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President Barack Obama talks with 4-H Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) students during their visit, with Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, to the Oval Office, April 13. (Official White House photo by Pete Souza)

Blacks Missing Out on 'Obamacare' Savings

By Freddie Allen

NNPA Senior Washington Correspondent

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - Even as health care costs continue to cause concerns for the poor, nearly 40 percent African Americans and about half of Whites didn't know that the Affordable Care Act (ACA) can help those that need it the most to cover some of those costs.

According to the new report by the Alliance for a Just Society (AJS), a national research network that analyzes health care issues including Medicaid, prescription drugs, and insurance industry practices play a major role in coverage savings.

In the report titled, "Breaking Barriers: Improving health insurance enrollment and access to health care," researchers detailed the stories of 1,200 low- to moderate-income earners, living in 10 states (California, Florida, Idaho, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Montana, New Mexico, Oregon, and Texas). Six of those states refused to expand Medicaid programs using federal funds, effectively pushing many poor people into the coverage gap and limiting their access to health care.



According to the AJS report, more than 40 percent of Black enrollees and more than half of White enrollees didn't know which services were covered under their health plans and which services they would pay for out-of-pocket. (Stock Image)

The AJS report said that the rejection of Medicaid expansion in those states remained the most significant barrier to health care for the poor and African Americans.

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Man charged with killing 3 Muslims can face death penalty

By Michael Biesecker

AP) - A man charged with first-degree murder in the killing of three Muslim college students can face a death penalty trial, a judge ruled April 6.

Superior Court Judge Orlando Hudson Jr. said prosecutors had two aggravating factors and that Craig Steven Hicks is "death penalty qualified."

Hicks, handcuffed throughout the hearing, is charged with three counts of first-degree murder in the Feb. 10 killings of 23-year-old Deah Shaddy Barakat; his wife, 21-year-old Yusor Mohammad Abu-Salha; and her sister, 20-year-old Razan Mohammad Abu-Salha.

Durham County Assistant District Attorney Jim Dorn said Hicks was arrested with the murder weapon, and ballistics matched the handgun to shell casings recovered at the apartment. There was gunshot residue on Hicks' hands and blood from one of the victim's was on his pants, prosecutors said.

Police say Hicks, 46, appears to have been motivated by a long-running dispute over parking spaces at the Chapel Hill condominium complex where he lived in the building as Barakat and his wife.

After prosecutors asked for the death penalty, defense lawyer Terry Alford declined to speak.

The victims' families are adamant that they were targeted because they were Muslims and have pushed for more-crime charges. They sat in the second row of the courtroom and declined the comment after the hearing.

The FBI is conducting what it has called a "parallel preliminary inquiry" to the homicide investigation to determine whether any federal laws were violated, including hate crime statutes.

Search warrants filed by Chapel Hill police said Barakat was shot in the head near the entrance to his condo. Two women were found in or near the kitchen. Eight shell casings were found at the crime scene, investigators said.

Prosecutors said the man was shot multiple times and women once in the head.

Earlier search warrants listed a dozen firearms recovered from the condo unit Hicks shared with his wife, in addition to the handgun he had with him when he turned himself in after the shootings.

Hicks, who was unemployed and studying to become a paralegal, posted online that he was an atheist and a staunch advocate of the Second Amendment right to bear arms.

Neighbors described him as an angry man who had frequent confrontations over parking or loud music, sometimes with a gun holstered at his hip. His social media posts often discussed firearms, including a photo posted of a .38-caliber revolver.

Hicks is being held at a prison in Raleigh.



Dr. Everett B. Ward

Dr. Everett B. Ward Selected as the 11th President of Saint Augustine's University

RALEIGH - On April 10, the Saint Augustine's University Board of Trustees voted unanimously to remove the interim status from Dr. Everett B. Ward's title and name him the 11th president of Saint Augustine's University effective immediately.

Ward is the third alumnus to hold the post in the 147-year history of Saint Augustine's University.

"We are pleased with the direction in which the university is headed under the leadership of Dr. Ward and feel confident that he is the best person for this job," said Rodney E. Gaddy, chairman of the Board of Trustees. "We are impressed with the amount of change that Dr. Ward has been able to affect in such a short period of time. The stability and restoration of faith in the institution that he has achieved is evident and we are looking forward to what's next."

Dr. Everett B. Ward was appointed interim president on April 23, 2014. Under his leadership, the university has identified and focused on four academic areas: Mass Communication and Journalism, Criminal Justice, Public Health and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM).

"I would like to thank the members of the Board of Trustees for their vote of confidence in naming me president," Dr. Ward said. "As a proud son of Saint Augustine's University, I know firsthand the rich history of our beloved institution as well as the University's mighty contributions to this community and state. The legacy of my family and Saint Augustine's University are forever linked."

In addition to his undergraduate degree from Saint Augustine's University, Ward holds a master's degree from North Carolina State University and a Ph.D. from North Carolina A&T State University.

Prior to Saint Augustine's University, Dr. Ward served as the director of the Historically Black Colleges and University/Minority Institutions of Higher Education Program for the North Carolina Department of Transportation. In that role, he worked with university chancellors and presidents, faculty and staff in the areas of transportation curriculum development, research initiatives and student development.

Civil rights activists: Vote now to confirm Lynch as Attorney General

By Julie Walker

NEW YORK (AP) - Senate leaders should immediately call for a vote to confirm Loretta Lynch as attorney general, national civil rights activists urged April 11.

The National Action Network, the NAACP, the National Urban League and other groups announced their campaign in New York, with the Rev. Al Sharpton saying they'll go to the Washington offices of Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell every day until he calls a vote.

"We're not asking for favors; we're not asking for backroom deals. Call the vote," Sharpton said, prompting a chant of "Call the vote" from a crowd gathered for the National Action Network convention.

Lynch appears to have a narrow majority in her quest to succeed Attorney General Eric Holder and become the first black woman to hold the job. McConnell, a Kentucky Republican, has said sex trafficking legislation must be cleared before the confirmation vote can be held.

"Loretta Lynch now has 51 publicly committed votes, which means she has all the votes to be confirmed," said National Urban League President Marc Morial. "So when we say call the vote, we know that the vote is going to be yes in favor of Loretta Lynch."

The Greensboro, North Carolina, native has overseen bank fraud and public corruption cases in her current post as the U.S. attorney for New York's Eastern District, which includes Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island and Long Island.

During her first tenure in the Eastern District, during the Clinton administration, Lynch helped prosecute police officers who severely beat and sexually assaulted Haitian immigrant Abner Louima.