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The young ladies of Girl Scout Troop 711 of St. Joseph A.M.E. Church hosted local troops for World Thinking Day. See story and photos on pages 8 and 9.

Arkansas lawmakers vote to remove Lee from King holiday

By Tafi Mukunyadzi

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (AP) - Arkansas lawmakers gave final approval March 17 to legislation removing Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee from the holiday honoring slain civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr.

The state House approved the proposal with a 66-11 vote and sent it to Republican Gov. Asa Hutchinson, who had urged lawmakers to end the dual holiday. Five representatives voted present, effectively voting no on the bill.

Once the bill is signed into law, Mississippi and Alabama will be the only states that honor Lee and King on the same day.

The bill sets aside the second Saturday in October to honor Lee with a memorial day, not a state holiday, marked by a gubernatorial proclamation. It also expands what is taught in schools about the Civil War and civil rights.

Hutchinson, who promised last year to push for ending the dual holiday,

made the unusual move of testifying in front of two separate legislative committees this month to speak in support of the proposal. Hutchinson told the panel that King deserved his own day of recognition, and that ending the dual holiday would be a healing moment for the state.

Hutchinson's office said he would sign the measure into law on Monday with a ceremony that the governor said would emphasize the "historic dynamic of this new day."

"The support for a separate holiday to recognize Martin Luther King far exceeded my expectations and speaks well of the General Assembly and our state," Hutchinson said in a statement released by his office.

Republican Rep. Grant Hodges presented the bill in the House and acknowledged that it wasn't perfect. The representative said he has several Confederate memorials in his district and that the measure is not meant to disrespect Confederate history in any way. He said the proposal was an effort to give both King and Lee their due, individually.

"This is not a perfect solution, but it is a good solution," Hodges said.

A similar effort to remove Lee from the King holiday repeatedly failed before a House committee two years ago. Opponents of the measure said the legislation belittled the state's Confederate heritage by not giving Lee his own holiday.

The vote on March 17 followed an emotional debate about King, Lee and Arkansas' Confederate and civil rights histories.

"We are not separating Robert E. Lee and Martin Luther King," Republican Rep. Jana Della Rosa told lawmakers before the vote. "We are taking Robert E. Lee and we are putting him in the basement and we're acting like we're embarrassed that he ever existed."

Della Rosa told the other legislators that this marked the first time she had been angry about a bill that she was voting against. She had filed a competing bill to move Lee to the state and federal holiday in February honoring George Washington, but said she withdrew the bill.

Trump's budget boosts military but cuts GOP, Dem favorites

By Andrew Taylor

WASHINGTON (AP) - President Donald Trump's new \$1.15 trillion budget would reshape America's government with the broad, conservative strokes he promised as a candidate, ordering generous increases for the

military, slashing domestic programs and riling both fellow Republicans and Democrats by going after favored programs.

The president's initial budget proposal, submitted to Congress on March 16, would boost defense spending by \$54 billion, the largest increase since Ronald Reagan's military buildup of the 1980s. That means deep cuts elsewhere - the environment, agriculture, the arts - but Trump said that's imperative to take on the Islamic State group and others in a dangerous world.

"To keep Americans safe, we have made the tough choices that have been put off for too long," he declared in a statement titled "America First" that accompanied the budget.

Or, as Budget Director Mick Mulvaney said, "This is a hard power budget, not a soft power budget."

It's not entirely in line with Trump's campaign pledges.

Durham Branch NAACP to Mark 100th Anniversary

The Durham branch of the NAACP will have its 100th anniversary program at Markham Chapel Missionary Baptist Church, 3630 Old Chapel Hill Road on Sunday March 26th at 4pm. Bishop Tony Butler will be our guest speaker and his topic will be "One Language, One Speech". There will be no food served during or after the meeting as previously mentioned. Fred Foster, Jr. will be recognized as our president from 2006 to 2016. Please come to our meeting, your support is needed.

Former NC police chief detained at JFK for 90 minutes

By Martha Waggoner

RALEIGH (AP) - A former North Carolina police chief who now works as a law enforcement consultant said March 19 that he's disappointed with his country of 42 years after he was detained at John F. Kennedy International Airport.

Former Greenville Police Chief Hassan Aden of Alexandria, Virginia, said he was detained March 13 on his return trip from Paris. He supports the officers of the U.S. Customs and Border Patrol, but he believes his 90-minute detention was unreasonable, he said in a telephone interview.

Aden, who is biracial, said a customs officer told him that his name was used as an alias by someone on a watch list. He said one officer told him that he wasn't being detained even though he couldn't use his phone and he had to remain seated.

"When it goes to 90 minutes with no phone ... and you can't move around, it seems more than an investigation to check your passport," he said. "It begins to feel like you are in custody."

Aden described the scene in a Facebook post March 18, adding that the officer who told him that he wasn't being detained has an "ignorance of the law and the Fourth Amendment" of the U.S. Constitution that should disqualify him as a customs officer.

"I certainly was not free to leave," Aden said.

Aden, 52, said he became a naturalized U.S. citizen at the age of 10 when he was an Italian citizen. He worked for the police department in Alexandria for about 25 years, then as Greenville police chief for about two years.

Clients of the consulting firm he now owns include the U.S. Justice Department, he said.

With family in Italy, France and England, Aden travels often travels overseas. He says that won't change. But he is rethinking plans to send his 12- and 15-year-old children overseas as unaccompanied minors to spend the summer with relatives because he wouldn't want them to go through the same situation on their own.

"This is my country and with things I see happening, I see certain rights eroding in the name of national security. It's worrisome," he said.

A U.S. Customs and Border Patrol spokesperson said the agency doesn't comment on individual cases.

Parts of Trump's spending plan for the next fiscal year angered both congressional Democrats and Republicans who will have the final say on it.

While it targets Democratic priorities like housing, community development and the environment, it also would slash GOP sacred cows like aid to rural schools and subsidized airline service to Trump strongholds, and it would raise fees on participants in the federal flood insurance program.

The budget pursues frequent targets of the GOP's staunchest conservatives, eliminating the National Endowment for the Arts, legal aid for the poor, low-income heating assistance and the AmeriCorps national service program established by President Bill Clinton.

But Midwestern Republicans including Sen. Rob Portman of Ohio were upset by cuts to the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. Southern Republicans like Rep. Hal Rogers of Kentucky lashed out at cuts he called "draconian, careless and counterproductive."

One target of the budget is the Appalachian Regional Commission, which helps communities in the region.

Trump's proposal covers only roughly one-fourth of the approximately \$4 trillion total federal budget. This is the discretionary portion that Congress passes each year, not addressing taxes, Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid.

Nor does it make predictions about deficits and the economy. Those big-picture details are due in May, and are sure to show large - probably permanent - budget deficits. Trump has vowed not to cut Social Security and Medicare and is dead set against raising taxes.

As for Thursday's (March 16) proposal, Republicans praised the president for beefing up the Pentagon, but they were far less enthusiastic about accepting Trump's recipe for doing so without adding to the nation's \$20 trillion debt.

"While we support more funding for our military and defense, we must maintain support for our farmers and ranchers," said North Dakota Republican John Hoeven, blasting a 21 percent cut to the Agriculture Department's budget.

The proposed budget would close numerous county offices that help farmers and rural residents navigate farm subsidy and rural development programs. Rural development and water projects would also bear cuts.

"I just want to make sure that rural America, who was very supportive to Trump, doesn't have to take a disproportionately high cut," said Rep. Robert Aderholt, R-Ala.

Budget Director Mulvaney acknowledged that passing the cuts could be an uphill struggle and said the administration would negotiate.

"This is not a take-it-or-leave-it budget," he acknowledged.

Many of Trump's GOP allies on Capitol Hill gave it only grudging praise, if any.

"Congress has the power of the purse," reminded House Appropriations Committee Chairman Rodney Frelinghuysen of New Jersey. "I look forward to reviewing this," said House Speaker Paul Ryan of Wisconsin.