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Republican Ben Carson claims benefits from Muslim criticism

By Steve Peoples

WASHINGTON (AP) - As his critics grew louder, Republican House contender Ben Carson retreated slightly late Monday in his weekend charge that Muslims shouldn't serve in the presidency. In an interview with Fox News, Carson said he would be open to moderate Muslim who denounced radical Islam as a White House candidate. But he also said he stood by his original comments, saying

with carrying out the duties of the Constitution."

"If you're a Christian and you're running for president and you want to make this into a theocracy, I'm not going to support you," Carson told Fox News host Sean Hannity in an interview to be broadcast later Monday. "I'm not going to advocate you being the president."

Carson said members of the Islamic faith who are willing to accept the American way of life "will be considered infidels and heretics, but at least then I will be quite willing to support them."

The intensifying political fallout is a distraction at least as the retired neurosurgeon tries to capitalize on recent momentum in the unruly GOP field. But it also highlights a sentiment among voters in both parties who agree with Carson's reluctance to elect a Muslim to the nation's highest office.

Carson's campaign reported strong fundraising and more than 100,000 new Facebook friends in the 24 hours after he told NBC's "Meet the Press" on Sunday: "I would not advocate that we put a Muslim in charge of this nation."

His campaign manager Barry Bennett told The Associated Press on Monday: "While the left wing is huffing and puffing over it, Republican primary voters are with us at least 80-20."

"People in Iowa particularly, are like, 'Yeah! We're not going to vote for a Muslim either,'" Bennett said. "I don't mind the hubbub. It's not hurting us, that's for sure."



Rev. Dr. William Barber, II

Butterfield Recognizes Rev. Dr. William Barber, II with CBC Chair Award

WASHINGTON, DC - Tomorrow, Congressman G. K. Butterfield (NC-01) will present the CBC Chair Award to Rev. Dr. William Barber, II during the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation's 45th Annual Legislative Conference Phoenix Awards Dinner. Rev. Dr. Barber serves as president of the North Carolina State Conference of the NAACP.

"I am proud to present the CBC Chair Award to my constituent dear friend, Reverend Dr. William Barber, II," said Butterfield. "Rev. Dr. Barber has dedicated his life to advocating for racial equality and social justice and is most deserving of being recognized for his tireless work."

Most recently, Rev. Dr. Barber spearheaded the impactful 'Moral Monday' demonstrations at the North Carolina state capitol following the Republican-led legislature's passage of the discriminatory HB 1 legislation that turned back the clock on the advancements many fought to obtain. His 'Moral Monday' demonstrations highlighted the legislature's refusal to expand the state's Medicaid program, a decision that systematically disenfranchised over 1 million low income North Carolinians from accessing the most basic of health care.

This year's conference theme is "With Liberty and Justice for All," said Butterfield. "I am confident that Rev. Dr. Barber's lifelong advocacy on behalf of those who are often overlooked will not cease until there is truly 'liberty and justice for all.'"

Rev. Dr. William Barber, II, is president of the North Carolina State Conference of the NAACP. He is pastor of Greenleaf Christian Church Disciples of Christ in Goldsboro, North Carolina and serves as chairperson of the Rebuilding Broken Places Community Development Corporation. He is the author of two books - Preaching Through Unexpected Pain and Forward Together: A Moral Message for the Nation.

Rev. Dr. Barber graduated cum laude from North Carolina Central University with a degree in Public Administration, earned a Master of Divinity from the Duke Divinity School, and a doctoral degree from Drew University in New Jersey.

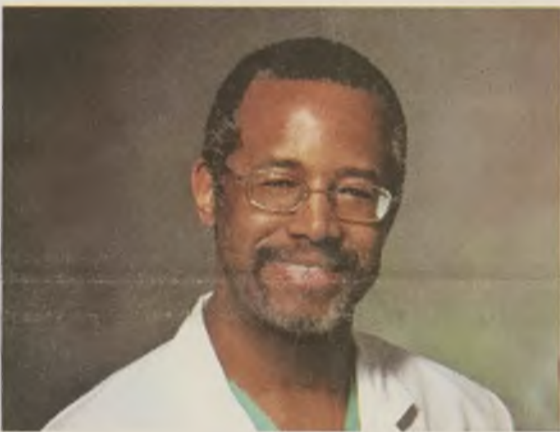
Chief retires after post criticizing Black Lives Matter

DURHAM (AP) - The town of Surf City has approved the retirement of the police chief after he referred to Black Lives Matter as a terrorist group in a Facebook post.

Local media outlets report that town council approved the retirement of Police Chief Mike Halstead during an emergency meeting Tuesday.

Halstead is white and had planned to retire this year. The town council approved the retirement following a Sept. 3 Facebook post by Halstead.

In the 662-word post, he called Black Lives Matter "nothing more than an American born terrorist group." Halstead said that the government nor blacks would tolerate a white supremacist group marching through the streets calling for the removal of public servants.



Dr. Ben Carson

The head of the nation's largest Muslim advocacy group called on Carson to drop out of the 2016 presidential contest during a Capitol Hill press conference on Monday, declaring him "unfit to lead because his views are in contradiction with the United States Constitution."

"Not long ago, some people thought that a Catholic cannot be a president, an African-American cannot be a president," said Nihad Awad, executive director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations. "They were wrong then, and they are wrong now." He cited Article 6 in the Constitution, which states, "no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States."

A couple of Republican candidates joined a chorus of Democrats condemning Carson's statement.

South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham said Sunday that the comment "shows that Dr. Carson is not ready to be commander in chief."

Businesswoman Carly Fiorina also denounced rival Carson's recent comments about not wanting a Muslim elected to the White House.

"Well I think that's wrong," said Fiorina. "You know it says in our Constitution that religion cannot be a test for office."

The leading Democratic presidential candidate, Hillary Rodham Clinton, addressed the issue Monday on Twitter: "Can a Muslim be President of the United States of America? In a word: Yes. Now let's move on."

While the law is clear, the politics of Muslim culture in America are not. Fourteen years after Islamic extremists executed the deadliest terrorist attack in U.S. history, a suspicious stance resonates with some voters despite the fact that - as Democratic Sen. Harry Reid put it Monday - "they teach in our schools, fight in our military and serve in Congress."

The U.S. Muslim population is growing, according to a May survey by the Pew Research Center, which found the group represented just under 1 percent of the U.S. population.

A June Gallup poll found that 54 percent of Republicans would not vote for a well-qualified Muslim nominee from their own party; 39 percent of independents and 27 percent of Democrats said the same.

"Carson is not going to lose any votes in a GOP primary with those comments," said GOP strategist John Feehey. "He could probably gain a few."

Indeed, conservatives have repeatedly embraced anti-Muslim sentiment in recent years.

Nineteen states introduced legislation in 2015 to restrict the use of foreign law in state courts, Republican-backed steps largely designed to block the influence of Shariah - the legal framework that regulates many aspects of life based on the Quran and Islamic tradition in some Muslim countries. Nine states have already implemented such laws, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

And conservatives have consistently tried to link President Barack Obama to Islam throughout his presidency, using imaginary religious ties.

Republican front-runner Donald Trump declined last week to correct a voter who inaccurately stated that Obama is a Muslim. For Trump, the election of a Muslim president was "something that could happen. Would I be comfortable? I don't know if we have to address it right now."

AP News Survey Specialist Emily Swanson contributed to this report.



Ms. Viola Davis

Viola Davis says her story doesn't end with Emmy win

By Lindsey Bahr

LOS ANGELES (AP) - Viola Davis made history on Sunday by becoming the first black woman to win an Emmy for best drama series actress, but said there is still work that needs to be done in getting more diverse stories on screen.

She won for her role as the professor and defense attorney Annalise Keating in ABC's "How to Get Away With Murder," which is just beginning its second season.

In her acceptance speech, Davis quoted Harriet Tubman. "I can seem to get over that line," said Davis, who will be playing Tubman in an upcoming HBO movie.

"The only thing that separates women of color from anybody else is opportunity. You cannot win an Emmy for roles that are simply not there," she said.

Backstage, Davis expanded on the line that exists in the industry, saying "there is a difference when it comes to actors of color in this business. If it's been 67 years since an actress of color has won an Emmy then there is certainly a line."

She and her husband, Julius Tennon, have started a production company to try to continue erasing that line.

"My story doesn't end here," she said. "There is so much work that needs to be done in so many areas in the business with actors of color, so many narratives that need to be seen by people, so many stories that need to be seen and felt."

Davis's friend and peer Taraji P. Henson was also nominated in the same category for her performance in "Empire." The competition between the two was only on paper, though. As Davis walked up to accept the award, she and Henson hugged and exchanged words of support.

"We whispered to each other: 'Whoever gets it, it's great, it's wonderful and I love you.'"

UNC, community colleges to get most from \$2B bond proposal

By Gary D. Robertson

RALEIGH (AP) - Senate Republicans offered Monday a scaled-down version of a bond package lobbied on for several months by Gov. Pat McCrory but would borrow less than the governor wanted and leave out proceeds he wanted for road projects.

The new proposal unveiled in the Senate Finance Committee would borrow \$2 billion, in keeping with a new agreement with House Republicans. The governor wanted a package of about \$2.85 billion.

McCrory wanted some proceeds for highway construction, but legislative leaders from both chambers say road debt isn't necessary now that the final state budget approved late last week locates \$700 million for roads and bridges through mid-2017. Those revenues come in part from increasing Division of Motor Vehicles fees and retaining \$216 million that previously had been transferred from the state Highway Fund to pay for general operating expenses.

The Senate bond package also differs from previous proposals by the governor and a previous House bond offer by putting it on the statewide ballot in November 2016. The governor originally wanted a referendum this fall - citing very low interest rates - but appears agreeable with one next March, which is likely when all primaries will be held. The House proposal also set a March referendum date.

But Sen. Bob Rucho, R-Mecklenburg, the finance committee co-chairman, said waiting more than a year before the referendum will give bond boosters more time to persuade a majority of voters to approve the bonds.

The Senate wants more than \$1.3 billion of the debt proceeds going to University of North Carolina (\$921.7 million) and community college (\$400 million). All 58 community college campuses would receive a portion based on a formula.

The UNC proceeds would target 11 new projects, topped by a \$124.5 million life sciences and biotechnology building at East Carolina University. There would be \$115 million for a nursing school building at UNC-Greensboro and \$102.9 million for a science, technology and math building at Western Carolina University.

The bond package "prioritizes our pressing infrastructure needs across our state," Sen. Kathy Harrington, R-Gaston, told the committee, which took comments on the proposal. The panel isn't expected to vote on the package until Tuesday.

Sen. Dan Blue, D-Wake, urged GOP colleagues to consider locating proceeds to additional historically black colleges in the UNC system. The Senate proposal pays for construction at Winston-Salem University and North Carolina A&T State University.