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A Voteless People Is A Hopeless People - L.E. Austin

Raleigh Community members recall man fatally shot by police officer

By Emery P. Dalesio and Jonathan Drew

RALEIGH (AP) - Community members gathered Monday night (Feb. 29) to remember a Raleigh man fatally shot by a police officer during a foot chase as he was trying to arrest him on drug charges.

In the first several hours after the shooting, local television coverage showed police forming a line in the street near the downtown neighborhood where the shooting took place as a number of people gathered behind yellow crime-scene tape that blocked off the area and began chanting "No justice, no peace!"

The chant has been used repeatedly across the nation in recent years to protest the deaths of black men following encounters with law enforcement officers.

By late afternoon, the police tape had been taken down and by evening several dozen people had gathered with candles at a makeshift memorial near where the shooting happened.

Several hundred people gathered in the evening to hear speakers address the crowd. The Rev. Chris Jones of Ship of Zion, a church in the neighborhood, said he knew the dead man and asked aloud why the officer had to kill him.

After addressing the crowd, Jones said in a brief interview that he wanted people to remember the slain man as a good person.

Police Chief Cassandra Deck-Brown did not reveal the man's race during a news conference at City Hall. She said a firearm was found near the man's body but did not say whether it was his. She also said the man was wanted on a felony drug charge. Deck-Brown declined to provide any other details about the circumstances of the shooting pending a customary investigation by the State Bureau of Investigation.

The officer who shot the man was identified as Senior Officer



Bystanders gather for a vigil near the scene of a fatal shooting in Raleigh, N.C., Monday, Feb. 29. Authorities say that a police officer shot and killed a man while trying to make an arrest for a felony drug charge. (AP Photo/Gerry Broome)

Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina breaks even for '15, Obamacare Makes BCBS Whole

By Gary D. Robertson

RALEIGH (AP) - Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina said Feb. 26 that it essentially broke even in 2015 even as losses related to coverage of customers enrolled through the federal health care law mounted.

The state's largest health insurer reported net income of \$500,000 last year, improving from a \$51 million loss in 2014.

The company said strong investment income and improved results in core businesses such as Medicare Advantage offerings helped overcome a \$282 million loss on plans that comply with the Affordable Care Act. A year ago, losses related to ACA plans were \$123 million, according to the Durham-based not-for-profit company.

"ACA customers were older and sicker and continue to utilize more services and drive medical costs higher," Gerald Petkau, the company's chief financial officer, said of the results, which were filed with the state Department of Insurance.

The extent of these losses is being cushioned somewhat by payments the federal government has made to the company to deal with uncertainty in enrollment levels and medical expenses of the newly insured. Two of the three risk provisions end after this year, however.

BCBS has about 3.9 million customers, of which 1.4 million are fully insured through the company. Of that number, 340,000 are enrolled through the Affordable Care Act. Those BCBS policies can be bought through the federal online health care website or through the company.

The losses, however, are making the company scrutinize whether it will continue in 2017 to offer ACA plans in all 100 counties, scale back its coverage area and plans, or withdraw from offering the subsidized plans all together. A decision must be made by late summer, according to Petkau.

"We're doing everything we can to participate, but we have to evaluate the sustainability and affordability for our customers," Petkau said adding "all options are on the table."

The company was permitted to raise 2016 overall premium rates on average by 32.5 percent, which Petkau said he hopes will help financially stabilize its ACA offerings. But he acknowledged the higher rates could reduce the number of ACA enrollees.

Total BCBS revenue increased slightly from \$8 billion in 2014 to \$8.2 billion in 2015. Of the 2015 amount, \$1.8 billion came from premium and government subsidies through ACA plans, Petkau said. The sickest or most expensive 5 percent of ACA enrollees at the company generated \$1.3 billion in claims alone, he said.

Another company document filed with the Insurance Department showed increases for overall compensation for top executives during 2015 after it fell during 2014. BCBS reported President and CEO Brad Wilson received nearly \$3.8 million in total compensation, including a \$1 million salary and a bonus that grew by more than \$460,000 compared to 2014.

Petkau said executive compensation is based in part on several factors over multiple years and that "salaries are in line with other companies of our nature and size."

Report: Racial history fuels some backlash against district

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) - Some of the backlash against the state's Achievement School District is rooted in the historical experience of Memphis and the River City's history of highly charged racial dynamics that date back to the 19th century, a new report says.

The goal of the ASD is to move the bottom 5 percent of schools in Tennessee to the top 25 percent in five years. The state-run district is composed of 29 schools - 27 in Memphis and two in Nashville - and has about 10,000 students. All but five of the schools are charter schools, and the others are run by the ASD.

The report released this week by the Tennessee Consortium on Research, Evaluation & Development said the racial history of Memphis complicates typical debates surrounding charters schools and the takeover of public schools.

The ongoing community backlash, the report says, has led to instability and draining of ASD resources.

"The experience of Memphis' African American community with issues like discrimination, segregation and desegregation, white flight, and the recent departure of six counties from the district shape the lens with which many local residents interpret and understand the ASD's mission," the report said.

School takeovers and charter schools are often somewhat divisive because people don't like to have their schools taken over, said Joshua L. Glazer, an associate professor of education policy at George Washington University and co-author of the report.

"But when that work transpires in a context that has a very divisive history and where the society is deeply divided, it really amplifies the degree of rancor and resentment," Glazer said.

The report recommends that the ASD build a broad-based coalition of support, including in the political arena.

Schools officials agree that more work needs to be done to engage the community with the difficult work of school turnaround.

"Clearly, we have not gotten the porridge just right yet," ASD superintendent Malika Anderson said. "That is evident. But I don't think anyone can say we haven't been trying. And we will continue to try and get it right."

Glazer recognizes that the district has been working to build bridges.

"I think the ASD is trying very hard to bring people together, to build a coalition, but it's doing it in a very tough environment," he said.



'Souls to the Polls' Event

Please join the Durham Branch NAACP and the Nehemiah Christian Center in a special "Souls to the Polls" march on Sunday, March 6, 2016. The march will begin at the Nehemiah Christian Center which is located at 514 Mangum Street, Durham, NC 27701 and end at the Board of Elections Office which is located at 201 N. Roxboro Street, Durham, NC. The march will begin at 12:30 p.m. so please arrive in ample time for parking and lining up.

You are reminded that early voting affords voters the following: out of precinct voting, same day registration and shorter lines. If you have an ID, please be certain that you bring it with you to the poll. However, if you don't have an ID you may still vote. Voting is not a privilege for the few, but the right of every registered citizen. Don't lose early voting. Help save your children's and grandchildren's future by exercising your right to choose who you want to represent you locally, statewide, and nationally during early voting March 3rd-March 12th or during the primary which is March 15th.

Forward Together! Not One Step Back!

The Smithsonian unites with Tuskegee University

TUSKEGEE, Ala. (AP) - The Smithsonian Institution National Museum of African American History and Culture will collaborate with the Tuskegee University Archives to preserve and share significant parts of the nation's Civil Rights Era with the world.

A news release from Tuskegee University says the museum is scheduled to open Sept. 24. The Tuskegee University Archives has a Memorandum of Understanding with the museum that will support several projects, including digitization of materials, lectures and education workshops.

For the first phase of the MOU, the museum has given \$25,000 to the university to preserve the legacy of Amelia Boynton Robinson, best known as the beaten woman in the iconic photo of the 1965 "Bloody Sunday" civil rights march.

Other future projects planned include a civil rights symposium in 2018 at the university with prominent Civil Rights historians.

Rosa Parks archive fully digitized by Library of Congress

WASHINGTON (AP) - Rosa Parks' archive of letters, writings, personal notes and photographs has been fully digitized by the Library of Congress and is now available online.

The library announced Wednesday that the collection of 10,000 items belonging to Parks is available to the public.

Her collection was kept from the public for years because of a legal battle between her heirs and friends. But in 2014, philanthropist Howard Buffett bought the collection and placed it on long-term loan at the national library.

The collection presents a more complex portrait of Parks, who is remembered for a single, iconic act of civil disobedience. Parks refused to give up her seat on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1955, sparking a year-long bus boycott that helped dismantle formal segregation.

Parks, who died in 2005 at 92, wrote of feeling lonely and lost as she lived through the struggle with segregation. After her arrest, Parks lost her job as a tailor at

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