

The Carolina Times

THE TRUTH UNBRIDLED

VOLUME 95 - NUMBER 18

DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA - SATURDAY, MAY 7, 2016

TELEPHONE (919) 682-2913 PRICE: 50 CENTS

N.C. Republican Party chairman Harnett dumped

By Gary D. Robertson

RALEIGH (AP) - The North Carolina Republican Party's first black state chairman was removed from his post April 30, the climax of months of conflict with other party leaders who recently censured him for exceeding his authority and trying to crash a GOP website.

More than two-thirds of roughly 280 members attending the party's Executive Committee required to throw out Hasan Harnett voted to do so at the private, trial-like meeting in Raleigh that lasted several hours, according to meeting participants. Committee members earlier April 30 found Harnett responsible for violating the GOP's organizational rules and committing acts of "gross inefficiency."



HASAN HARNETT

The committee later April 30 was considering a replacement for Harnett, who was elected last June with the backing of activists aligned with the tea party. The state's top elected leaders, including Gov. Pat McCrory, Senate leader Phil Berger and House Speaker Tim Moore, wanted Harnett's rival to win.

Harnett was out of the country April 30 on a previously-announced business trip, according to ally Daniel Rufty, chairman of the party's 12th Congressional District. Jim Womack, a Lee County party official made Harnett's case before the committee. Womack confirmed Harnett's removal but said he wasn't authorized to comment more. Before the meeting, about 15 Harnett supporters demonstrated outside the building where it was meeting. "NC GOP Elites GO HOME!" read one placard.

Executive Committee members petitioned successfully for the emergency meeting after the party's smaller board of directors censured Harnett on March 20, limiting his powers and denying access to the party email.

Specifically, the Central Committee accused Harnett of unilaterally trying to lower registration fees to attend next weekend's state GOP convention without permission, criticizing other party leaders publicly and trying to interfere with the party's computer system. Harnett's critics have affidavits suggesting he tried to get a computer professional to crash the convention website and create an alternative site to collect convention proceeds.

Harnett said allegations against him are untrue or simply the result of differing views of party rules. A written rebuttal of the charges against him handed out to meeting participants by his "defense team" call the computer-related accusations "innocent activities performed by the chairman with absolutely no malice or impropriety toward the NC GOP or our convention delegates."

An angry and frustrated Harnett emphasized his race and place in state party history when he was locked out of his party email account in early March - before the Central Committee's censure of him - as part of what was called a server security sweep.

"I mean seriously, is this some form of ritual or hazing you would put the first black chairman of the NCGOP state party through?" he wrote in early March to the party's executive director and treasurer. "Or is it because I am not white enough for you?"

Harnett in recent weeks called for a truce with the 50-member Central Committee and proposed terms of reconciliation, including apologies. But several of Harnett's predecessors last week publicly expressed support for Harnett's removal, writing that he had "demonstrated time and time again that he is not capable of being chairman."

Saturday's meeting brings negative publicity and vibes for divided state Republicans seeking to retain their hold upon North Carolina government in November. Redistricting lawsuits, a tough gubernatorial re-election bid for Pat McCrory and national negative fallout on a new law restricting bathroom use by transgender people and state and local anti-discrimination rules protecting gays and lesbians already are adding to the GOP's troubles.

Harnett's defense team wrote "the harm done to our party and our candidates this election cycle will be catastrophic" if Harnett was removed unjustly.

CIAA will stay in North Carolina despite HB2

CHARLOTTE (AP) - The Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association says it won't move its headquarters, its basketball tournament or other conference championships from North Carolina, despite the state's controversial new LGBT law.

The CIAA said in a statement April 28 that it will instead partner with the NCAA to educate its members on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issues as it does on other issues, like graduation rates and concussion management.

The Charlotte Observer reports (<http://bit.ly/1NZnZ9s>) that the CIAA, the oldest African-American sports conference in the U.S., has hosted its annual basketball tournament in Charlotte since 2006 and announced it was moving its headquarters to Charlotte from Virginia in 2015.

Federal ruling on N. Carolina voting laws bolsters voter ID

By Gary D. Robertson

RALEIGH (AP) - Civil rights and elections attorneys said April 26 they will appeal a federal court ruling upholding North Carolina's 2013 major rewrite of its voting laws, a decision that marks at least a temporary victory for another state that requires photo identification to vote.

This week's ruling came after two trials since July and 20,000 pages of court-filed documents. It rejected arguments by the state NAACP, the U.S. Justice Department, churches and individuals that the election changes approved by the GOP-led General Assembly disproportionately harmed minority voters.

Critics had sued, alleging that North Carolina's revised voting law was passed to discriminate against poor and minority voters in violation of the Constitution and U.S. Voting Rights Act. While North Carolina has "significant, shameful past discrimination" that extended to voting, the plaintiffs didn't show the law made it harder for minority voters to cast ballots compared to other groups, the judge ruled.

"North Carolina has provided legitimate state interests for its voter ID requirement and electoral system," U.S. District Judge Thomas Schroeder wrote in Monday's decision, siding with the state's Republican-led legislature.

It marked a legal win for one of the 30 states that currently have some kind of voter ID rule now in force. Nineteen have a photo ID mandate, according to the ruling.

"We've advocated all along that the commonsense voter ID and election integrity reforms that we passed in the General Assembly were constitutional," said Rep. David Lewis, R-Harnett. He helped guide the 2013 law through the legislature and said it bolsters the integrity of the voting system.

Lawyers for the state NAACP, the League of Women Voters of North Carolina and others filed notices April 26 of plans to appeal the 485-page ruling to the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. Some of the attorneys said Schroeder wrongly determined the provisions didn't worsen the state's historical bias against black voters.

"We believe the judge's decision is wrong," said the Rev. William Barber, state NAACP president. He called the ruling "almost 500 pages of rationalization for the intentional race-based voter suppression law that everybody knows was written to suppress African American votes."

Voter ID laws in states such as Indiana, Wisconsin and Georgia have been upheld in court. But pending litigation in North Carolina and Texas could decide whether similar requirements could be struck down based on claims they violate the U.S. Voting Rights Act, a voting law expert said.

The 2011 Texas photo ID requirement is expected to be heard by the full 5th Circuit next month.

"This is really the second generation of voter ID challenges," said Rick Hasen, a professor at the University of California-Irvine School of Law. "If North Carolina ultimately succeeds ... I expect to see other Republican-leaning jurisdictions to pass similar laws."

Starting with this year's March 15 primary, North Carolina required those voting in person to show one of six qualifying IDs such as a driver's license, a passport or military identification.

North Carolina's Division of Motor Vehicles provides free identification cards for those who need them to vote, although past trial testimony described obstacles in obtaining that ID. Legislators subsequently passed changes last summer so that those with a "reasonable impediment" to obtaining an ID - like disabilities, transportation problems or work schedules - could still vote if they signed a form and provide other identifying information.

Schroeder wrote the state's voter ID requirement now serves "legitimate state interests ... without imposing a material burden on any group of voters."

Schroeder also upheld parts of the 2013 law that reduced the number of early-voting days from 17 to 10, eliminated same-day registration during the early-voting period and barred the counting of Election Day ballots cast in the wrong precinct. He focused on numbers showing black voters had higher registration and turnout rates in 2014, when many of the changes were being implemented, compared to the last midterm election in 2010.

"The 2014 data merely confirm what the remaining data suggest: that minorities enjoy equal and constitutionally-compliant opportunity to participate in the electoral process," he wrote.

The plaintiffs' attorneys said focusing on the 2014 election to determine the effect of the law doesn't take into account other factors. They said an expensive U.S. Senate campaign and voter mobilization efforts by opponents of the 2013 law helped boost minority turnout.

Federal courts previously allowed same-day registration and out-of-precinct voting for the 2014 general election while the trial court heard the case. Schroeder allowed such options to continue only through the June 7 congressional primary.

Appeals court orders expedited review in voter ID case

RALEIGH (AP) - A federal appeals court wants to examine swiftly a trial judge's ruling this week upholding North Carolina's voting law changes, which include a photo identification mandate to cast a ballot in person.

The 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Richmond, Virginia, ordered April 28 an expedited review of April 25th decision by U.S. District Judge Thomas Schroeder. He determined voter ID, scaled-back early voting and other changes didn't discriminate against minority voters.

The state NAACP, League of Women Voters of North Carolina and others challenging the law in 2013 filed appeal notices April 25.

The order sets deadlines for May and June for appeal briefs. Any 4th Circuit ruling also could be appealed. The plaintiffs want a resolution in the case so any required changes are made before the November election.



President Barack Obama talks with Jahana Hayes, 2016 National Teacher of the Year, and Lynadia Whiting, a student of Hayes, in the Blue Room of the White House prior to an event to honor Hayes and Teacher of the Year finalists, May 3. (Official White House Photo by Pete Souza)

White House: Obama not offended by comedian's language

By Kevin Freking

WASHINGTON (AP) - The White House said May 2 that President Barack Obama wasn't offended by comedian Larry Wilmore's use of a racial slur at Saturday night's White House Correspondents' Association dinner.

Wilmore concluded his remarks noting progress on race and how much it meant to him that a black man was president. He concluded: "Yo Barry, you did it, my n----. You did it."

White House spokesman Josh Earnest said he talked with Obama, and Obama appreciated the spirit of racial progress Wilmore was trying to convey.

Earnest said the White House didn't see Wilmore's speech beforehand. Earnest also said he's confident Wilmore used the word by design and was seeking to be provocative.

But Earnest said any fair reading makes clear that Wilmore's sentiments of racial progress "came from a genuine place."

Wilmore, on his Comedy Central show May 2, noted: "Like the president himself, the reaction was mixed," a joking reference to Obama's black father and white mother.

"I completely understand



why people would be upset about that," Wilmore said on "The Nightly Show." "It's a very charged word - I get it."

He said one critic, former CNN host Piers Morgan, had misquoted him by saying Wilmore used the word ending in "er." Instead, Wilmore pointed out he used it ending in "a," which he said was a term of endearment some black people use between each other to take back the power of the word to denigrate.

AP Television Writer David Bauder in New York contributed to this report.

107-year-old woman who danced with Obama gets new ID card

WASHINGTON (AP) - A 107-year-old woman who gained Internet fame for her impromptu dance with President Barack Obama has received a temporary photo identification card after her lack of a birth certificate stymied her earlier efforts to get one.

Virginia McLaurin could not obtain a replacement for a photo ID that was stolen years ago because she lacks a birth certificate, The Washington Post reported on April 23. McLaurin, who is black and was born in segregated South Carolina in 1909, told the Post she was birthed by a midwife and her birth date was written in a Bible.

On April 26, District of Columbia Mayor Muriel Bowser presented McLaurin with a new temporary card and announced regulations giving city residents 70 and older more options to obtain identification. New federal regulations have made it harder to get the ID required to board airplanes.

Without the new ID, McLaurin couldn't fly to New York or Los Angeles for interviews about her videotaped meeting with Obama that went viral online.