry, several 19th-century slavery documents scheduled to be auctioned to the highest bidder today at Christie's in New York were withdrawn from the sale and will instead be donated to a museum

or historical society.

The eight documents, grouped in three sets or "lots" in the Christie's catalogue, include posters announcing a reward for runaway slaves, a slave auction poster announcing "Chancery Sale of Eight Likely Negroes" and other papers, including a receipt for "a mulatto boy named Joe."

They were part of a larger collection of Civil War-era autographs and manuscripts being sold by Christie's.

The decision not to sell the slavery documents was made abruptly yesterday after Christie's was flooded with calls from furious radio listeners from around the country who had heard a com-

Remembering veterans' sacrifice



PHOTO/PAUL WILLIAMS III

John Steele Jr. of Charlotte wipes his eye Tuesday during ceremonies commemorating Veterans Day at Marshall Park. The holiday was originally called Armistice Day by President Woodrow Wilson in 1917 to mark the end of World War I, but has grown to include American military personnel who have served in the armed forces.

NAACP election results challenged

By John Minter
THE CHARLOTTE POST

The three losing candidates in recent N.C. NAACP presidential elections have filed a challenge to those results with the national NAACP office.

The candidates — Curtis Gatewood of Durham, Jesse Smith of Duplin County and Terry Belk of Charlotte — contend the victory by incumbent Skip Alston of Greensboro was made



Alston

possible by a violation of the organization's constitution.

The complaint, dated Nov. 6, was signed by the candidates and 27 delegates to the state conference convention in Raleigh Oct. 31-Nov. 1.

The document filed with the national chapter list 10 violations, ranging from a 20-minute delay in the opening of the polls to a failure to file a proper credentials report prior to the election and improper seating of youth delegates.

Included with the complaint was a copy of the state conference's souvenir journal, which included an ad for Alston's candi-

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PHOTO/PAUL WILLIAMS III

Mecklenburg's Jail Central on Fourth Street opened this year, but already exceeds capacity.

Crime pays, at least for jail and prison builders

By John Minter
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Ask most Mecklenburg County residents what their No. 1 concern is and the likely answer is crime.

Among African Americans — most often the victims of violent crimes such as murder, robbery and rape — there are other issues. The high number of blacks incarcerated or the increasing amount of public dollars being spent on jails and prisons while public education and other government services go lacking.

So while \$62 million in Mecklenburg jail bonds was approved with 65 percent of the vote in a Nov. 4 referendum, the level of support was 10 percent lower than the \$443 million education bonds package.

The jail bonds will be used to add 900 beds to Jail Central in downtown Charlotte. Jail Central, an imposing gray building in the governmental complex off McDowell Street, opened in January with 1,004 beds. It cost \$77 million.

That puts Mecklenburg in a league with the skyrocketing expenditures on the justice system nationally. Prison and jail construction totaled \$94 billion in 1992, up from \$6.9 billion in 1980, an increase of more than 350 percent.

Mecklenburg County spends \$27 million each year to operate its jails. Across the country, there's a growing concern that the construction and operation of jails and prisons is becoming such a major industry that the drive for profits will fuel support for more arrests and longer sentences, even as the overall crime rate drops.

"I can't see anyone wanting to deter crime, because there are too many people getting rich behind it," Curtiss Neal, owner of a black-owned prison telephone service company in Forth Worth, Texas, told Emerge

See CRIME on page 2A

Powell not interested in run for office in 2000

By Mike Glover
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

DES MOINES, Iowa — Retired Gen. Colin Powell said Tuesday he will not seek the Republican presidential nomination or any other office in 2000, lacking "the passion" for political life.

"I went through this in 1995. I took a hard look at myself and took a look at the needs of my family and I concluded individually and we concluded as a family that political life was not for us," Powell said at a news conference.

"I am not running for any political office in 2000," he said.

Powell, who is heading President Clinton's national volunteerism effort, had said before that he had no intention of running for president. Tuesday's remarks left no room for doubt.

Polls consistently show that Powell is by far the most popular of potential GOP candidates. That may be why Republicans still refuse to count him out as a potential candidate.

"It always leaves him the option of playing the 'I was drafted into

the race' thing" closer to 2000, GOP pollster Tony Fabrizio said.

"I think Colin Powell has such stature he can go back and forth," GOP strategist Jill Hanson said.

Fabrizio said Powell made a smart political move by ruling

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