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NC elections boards move to curtail student voting

By Michael Biesecker

Raleigh (AP) - Within hours of Gov. Pat McCrory signing a Republican-backed bill this week making sweeping changes to the state's voting laws, local elections boards in two college towns made moves that could make it harder for students to vote.

The Watauga County Board of Elections voted Aug. 12 to eliminate an early voting site and election-day polling precinct on the campus of Appalachian State University.

The Pasquotank County Board of Elections on Aug. 13 barred an Elizabeth City State University senior from running for city council, ruling his on-campus address couldn't be used to establish local residency. Following the decision, the head of the county's Republican Party said he plans to challenge the voter registrations of more students at the historically black university ahead of upcoming elections.

Voting rights advocates worry the decisions could signal a statewide effort by GOP-controlled elections boards to discourage turnout among young voters considered more likely to support Democrats.

The law McCrory signed requires voters to have specific forms of government-issued photo identification to vote at a ballot, a measure he and other Republicans said is needed to prevent voter fraud. But the law also contains more than 40 other provisions, including ending same-day voter registration, trimming the period for early voting from 17 days to 10 and eliminating a program that encourages high school students to register to vote in advance of their 18th birthdays.

Democratic lawmakers repeatedly tried to amend the law to allow student IDs from state-supported universities and community colleges to be used at the polls, but that effort was blocked by the Republican majority.

In a radio appearance this week, McCrory suggested the changes are about fairness and suggested Democrats have, in the past, manipulated polling locations and early voting hours for partisan gain. When he was sworn in as governor in January, McCrory won the power to appoint a Republican majority to the N.C. Board of Elections, which in turn appoints the county boards.

With this new law, we have every political precinct in a week before election, which has equal access, and an exact number of hours of open precincts will be available now as they were in the last presidential election," McCrory said during an interview on WUNC.

In a contentious meeting Aug. 12, the new GOP majority on the Watauga elections board voted over the objection of the board's lone Democrat to eliminate early voting at the Appalachian State student union.

The Watauga board also voted 2-1 Aug. 12 to combine three Boone voting precincts into one, eliminating an election day polling site on campus. More than 9,300 one residents will now be slated to cast ballots at a county building that only has about 35 parking spots.

"Why are they making it harder for students to vote?" Sen. Josh Stein (D-Wake), who has been a vocal critic of the law, said during an interview on WUNC.

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DURHAM NATIVE STARS IN PEPSI'S BEYONCE "DANCE - Caption: During "The Mrs. Carter Show World Tour" in New York, winners of Pepsi's Dance for Chance Contest came together in New York with Beyonce's head choreographer, Chris Grant, to create a Super Fan Video to Beyonce's "Grown Woman."

Beginning July 4, fans who submitted a 10 second dance video clip themed after Pepsi's latest TV commercial featuring Beyonce were not only eligible to win the chance to appear in a unique "super fan" music video, but also won the chance to fly out to NYC as VIP guests during Beyonce's August 4 "The Mrs. Carter Show World Tour" performance at Barclays Center in Brooklyn.

Winners met Beyonce' backstage after her August 4 show. Beyonce is shown here with Anthony Nelson Jr. of Durham.

Judges next to examine broad NC voting changes

By Gary D. Robertson

(AP) - Judges will now decide whether an elections overhaul in North Carolina requiring photo identification to vote and scaling back early voting is discriminatory or permitted under the law.

Several groups and voters filed two lawsuits in federal court challenging the law soon after Gov. Pat McCrory signed the bill Aug. 12. Some of the same groups also planned to sue in state court soon.

Lawyers challenging the law said at a news conference Aug. 13 they have a strong case and the totality of changes will be burdensome for black voters. Republicans who passed the bill disagree and say provisions are similar to those in other states.

Duke University law professor Guy Charles says the plaintiffs face an uphill battle to prevail but some provisions could be hard for legislators to justify.

Forsyth elections chair to move on student voting at WSSU

WINSTON-SALEM (AP) - The newly appointed Republican head of the Forsyth County Board of Elections says he plans to eliminate an early voting site at Winston-Salem State University.

The Winston-Salem Journal reported that elections chairman Ken Raymond will move at a meeting Aug. 20 to shut down the voting site at the historically black college.

Raymond said he is taking action after hearing talk that a professor had offered students extra credit for going to the polls, which he said was violation of a law barring someone from providing anything of value in exchange for votes. Raymond offered no proof such irregularities had occurred.

Forsyth is the latest county making it harder for students to cast a ballot, a trend voting rights advocates worry could signal a statewide effort by GOP-controlled elections boards to discourage turnout among young voters considered more likely to support Democrats.

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Republicans on the Pasquotank County Board of Elections also voted last week to bar an Elizabeth City State University senior from running for city council, ruling his on-campus address couldn't be used to establish local residency. Following the decision, the head of the county's Republican Party said he plans to challenge the voter registrations of more students at the historically black university ahead of upcoming elections.

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Register

To

Vote

King's unfinished symphony of freedom

By Jesse Jackson

This weekend, we will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, best known for Dr. Martin Luther King's "Dream."

Fifty years later, the dream challenges us yet. It is alive because it is not static. The dream of equal rights and equal opportunity, of being judged for character, not color, has transformed this nation. Much progress has been forged; much remains to be done. One way to think about the Civil Rights Movement and Dr. King's Dream is as a symphony of freedom. The first movement was the movement to end slavery, which required the bloodiest war in American history. Then came the drive to end segregation, the disfiguring legal apartheid of the South. In that victory, the movement freed not only African-Americans but also the South to grow, and opened access to libraries and hotels, trains and restaurants, pools and parks. Rosa Parks could sit wherever she wanted to on that bus.

The third movement was the movement for empowerment, for the right to vote. That movement culminated in the Voting Rights Act, challenging the various taxes and tests and intimidation used to deprive African-Americans of the power of the ballot box. This year, the five conservatives on the Supreme Court weakened the act. Conservative governors are pushing to constrict rather than expand the vote. We still have no constitutional right to vote. Surely, that is the next step toward the dream.

The fourth movement of the freedom symphony features the trumpet call for equal opportunity, and the clash over extreme and growing inequality. Here, Lyndon Johnson's promise to fulfill the movement's pledge that "we shall overcome" has been frustrated. African-Americans continue to suffer twice the unemployment as whites. Poor

people of color, often isolated in ghettos and barrios, have less access to healthful food, good schools, public parks and safe streets. Inequality is the new de facto segregation, with the affluent withdrawing to gated communities and private schools, and the poor huddled in impoverished neighborhoods.

Dr. King knew this final movement was the most difficult. He saw Johnson's war of poverty being lost in the costly folly of Vietnam. He worried that we might be "integrating into a burning house." He was murdered while standing with sanitation workers organizing for dignity and a decent wage. When he died, he was organizing a new march on Washington - a Poor People's Campaign that would bring the impoverished of all races and regions to a Resurrection City in Washington, D.C., to demand a renewal of the war on poverty.

The fourth movement - the movement for real equality of opportunity - remains unfinished. Its agenda speaks to poor and working people of all races: full employment, a living wage, child nutrition, a good public education from pre-K to affordable college, high-quality health care, affordable housing in vibrant communities, workers empowered to share in the profits and productivity they help to produce.

We have gained freedom without equality. Globalized capital and communication have been used to push workers down rather than lift them up. We continue to squander scarce resources policing the globe. Inequality has grown worse, and the middle class is sinking.

The symphony of freedom is unfinished, but its powerful themes still resound amidst its listeners. Dr. King called on each of us to march for justice. He understood the power of people of conscience when they decide to act. As we remember his dream, we are called to action, for there is more work to be done.