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With 'No More Campaigns to Run,' Obama Refuses to Back Down

By George E. Curry
NNPA Editor-in-Chief
WASHINGTON (NNPA) - The strongest line in President Obama's State of the Union address Tuesday night was added. When he said toward the end of his one-hour speech, "I have no more campaigns to run," Republicans laughed. He quickly shot back, "I know because I am on both of them."
That brief exchange tells us that we can expect in Obama's final two years in office and rejects two different realities. A confident and relaxed Obama, making it very clear that he is not going to curl up in a corner and concede the next two years to Republicans, outlined his bold vision for the future, a vision that does not abandon his key policy positions.

Republicans were mostly polite, while making it clear they were not endorsing Obama's vision for his final two years in office. Noticeably absent from Tuesday's State of the Union were three of the most conservative members of the Supreme Court: Chief Justice John Roberts and Associate Justices Clarence Thomas and Antonin Scalia. Thomas has called the event so partisan that it makes him feel uncomfortable. Scalia has dismissed it as a "childish spectacle" and Roberts has likened it to "a political pep rally." In modern years, regardless of a court member's personal views, the robbed justices have attended the yearly event, most of the time

displaying no emotions. Reviewing his accomplishments over the past six years, Obama boasted, "We believed we could reverse the tide of outsourcing and draw new jobs to our shores. And over the past five years, our businesses have created more than 11 million new jobs."
"We believed we could reduce our dependence on foreign oil and protect our planet. And today, America is number one in oil and gas. America is number one in wind power. Every three weeks, we bring online as much solar power as we did in all of 2008. And thanks to lower gas prices and higher fuel stan
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President Barack Obama talks with, from left, Sen. John Thune, R-S.D.; Sen. Charles "Chuck" Schumer, D-N.Y.; Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, Minority Whip; Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill.; and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., after meeting with bipartisan, bicameral leadership of Congress in the Cabinet Room of the White House, Jan. 13. (Official White House Photo by Pete Souza)

NEWS ANALYSIS

Though Obama did indeed in both times his name was on the ballot, Democrats suffered major losses in the 2014 midterm elections. Consequently, Republicans hold a 247-188 edge in the House. In the Senate, there are 54 Republicans, 44 Democrats and two Independents who usually vote with Democrats.
On Tuesday night, President Obama seemed to be setting the stage for 2016 when in addition to the White House, there will be a major battle for control of the Senate, where 25 Republicans will be up for re-election, compared to only 10 Democrats.



Maj. Gen. Vincent Stewart

First Marine tapped to head Defense Intelligence Agency

By Lolita C. Baldor

WASHINGTON (AP) - A Marine three-star general will take control of the Defense Intelligence Agency later this month, marking the first time an African American or a Marine has held that post, the Pentagon said Jan. 13.

Maj. Gen. Vincent Stewart will be promoted to lieutenant general and take over the DIA on Jan. 23. His promotion was confirmed last month by the U.S. Senate.

Most recently Stewart was serving as the head of Marine Forces Cyber Command, and he has also been the Corps' intelligence director.

James Clapper, director of national intelligence, said Stewart's "temperament, professional background, leadership skills and integrity make him eminently suited to be the next DIA director."

Stewart's appointment comes more than eight months after the previous leader was nudged aside amid ongoing conflict within the agency. Then-DIA chief Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn and his civilian deputy director announced last April that they would retire. Officials at the time said their departures were hastened in part because of friction associated with efforts Flynn was making to shake up the agency.

The traditional role of the DIA has been to provide military intelligence, including insight into the makeup and capabilities of foreign military forces, to U.S. combat units and defense planners and policymakers. It also provides "strategic warning," or the forewarning of imminent hostilities, insurgencies, attacks on the United States or its forces or allies, hostile reactions to U.S. reconnaissance activities and terrorist attacks.

Flynn, a career intelligence officer, had led the DIA since July 2012 and he retired early last August. Typically, the director's post rotates among the Army, Navy and Air Force about every three or four years. But it had never gone to a member of the Marine Corps, which is technically part of the Department of the Navy.

Durham Committee Announces 2015 Officers

Former N. C. Sen. Ralph Hunt, chair of The Durham Committee on the Affairs of Black People, has announced the new slate of officers who have been elected to lead the organization for the next two years. Hunt, who was elected to head the organization in 2014, will continue to lead the group for the next two years under the terms of a recently adopted new constitution that provides for two year terms for officers. The new officers, he said, were unanimously elected on a voice vote at a meeting held Thursday evening, January 15, at the Delta House in Durham.

Continuity and stability are hallmarks of the new leadership group, Hunt said, noting that all three of the group's vice chairs were re-elected to their positions, as were many of the other officers. Omar Beasley continues as first vice chair, Deborah Giles will continue to serve as second vice chair and Mignon Schooler was re-elected as third vice chair. Paulette Morrison-Danner was elected to serve another two years as the organization's executive secretary.

Attorney Ralph Hunt, Jr. was elected to head the political committee, following Walter Jackson, who did not seek another term. Kimberly Williams Moore will serve as political committee vice chair.

Other new faces in the leadership team include treasurer Lolita Wynn, recording secretary Angie Steele, assistant recording secretary Carolyn Wallace, health committee chair Dr. Sharon Elliott-Bynum, health committee vice chair Wanda Boone and youth committee vice chair Antoinette Hilliard.

Re-elected to their current positions were civic committee chair Michael Palmer, civic committee vice chair Pamela Oxendine, education committee chair Deborah Bryson, along with vice chair Vernell Lassiter, economic development committee chair Jarvis Martin along with vice chair C. J. Broderick, legal redress committee chair Leon Stanback and vice chair Ralph Frasier, and youth committee chair LaManda Chestnut-Pryor.

Mark Abram and Frank Meachem exchanged positions with the DCABP housing committee, with Abram becoming chair and Meachem becoming vice chair.

"I am delighted to have this team of people to work with me in continuing the work of this vital and historic organization," Hunt said. "I believe that together we can continue to build on the excellent progress we made in moving the organization forward in 2014."

The new officers will be installed and will assume their duties at the group's annual meeting on February 22.

NC's NAACP leader plans 2015 demonstrations in capital

By Jonathan Drew

RALEIGH (AP) - Groups that have protested conservative policies by the GOP-led Legislature are preparing for a new year of demonstrations undeterred by an election that sent Republicans back to both chambers with veto-proof majorities, the leader of North Carolina's NAACP said.

The Rev. William Barber, president of the state NAACP chapter, said reversing restrictive policies on voting rights, expanding Medicaid and raising minimum wage remain among the groups' key issues. The groups are planning a gathering at the General Assembly on Jan. 28 and ongoing actions during the legislative session. On Feb. 14, they will hold a march known as the "Mass Moral March on Raleigh/Historic Thousands on Jones Street," which began in 2007 when Democrats led the Legislature.

Barber, who is delivering a keynote address Sunday at Duke University's annual commemoration for the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., said in an interview that the demonstrations are based on issues, not political parties.

"We don't have any permanent enemies, only permanent issues," he said. Barber said he wasn't discouraged by elections in November that preserved GOP control of the state House and Senate, citing electoral districts drawn by Republicans.

"Because of the race-based redistricting, we already knew that many of them would still be in office," he said. "Even when you have a veto-proof majority, you cannot veto the voters and veto the right of people to protest and to challenge."

The GOP maintains that the districts are both fair and legal, and they were upheld in December by the State Supreme Court.

Barber said his group's lawyers are also looking at new rules announced for the General Assembly about how the public can gather in the legislative building when either chamber is in session. A memo on the rules from the Legislative Services Office says police can designate separate areas to allow legislators to come and go from the chambers but that the restrictions won't deny free speech rights.

At their peak, the demonstrations that started during the 2013 legislative session drew thousands. Nearly 1,000 demonstrators were arrested in 2013, and about 100 the following year. About half of the people arrested resolved the cases with community service and a fine, and most of the rest were dropped in September by the Wake County prosecutor who cited a U.S. Supreme Court decision on peaceful assembly and protest.

Groups in several other states coordinated with Barber's group last year to hold protests at their state Capitols, and he's expecting that to continue this year.

Barber said people frequently ask whether he expects more arrests this year. He said the coalition's repertoire includes civil disobedience, and they'll tailor their approach in response to the Legislature's policies.

"Whether there will be more arrests depends on them more than us," he said. On the eve of his speaking engagement honoring King, Barber said that he's reminded that change in the civil rights leader's era required consistent effort.

"Change came when people consistently and morally and constitutionally protested until they changed the political climate," he said.