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Term 'states' rights' heard anew in election cycle

By Allen G. Breed
RALEIGH (AP) - Pop singer Kelly Clarkson wasn't expecting such a harsh response when she tweeted her endorsement in the Republican presidential race. "I love Ron Paul," she wrote late last month. Later, in a radio interview, she elaborated, "He believes in states having their rights, and I think that that's very important." Clarkson received hundreds of replies, some lambasting Paul and at least one suggesting that

the "American Idol" winner choose her words more carefully. In particular, two words: "states" and "rights" - which for some stir memories, even when unintended, of an era of racial injustice. As the Republican presidential campaign has turned south, into the region that seceded from the Union 150 years ago, old debates about state and federal authority echo anew in phrases used by candidates, their supporters and the news media.

Even before the Civil War, "states' rights" had become a byword for the protection of black slavery. And since the late Sen. Strom Thurmond ran for president in 1948 as a States' Rights Democrat, or "Dixiecrat," the phrase has sometimes been labeled a "dog whistle" for racist elements in the electorate. None of that was on Clarkson's mind. After a barrage of responses to her Dec. 29 tweet, the 29-year-old Texan told fans, "My eyes have been opened to

so much hate." And she emphasized, "I do not support racism." Sociologist and author John Shelton Reed, a professor emeritus at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, was not surprised that someone of Clarkson's youth would fail to recognize the "baggage that 'states' rights' carries."

Still, he says, hearing the term employed by people like Paul - and also by Texas Gov. Rick Perry before he quit the race - "it's clear that we've turned some kind of page." Paul, Perry and others referred to the Constitution's 10th Amendment, which states, "The powers not delegated to the

United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people." The shorthand "states' rights" came later. "Any time I hear it, I get this sort of little twitch, because I associate it with Ross Barnett or" (Continued On Page 15)

NC gov's exit shakes up vote on gay marriage ban

By Tom Breen
RALEIGH (AP) - Something unexpected happened on the way to North Carolina's vote on a gay marriage ban this May: Democratic Gov. Beverly Perdue decided not to run for re-election, meaning more voters who oppose the ban could turn out at the polls.

Before the Jan. 26 development, mostly Republican voters were expected to show up to pick their nominees for governor and president, and likely make North Carolina the last state in the Southeast to block same-sex marriage.

Now gay rights supporters hope they have a better chance of shooting down the constitutional amendment with more Democrats showing up May 8 to pick a candidate for governor at the same time. Gay marriage opponents believe they have the votes sewn up anyway and it won't make much of a difference.

"I'm sure that supporters of the amendment thought that, strategically, putting the question on the May ballot was their best chance," said Michael Bitzer, a professor of politics and history at Catawba College. "That strategy just got blown out of the water."

People on both sides of the question see the referendum here as having significant national implications: Gay marriage will either be banned in a clean sweep of the South, or there will be a stunning Dixie rejection.

"Given the fact that this amendment won't be decided by such a narrow slice of voters as it would have been previously, it increases the optimism from our side," said Michael Cole-Schwartz, spokesman for the Human Rights Campaign, a national gay rights group. "It's something we have to consider carefully in light of all the other

issues in other states around the country this year."

If Perdue's departure hurts the ban's chances, it would be ironic, given that her objections to its appearance on the November ballot helped convince lawmakers to move it back to spring.

Perdue opposes the amendment and said she didn't want to see it on any ballot, but she worried that Republicans wanted it in November to help their chances in the general election. Turnout for primary elections is historically lower than in November, and without a contested Democratic primary in either the gubernatorial or presidential races, there was little reason for Democratic voters to turn out in large numbers this spring.

"Democrats didn't want it on the November ballot because they feared it would be bad for them in the presidential and gubernatorial races," said John Dinan, a professor at Wake Forest University. "Nobody could have predicted at that point that the May primaries would be much more contested. Nobody planned it this way."

A Democratic primary could bring out voters more likely to oppose bans on gay marriage, said Richard Matland, a professor at Loyola University Chicago who co-authored a paper last year that analyzed every single state referendum on gay marriage.

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Artwork by Beverly McIver

Raising Renee, Acclaimed Documentary, to be Shown at NCCU

"Raising Renee," an award-winning documentary film by Jeanne Jordan and Steven Ascher, will be screened at North Carolina Central University on Feb. 9 at 6 p.m. in the H.M. Michaux Jr. School of Education Auditorium.

The film chronicles the struggle of artist Beverly McIver, now the SunTrust Endowed Professor of Art at NCCU, to provide care for her mentally disabled sister Renee after their mother died.

Jordan and Ascher met McIver in 2003 when McIver, then a professor at Arizona State University, was at Harvard University on a fellowship. The initial plan was for a film about a rising star, an artist whose years of hard work were starting to pay off. But then McIver's mother, Ethel, was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. The disease progressed quickly and Ethel McIver died in March 2004 — and the filmmakers had a very different story to tell.

Years before, McIver had casually promised her mother that she would take care of Renee when Ethel died — an event that seemed far off and unlikely to intrude on her life and career. "Raising Renee" is the story of a family's remarkable response to an unexpected crisis, exploring themes of family, race, class and disability through the interplay of painting, cinema and everyday life.

McIver, a 1987 graduate of NCCU, returned to the university as a full professor in 2008. The SunTrust endowment, designed for working artists, allows McIver to teach just one semester a year, leaving time for her to devote to her career as an artist. Her paintings are now in a major exhibition, "Reflections: Portraits by Beverly McIver," at the North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh, which runs through June.

Seating for the screening of "Raising Renee" is limited. Reservations should be made by Feb. 3, either online at <http://tinyurl.com/raisingrenee> or by phone at 530-6151.

Judge suspends Durham DA prior to removal hearing

(AP) - A Franklin County judge has suspended Durham County's top prosecutor in advance of a hearing to determine whether she should be permanently removed from office.

Judge Robert Hobgood issued his order Jan. 27, suspending District Attorney Tracey Cline pending the outcome of the Feb. 13 hearing.

Defense attorney Kerry Sutton is seeking Cline's removal, saying her battles with Judge Orlando Hudson have damaged the reputation of the Durham courts.

Cline has unsuccessfully sought to have Hudson removed from criminal cases, claiming he's been retaliating against her for refusing to dismiss a murder case in 2010.

She was elected in 2008 to replace Mike Nifong, who resigned in disgrace after prosecuting three Duke University lacrosse players falsely accused of rape.



Mrs. Mary Duke Biddle Trent Semans

Farewell to Mary Duke Biddle Trent Semans

Duke University News Service
Duke University said goodbye Monday to a woman described as its "heart and soul," a historic figure whose "extravagant love" transformed the university and its city.

In a Duke Chapel service filled with music and pageantry, Mary Duke Biddle Trent Semans - who served as a living link between the university's founders and its modern accomplishments - was remembered for her many contributions to Duke, Durham and North Carolina, and for what Duke President Richard Brodhead called her "embodiment of unconditional love."

"She saw more good in others than any of us are used to seeing in ourselves, and she made you want to be the person she believed in," Brodhead told an audience that filled the chapel well before the 2 p.m. service began. "She made this city, this university and this region better in actuality by the way she believed in their possibility."

Semans, the great-granddaughter of industrialist-philanthropist Washington Duke, for whom Duke University is named, died on Jan. 25 at the age of 91. Her grandfather was Benjamin N. Duke, the brother of James B. Duke, who endowed the university.

She inspired people across the city and state to be "all that they can be and should be and must be," said former Gov. James B. Hunt Jr., who joined current Gov. Bev Perdue and other state and local leaders at the service along with family members and admirers from across the university, the city and beyond. Hunt praised her as a champion of progressive causes whose support could bolster political leaders when they were being criticized, and who also could "fix our eyes" (Continued On Page 15)