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Charlotte mayor to NC lawmakers: You move first on LGBT laws

By Tom Foreman, Jr. and Gary D. Robertson

CHARLOTTE (AP) - The mayor of North Carolina's largest city applauded the governor Sept. 19 for recognizing the need to repeal the LGBT law prompting boycotts of the state. But she said lawmakers can act anytime they want to, whether or not Charlotte backs down first on protecting people from discrimination.

Feeling pressure from the loss of major events, North Carolina's Republican leaders offered over the weekend to consider rescinding their law limiting LGBT anti-discrimination protections, but only if Charlotte moves first to repeal its never-enforced city ordinance.

"We are not prepared to add this item to our agenda this evening, however, we urge the state to take action as soon as possible and encourage continued dialogue with the broader community," Mayor Jennifer Roberts said in response before Monday's city council meeting.

The mayor's response follows a weekend in which GOP lawmakers and Gov. Pat McCrory floated the idea of a special General Assembly session to take the state law off the books. But they said House Bill 2 wouldn't have been needed if Charlotte hadn't first overreached.

"We believe that if the Charlotte City Council rescinds its ordinance there would be support in our caucuses to return state law to where it was pre-H.B. 2," House Speaker Tim Moore and Senate leader Phil Berger said in a statement Sunday night.

Sentiment may be leaning against the Republicans on this issue.

A new poll released Monday found nearly 50 percent of the state's likely voters this fall oppose HB2, while almost 40 percent support it. Meanwhile, 60 percent say it has hurt the state, compared to only 11 percent who say it has improved North Carolina.

The poll also found that women and blacks oppose the law by even higher margins - 61 percent and 54 percent. The survey of 644 likely voters had a margin of sampling error of 3.9 percentage points.

The law - passed during a single-day special session in March - initially blocked workers from invoking state law to sue over employment discrimination, such as on the basis of race or sex, but the legislature restored that right in July.

Republicans crafted the law in response to Charlotte's ordinance the month before expanding anti-discrimination protections such as sexual orientation and sexual identity to cover public accommodations including city hotels, restaurants and retailers.

The state law blocked Charlotte and all local governments from passing similar rules and directed transgender people to use bathrooms and showers in schools and government buildings corresponding to the sex on their birth certificates.

National criticism from gay-rights groups, corporate CEOs and politicians led to the cancellations of events and lawsuits to overturn the law. The NBA pulled its 2017 All-Star Game out of Charlotte.

Last spring, legislative leaders said the Charlotte ordinance needed to be gone before any significant modifications would be considered to the state law. The city council declined to do so at the time. But efforts at a resolution intensified last week after the NCAA and Atlantic Coast Conference took championships away from North Carolina because of the law, including the ACC football title game in Charlotte.

Charlotte's business leaders and the state's restaurant and lodging association have been urging a "reset" by repealing both the ordinance and the law.

But equal rights advocates have urged city leaders to stand firm behind the ordinance, saying the loss of economic activity and any damage to the state's reputation is the fault of McCrory and lawmakers who passed the law, not Charlotte.

"One would think that, finally, 180 days later, the architects of this disaster, McCrory, Moore and Berger, would step up, admit their mistake and provide the leadership necessary to repeal H.B. 2," state Rep. Chris Sgro, the state's only openly gay lawmaker, said Monday in Charlotte. "Instead, McCrory, Berger and Moore aren't seeing 180 days of loss. They are seeing 50 days until an election."

McCrory has been the law's most high-profile defender, citing bathroom privacy concerns. He's blamed the fallout on politics - he's in a tough re-election bid against Democratic Attorney General Roy Cooper, who opposes the law.

Cooper said Monday that McCrory should call a special session Monday to repeal the law, and blasted the governor for not showing leadership. "The damage to our economy must be stopped and it is clear that full repeal of H.B. 2 will accomplish this," Cooper's statement said.

The city council holds its next regular public meeting Sept. 26.

Robertson reported from Raleigh, NC.

The 2016 Bull City Stand Down was held Sept. 16 at Durham County Memorial Stadium. The program honors veterans and promotes services to veterans.

This year the late Willie Bradshaw, a veteran, was honored with the field and scoreboard at the stadium named in his honor. Bradshaw was a long time member of the Durham and Walltown communities. He was a player, coach and athletic director for Durham Public Schools. From left to right ae: Pastor Fredrick A. Davis, First Calvary Baptist Church; Mrs. Shsirley Bradshaw, wife; and Fana Haile-Salessie, granddaughter.

For apathetic Dems, Obama offers himself as motivation

By Julie Pace
AP White House Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) - For Democrats lulled into apathy by the uninspiring presidential election, President Barack Obama is offering himself as motivation.

He's not just validating Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton or holding up his record as a reason for voters to keep the White House in his party's hands. Obama wants his supporters to see anything less than a vote for Clinton as a sign of disrespect to the nation's first black president.

"I will consider it a personal insult, an insult to my legacy, if this community lets down its guard and fails to activate itself in this election," Obama said Sept. 17 during an impassioned address to the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation's annual dinner. "You want to give me a good send-off? Go vote."

The president was speaking specifically to an audience of African-American leaders, but his broader message is aimed at all corners of the young, diverse coalition that twice propelled him to the White House. While Clinton leads Republican Donald Trump by wide margins with young voters, blacks and Hispanics, party leaders are deeply concerned that turnout among those groups will fall short of what she needs to win.

"The president knows firsthand how important it is to not take a single vote for granted," said Jennifer Psaki, Obama's communications director. She said Obama would spend the coming weeks taking his message to "African-Americans, young people, old people and anyone who needs an extra boost to remember what is at stake."

Obama aides say the president has grown increasingly frustrated this year by the indifference to Clinton among some Democrats, especially given what he sees as an unacceptable alternative in Trump. That frustration has been particularly acute with black voters who tell Obama they're saddened by the end of his presidency but aren't enthusiastically rallying behind the candidate who would safeguard most of his work.

"He knows when he ran, it was a great source of inspiration," civil rights activist Rev. Jesse Jackson said. "People cannot just limit the inspiration to his presidency."

When Obama met with advisers in August to start planning his remarks for the Congressional Black Caucus event, he made clear he wanted to light a fire under that group of voters.

"My name may not be on the ballot, but our progress is on the ballot," Obama said in Saturday's (Sept. 17) address.

President Barack Obama and Aung San Suu Kyi, State Counsellor and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Myanmar, visit with Obama family pets Bo and Sunny in the Cabinet Room of the White House following their bilateral meeting, Sept. 14. (Official White House Photo by Pete Souza)

Durtham Branch NAACP To Meet

The Durham Branch of the NAACP will meet asy Kyles Temple AMEZ Church, 409 Dunstan St.

There will be an election of th enominating Coimmittee.

Memberships are current as of 30 days prior to the meeting date may be elected to the Nominating Committee.

Ms. Carla Hayden

Carla Hayden sworn in as librarian of Congress

By Ben Nuckols

WASHINGTON (AP) - The nation is about to get a new chief librarian.

Carla Hayden was sworn in Sept. 14 as the 14th librarian of Congress. Chief Justice John Roberts will administer the oath of office during the ceremony at the library's Great Hall.

Hayden will be the first woman and the first African-American to lead the national library since its inception in 1800. She's the longtime CEO of the library system in Baltimore. She's also just the third professional librarian to get the job.

President Barack Obama signed a law last year establishing a 10-year term for the librarian of Congress. It was previously considered a lifetime appointment. Hayden's predecessor, James Billington, held the job for 28 years and was criticized for not keeping up with changes in technology.

Obamas get early peak at African-American museum

WASHINGTON (AP) - President Barack Obama and the first family got an early look Wednesday inside the National Museum of African American History and Culture before its opening.

The newest Smithsonian museum will open Sept. 24. Established more than a decade ago, it has been accumulating items to tell the story of America through the African-American lens.

The president will deliver remarks at the dedication ceremony. Officials are bracing for huge crowds in the opening days.