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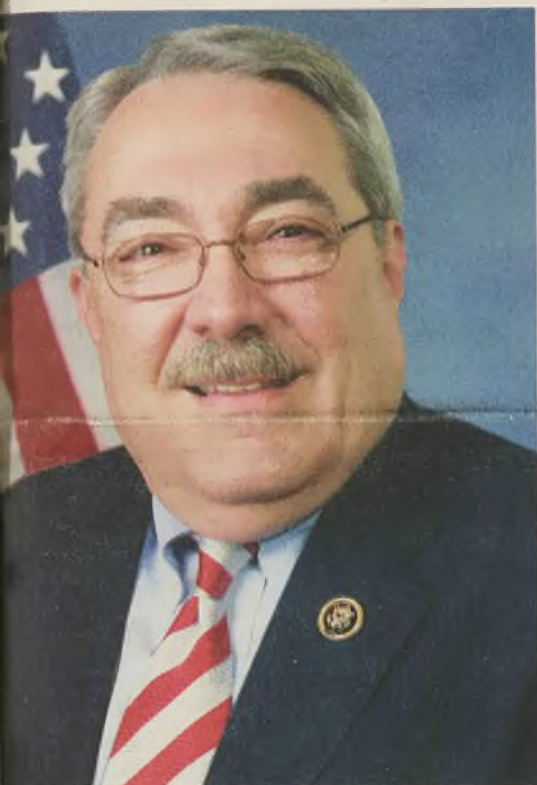
CBC Seeks GOP Cooperation On Economic Challenges

By Freddie Allen
NNPA Senior Washington Correspondent

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - Working across the aisle with Republicans on criminal justice reform might be the best shot that the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) has to address the economic challenges facing the black community before the 2016 presidential election, according to the head of the caucus. "We are having bipartisan conversations on the whole question of criminal justice reform," said Rep. K. Butterfield (D-N.C.), the chairman of the CBC. "There is a group of Republican members that are thoughtful and they are beginning to think through the broken criminal justice system that we have and they are now indicating to us they're willing to engage in some type of legislation that will begin to address it."

As states and jurisdictions weigh the financial burden of mass incarceration against more fiscally responsible criminal justice policies, more lawmakers are considering diversionary programs, decriminalizing small amounts of marijuana to decrease the load on their jails and court systems, and making it easier for ex-offenders to find jobs that pay a living wage after they've paid their debt to society. The Vera Institute of Justice, an independent research and policy group, reported that taxpayers in 40 states shelled out nearly \$40 billion in FY2010 to cover the costs of housing inmates and running prisons and jails.

Butterfield speculated that some of his Republican colleagues might just be playing politics with criminal justice reform, but he still welcomed their support.



Rep. G. K. Butterfield (D-N.C.), the chairman of the CBC said, "We've got to get smarter on crime and there are some Republicans who get that." (Courtesy Photo)

Obama calls delay of his attorney general nominee 'crazy'

WASHINGTON (AP) - President Barack Obama on April 17 said it was "crazy" and "embarrassing" the way the Republican-led Senate has held up confirmation of his attorney general nominee, Loretta Lynch.

"What are we doing here?" Obama said. "I have to say there are times when the dysfunction in the Senate just goes too far. This is an example of it. It's gone too far. Enough. Enough."

"Call Loretta Lynch for a vote," he said emphatically. "Get her confirmed."

Lynch is the U.S. attorney for New York's Eastern District and would succeed Attorney General Eric Holder if confirmed. She would become the first black woman to serve as the nation's top law officer.

Dozens of Senate Republicans have opposed her for various reasons, chiefly her support of Obama's immigration policies.

The president spoke at a news conference alongside visiting Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi. Asked about Lynch's nomination, Obama praised "some outbreaks of bipartisanship and common sense" in Congress recently on issues such as fixing a longstanding problem with Medicare payments to doctors.

"Yet what we still have is this crazy situation where a woman everybody agrees is qualified ... has been sitting there longer than the previous seven attorney general nominees combined," Obama said. He said there was no reason for the delay other than "political gamesmanship in the Senate" on issues unrelated to Lynch.

"We've got to get smarter on crime and there are some Republicans who get that," said Butterfield, adding that the U.S. Congress might see a viable, bipartisan bill on criminal before the August break.

The Joint Economic Committee, a bipartisan panel that studies the U.S. economy, laid out the economic challenges facing the black community in a recent report. The committee is composed of 10 senators and 10 members of the House of Representatives.

"More than half (51.4 percent) of black families with children under 18 are headed by a single mother, compared to one-fifth (19.1 percent) of white families with children, and nearly 47 percent of families headed by a black single mother are in poverty," stated the report.

The report continued: "The median income of African American households is just \$34,600 - nearly \$24,000 less than the median income of white households. Black Americans are almost three times more likely to live in poverty than white Americans."

The report said that at the peak of the Great Recession, one in 6 blacks was unemployed.

"African-American homeowners who took out mortgages between 2004 and 2008 were almost twice as likely as white homeowners to have lost their home to foreclosure by 2011," according to the Center for Responsible Lending, the report stated. "One-in-ten black homeowners who took out mortgages at the height of the housing boom eventually lost their home to foreclosure."

The report also included a state-by-state analysis of the poverty and unemployment rates for blacks and whites.

The poverty rate for blacks was highest in Maine at 50.7 percent (1.4 percent black population) compared to the white poverty rate, which was 13.2 percent. According to the report, blacks living in Hawaii (2.5 percent of the population) had the lowest poverty rate at 5.8 percent and the poverty rate for white was 11 percent.

In Washington, D.C., where 48.8 percent of population is black, the black unemployment rate is 15.1 percent, five percentage points higher than the national average for blacks in the labor force.

The jobless rate for blacks was the highest in Wisconsin at 19.7 percent (6.2 percent black population), more than four times higher than the 4.3 percent white jobless rate. Although the unemployment rate for blacks was the lowest in Utah at 1.7 percent (1.6 percent Black population), the poverty rate for blacks was 34.5 percent in the state, compared to a 9.9 percent white poverty rate.

(Continued On Page 2)



Roy Ayers, bottom right, is coming back to Durham for the Art of Cool Festival April 24-26. Here, Ayers is shown after performing at the Hayti Heritage Center Nov. 25, 2013. See story on page 2.

Rev. Barber: Without change, more NC legislative protests ahead

By Gary D. Robertson

RALEIGH (AP) - More nonviolent confrontations between people opposed to Republican policies and state government police are likely ahead at the North Carolina legislature unless Republican lawmakers reverse their agenda, a civil rights leader warned April 14.

The Rev. William Barber, the state NAACP president who has been leading the protest movement that began in 2013, returned to the Legislative Building with several dozen advocates for a lobbying day promoting their 14 demands. Those include expanding Medicaid to more of the working poor, overturning 2013 limits on voting and placing a state referendum on the ballot to raise the minimum wage.

Republican legislative leaders have shown little interest in ascribing to the protesters' agenda. Without change, Barber said, demonstrators will "be back in full force" at the legislative complex April 29 to resume their petitions, which regularly brought a few thousand people each Monday evening. About 1,000 arrests have occurred since the first gatherings of the "Moral Monday" movement. Charges against most of the arrested were ultimately dismissed.

"If there is not movement on these bills that protect the lives of people, the health of people, the rights of people, the voting rights of people - yes, there will be a fresh season of civil disobedience," Barber said at a news conference. "It's not in our DNA to stop just because people fight against us."

Barber said he also anticipated events in the districts of key Republican lawmakers and a week of civil action in June, capped by a massive march in Winston-Salem in early July. That synchronizes with a civil trial for three lawsuits seeking to overturn elements of the 2013 elections overhaul that eliminated same-day registration during early voting and required photo ID to vote in person starting in 2016. The state NAACP is among the plaintiffs.

Barber acknowledged change is difficult short of voting out lawmakers and winning in court. He said he's encouraged by a U.S. Supreme Court decision last month that ordered a lower court to review redistricting boundaries drawn by the Alabama legislature more closely in light of complaints black voters were packed into voting districts. Opponents of North Carolina legislative and congressional districts who make similar arguments are awaiting a response from the justices to hear their complaints. Justices are scheduled to review their request later this week.

"We have a long-view approach to social justice," Barber said. "We are in this for a long haul."

Advocates preparing to visit legislators' offices April 14 included workers in the fast food and home health care industry, both of which are aiming for a minimum wage of \$15 per hour. Ebbini Harris, 23, a single mother making just above the current \$7.25 minimum wage, said she needs more money to meet her children's needs.

Hilda Edmundson, 50, of Raleigh, said she makes \$9 per hour helping clients get clothed and fed, and even make them feel appreciated. She said she's optimistic that lawmakers will respond positively because of their visit.

"I never went this far as coming up to the legislature and standing for something," Edmundson said.

SC man arrested in 2012 double slaying in Durham

(AP) - A South Carolina man has been arrested and charged with murder in connection with a double slaying in Durham in 2012.

Durham police say that 38-year-old Tyrone Thompson was arrested Tuesday morning in Goose Creek, South Carolina, by U.S. Marshals.

Police responded to shootings at a home in Durham shortly after 9 p.m. on January 8, 2012. Twenty-four-year-old Timothy Deangelo McGhee died at his home. Twenty-two-year-old Paul Anthony Noel Jr. of Durham died at Duke University Hospital.

Investigators say a number of shots were fired at the house. Authorities said Thompson was in the Berkeley County, South Carolina, jail. It wasn't known if he had an attorney.

Police identify those charged in JCSU shooting

CHARLOTTE (AP) - Police have released the names of four men charged in a shooting at a historically black university in Charlotte where one student was hurt.

Johnson C. Smith University President Ronald Carter said four men who were not students were turned away from an end-of-the-year party but returned early April 19 and fired into the air.

A freshman was hit in the shoulder. His injuries were not considered life-threatening. His name has not been released.