

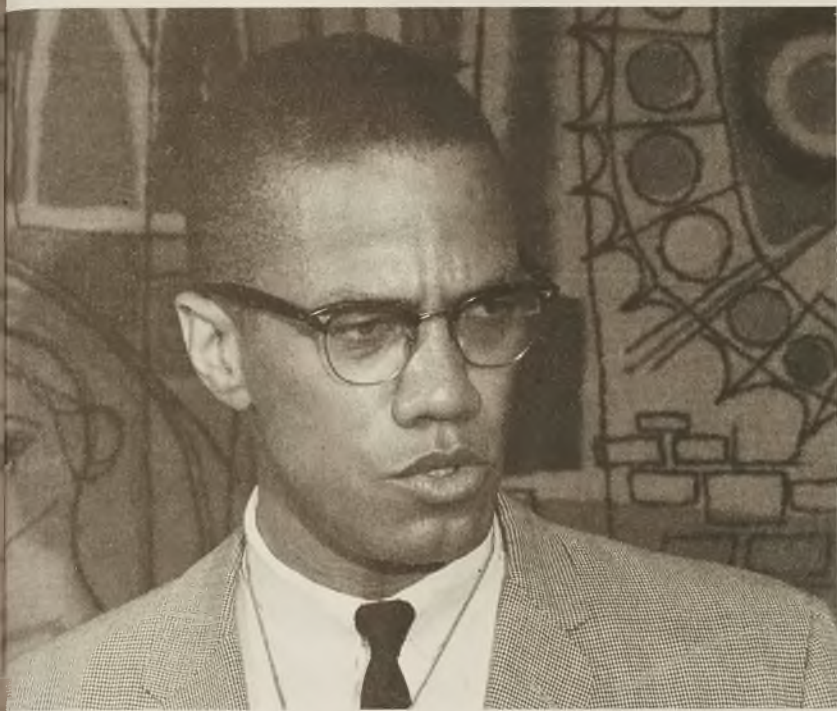
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MALCOLM X

Hundreds to mark 50th year since Malcolm X's assassination

By Frank Eltman

NEW YORK (AP) - Activists, actors, and politicians remembered civil rights leader Malcolm X with a ceremony at the New York site in Harlem where he was killed 50 years ago.

About 300 people were expected to hear remarks Feb. 21 from one of Malcolm X's six daughters, Ilyasah Shabazz, as well as U.S. Rep. Charles Rangel and other elected officials.

The ceremony is being held at the Malcolm X & Dr. Betty Shabazz Memorial and Educational Center in Harlem, formerly known as the Audubon Ballroom. Malcolm X was shot to death there Feb. 21, 1965, as he was preparing to address several hundred of his followers.

By the time he died, the Muslim leader had moderated his militant message of black separatism and pride but was still very much a passionate advocate of black unity, self-respect and self-reliance. Three members of the Nation of Islam were convicted of murder in his death. He had repudiated the Nation of Islam less than a year earlier.

In an interview with The Associated Press on the eve of the anniversary observance, Ilyasah Shabazz said she was pleased that the site is now a place for people to get a sense of empowerment.

"One of the great things about Malcolm is that he redefined the civil rights movement to include a human rights agenda," she said. "So while we are focusing on integrating schools, integrating housing and all these other things, Malcolm said that we demand our human rights 'by any means necessary.' And that means ... that we have to address these problems. That we have to identify them, and absolutely discuss them."

At 3:10 p.m., a moment of silence will be held to commemorate the time of his shooting. Actor Delroy Lindo will also read a eulogy to Malcolm X that was written by the late actor and activist Ossie Davis.

Veteran social and political activist Ron Daniels will give the keynote address.

Malcolm X, whose full name was El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz, was 39 when he was killed.

McCrory waiting for Supreme Court Before NC insurance choice

By Gary D. Robertson

CARY (AP) - Republican Gov. Pat McCrory said Feb. 18 he won't make a recommendation whether North Carolina should expand insurance to more of the uninsured through the federal health care law until after a U.S. Supreme Court ruling.

Speaking to The Associated Press in a brief interview, McCrory said it makes sense to wait on litigation challenging some federal tax credits in the health care law linked to coverage obtained through federally-run online health insurance markets.

The court's oral arguments are next month and a ruling is expected in the summer, about when the legislature traditionally seeks to adjourn. That could push any legislative action on a recommendation to 2016.

"I will not make any recommendation as to whether or not we extend insurance for the uninsured until the court case because there are so many ramifications of the court case," McCrory said following a speech to a gathering of the North Carolina Hospital Association.

McCrory and his administration have been looking for months at expansion, whether through Medicaid as offered in President Obama's 2011 health care law or through alternatives other states have sought. The governor met with Obama last month and U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Sylvia Mathews Burwell on Feb. 6.

In recent weeks, the governor had been ambiguous about when he'd make public his decision, and he said in no hurry to do so during his State of the State address to the General Assembly earlier this month.

Hundreds of thousands of North Carolina residents could benefit from expansion. Liberal-leaning groups and the state NAACP chapter have been pressing McCrory and legislators repeatedly to expand Medicaid, citing how the federal government would foot most of the bill and arguing it would create an economic benefit for hospitals and rural areas.

Republican legislative leaders remain skeptical, saying the current Medicaid program needs stability after years of financial and administrative troubles. Even among GOP lawmakers open to expansion, McCrory's time frame aligns well with their arguments that any expansion discussion should wait until after the Supreme Court rules.

McCrory said Feb. 18 that other Medicaid changes would still remain among his top priorities for the Republican-led legislature to pass this year.

The House and Senate couldn't work out a compromise last year to move away from the traditional fee-for-service model to one that rewards medical providers or managed care companies for cost savings and healthy patients. There are currently 1.8 million Medicaid enrollees.

McCrory health expansion delay smart to some, poor excuse to others

By Gary D. Robertson

RALEIGH (AP) - Gov. Pat McCrory says his decision to wait longer to announce whether he'll seek to cover hundreds of thousands of uninsured North Carolina residents through the federal health care law doesn't mean he's putting the idea on the back burner.

The Republican governor said this week he wouldn't weigh in with the legislature until after a U.S. Supreme Court ruling on a key element of the 2011 law - potentially delaying the issue for another year because the General Assembly session will be near its end by then. Oral arguments are scheduled in early March, with a ruling unlikely until early summer.

"The court case has major ramifications on the entire health care system," McCrory told The Associated Press in an interview in which he confirmed the delay. In the meantime, the governor added, he'll keep reviewing potential expansion plans.

But the legal fight in Washington provides an out for McCrory to keep expansion from gumming up the debate in Raleigh on something more important to his administration. He wants changed this year the current financial mechanism for treating patients within North Carolina's \$13 billion Medicaid system.

House and Senate leaders came close last summer to agreeing to create a system in which medical organizations ultimately would get a flat per-month amount to cover the treatment of each of the 1.8 million Medicaid enrollees they see. McCrory believes the change would help avoid future Medicaid shortfalls and make patients healthier.

"I've always said I've got to fix the current Medicaid (system) to help the women, children and disabled and elderly who are currently served by Medicaid before we expand it," McCrory said after speaking to the North Carolina Hospital Association in Cary.

The delay also means the governor avoids a showdown with fellow Republican leaders at the General Assembly strongly opposed to expansion, especially if it increases Medicaid rolls substantially. Budget-writers have suggested revisiting the idea after the Supreme Court decision is handed down.

"Expansion was never part of the conversation

about (Medicaid) reform in the legislature," said Sen. Ralph Hise, R-Mitchell, a budget subcommittee co-chairman on health matters, adding the delay is "a good step for the governor."

Expansion proponents see the Supreme Court case as a weak excuse for McCrory to kick the can down the road for people who make too much money to qualify for Medicaid but not enough to receive tax credits for premiums. The state NAACP chapter and allies have repeatedly demanded expansion and argue not doing so violates the state Constitution.

"Either he's committed to it or he's not committed to it," Sen. Gladys Robinson, D-Guilford, a health budget subcommittee member, said Feb. 19. "I think he has an obligation to the citizens of North Carolina who are not the wealthy people, but the people who need health care."



PRESIDENT OBAMA

Obama Heads to Chicago To designate Pullman National Monument

WASHINGTON (AP) - President Barack Obama is turning a historic South Side neighborhood in Chicago into a national monument Feb. 19.

Obama formally designated the neighborhood where African-American railroad workers won a significant labor agreement in the 1930s as the Pullman National Monument.

A Chicago Tribune columnist called the president's announcement - commemorating African-Americans who served as porters, waiters and maids on the iconic Pullman sleeper cars - "a big fat presidential bro-hug" to Emanuel, the president's "little buddy."

The White House says Obama is focused on the historical designation, which honors the neighborhood built by industrialist George Pullman in the 19th century for workers to manufacture luxurious railroad sleeping cars.

The 203-acre Pullman site includes factories and buildings associated with the Pullman Palace Car Company, which was founded in 1867 and employed thousands of workers to construct and provide service on railroad cars. While the company employed a mostly white workforce to manufacture railroad passenger cars, it also hired former slaves to serve as porters, waiters and maids on its iconic sleeping cars.

The railroad industry - Pullman in particular - was one of the largest employers of African-Americans in the United States by the early 1900s. Pullman workers played a major role in the rise of the black middle class and, through a labor agreement won by the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, they helped launch the civil rights movement of the 20th century, the White House said.

Before leaving Washington, Obama signed a proclamation in the Oval Office designating the Browns Canyon National Monument in Colorado, a 21,000-acre site along the Arkansas River popular for whitewater rafting. In Chicago, he was also expected to announce designation of the Honouliuli National Monument in Hawaii, the site of an internment camp where Japanese-American citizens and prisoners of war were held during World War II.

In his appearance before students at a South Side magnet school, Obama also launched the "Every Kid in a Park" initiative to provide all fourth-grade students across the country and their families with free admission to national parks and other federal lands and waters for a year, the White House said. The program begins with the 2015-2016 school year, marking the 100th anniversary of the National Park Service next year.

The White House said the three new monuments "help tell the story of significant events in American history and protect unique natural resources for the benefit of all Americans."

The new monuments will bring to 16 the number of national monuments Obama has created under the 1906 Antiquities Act, which grants presidents broad authority to protect historic or ecologically significant sites without congressional approval.

Some Republicans have complained that Obama has abused his authority, and they renewed their complaints over the new designations, especially the Colorado site, the largest in size by far among the three new monuments.