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Analysis: Trump's slow walk to condemning white supremacists

By JULIE PACE
AP Washington Bureau Chief

WASHINGTON (AP) — It took President Donald Trump two days to do what both Republicans and Democrats said should have come fast and easy.

In his carefully worded statement Monday, Trump condemned members of the Ku Klux Klan, neo-Nazis and white supremacists as "repugnant." He vowed that his administration would crack down on those who perpetrate "racist violence." He called for national unity.

It was the type of statement Americans have come to expect from their presidents after racially charged incidents, like the deadly violence that erupted Saturday in Charlottesville, Virginia. But Trump struggled mightily to meet the moment, glaringly omitting any direct condemnation of white supremacists in his initial comments on the incident and decrying bigotry "on many sides."

As the most unconventional president in modern American history, Trump has at times thrived off low expectations. He is often cheered by Republicans when he fulfills basic functions of the office. And GOP lawmakers in particular have often tried to explain away his missteps as a function of his lack of experience in Washington and politics.

But he has found himself with few allies after his botched handling of the Charlottesville violence. Several Republicans challenged Trump directly to be more strident in calling out white nationalists and neo-Nazis. Colorado Sen. Cory Gardner said the president needed to "step up" and call the groups "evil."

The president got to that place on Monday, declaring that "racism is evil, and those who cause violence in its name are criminals and thugs."

It's unclear whether his cleanup efforts will ease the political pressure he has faced in recent days. In addition to the disapproval from his own party, three members of a White House advisory council — Merck CEO Kenneth Frazier, Under Armour CEO Kevin Plank and Intel CEO Brian Krzanich — announced they were resigning from the panel in protest.



The Durham Committee on the Affairs of Black People will celebrate its 82nd Founders' Anniversary with three events. The first of the three events on this weekend will be a youth forum held in the student union on the campus of NCCU. Immediately following the forum, a free party for the students will take place. Saturday morning we will be hosting our 1st Annual Golf Classic at Fall Village Golf Course in Durham off Hwy 98. 6 p.m., at The Durham Convention Center, located at 301 Morgan Street, Durham, NC 27702. The Keynote speaker for this event will be Congresswoman Maxine Waters. The honorees will be Dr. Lorenzo Lynch and Dr. Howard Fitts.



Members of the NCCU Law School hold a rally Monday, Aug. 14 at the Law School when they laid out legal and moral reasons for fighting racism and supporting the cause of the Charlottesville massacre. NCCU Rally participants from left to right are: Professor Irving Joyner, NCCU Professor of Law; Ms. Aviance Brown, President, NCCU School of Law Bar Association; NCCU School of Law Dean Phyllis Craig-Taylor; and C. Scott Holmes, Assistant Clinical Professor of Law & Supervising Attorney Civil Litigation Clinic

Later Monday, Trump tried to pin the blame for the controversy on one of his favorite targets: the media. He tweeted that the media "will never be satisfied ... truly bad people."

The trouble for Trump is that his struggle in responding to the Charlottesville violence seems to fit a pattern of uncharacteristic caution when it comes to handling racial tensions and condemning the fringe groups that have rallied around his candidacy.

Indeed, it was striking that one of the few signs of support for Trump after his comments Saturday came from the white supremacist website Daily Stormer. The website noted that Trump avoided reporters' questions about whether he condemned the groups leading the protests. "Really, really good. God bless him," the website wrote.

Trump denies that he's racist or sympathetic to such groups. Son-in-law Jared Kushner, the grandson of Holocaust survivors, and daughter Ivanka, who converted to Judaism, are among those who have defended the president against those charges.

Still, he has a history of engaging in high-profile, racially fraught battles.

Early in his career as a developer, Trump fought charges of bias against blacks seeking to rent at his family-owned apartment complexes. He long promoted the lie that the nation's first black president, Barack Obama, was not born in the United States. As a candidate, he proposed temporarily banning Muslims from the United States. He retweeted a post from accounts that appeared to have ties to white nationalist groups. And he was slow to reject the endorsement of former KKK leader David Duke.

Some of the president's friends and advisers have argued that Trump is simply refusing to bend to liberals' desire for political correctness. A boastful, proudly disruptive politician, Trump often has been rewarded for saying impolite and impolitic things. Some supporters cheer him for being someone who says what they cannot.

Democrats frequently assert that Trump sees a political advantage in courting the support of the far right. Indeed, he has benefited politically from the backing of media outlets such as Breitbart or InfoWars. They have consistently promoted Trump and torn down his opponents, sometimes with biased or inaccurate reports.

Charlottesville's mayor, Democrat Mike Signer, said Sunday that Trump made a choice during his campaign to "go right to the gutter, to play on our worst prejudices."

Resident asks NC county to replace Confederate statue

ASHEBORO, N.C. (AP) — A request to remove a Confederate monument at a North Carolina county courthouse is a new entrant into the nationwide debate over the presence and preservation of such monuments.

WFMY-TV reports former local NAACP president Dr. Wesley Fennell asked Randolph County commissioners at their meeting Monday to remove the bronze Confederate soldier from the courthouse and replace it with one honoring the Quakers.

Randolph County Manager Hal Johnson says commissioners have not made a decision or discussed the issue yet. Johnson says Randolph County was part of an 1861 vote in which 90 percent of its citizens voted to stay in the Union. Johnson says the county's Historic Preservation Commission should compile the history and meaning of community monuments to provide information to citizens.

The statue was erected in 1911.

NC remapping rules include election results but not race

By GARY D. ROBERTSON
Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — Past election results can be considered in drawing North Carolina's new General Assembly districts later this month but not racial information about voters, according to ground rules Republicans pushed through redistricting committees Thursday.

The party-line votes on the GOP-controlled House and Senate panels for mapmaking criteria run counter to the wishes of most speakers during a public hearing last week who pleaded for politics to be left out of the process. And Democratic committee members scratched their heads when Republican leaders said racial data wouldn't be examined at all even though the boundaries still must comply with the U.S. Voting Rights Act.

"How are you going to prove to the court that you did not violate their order in terms of racial gerrymandering?" Rep. Mickey Michaux, a Durham County Democrat, asked House Redistricting Committee chairman David Lewis. "You cannot escape the fact that race has to be in there somewhere."

Federal judges last year struck down 28 House and Senate districts because they said GOP legislators relied too heavily on race when drawing them in 2011. Their ruling, which wasn't finalized until a U.S. Supreme Court decision in June, means legislators are scrambling this month to adjust those and several dozen adjacent districts and approve them before a Sept. 1 deadline.

Lewis said his reading of the August 2016 ruling by a three-judge panel found that legislators had not offered substantial evidence to justify their focus on using race in drawing districts to comply with the Voting Rights Act.

"Therefore, we do not believe it is appropriate given the court's order in this case for these committees to consider race when drawing districts," said Lewis, a Harnett County Republican.

All but one of the 28 challenged districts had majority black voting-age populations. Although Democrats have said that Republicans needlessly drew too many such districts to benefit GOP candidates in surrounding districts, they say protections to ensure the political influence of black voters doesn't erode are still needed. The approved maps are subject to review by the three-judge panel and would first be used in the November 2018 elections.

"We live in the South," said Forsyth County Sen. Paul Lowe, who like Michaux is black. "When in the South has race not been a factor? Because what I'm hearing doesn't really add up."

Republican mapmakers last year also reversed course on using racial data in February 2016, when another three-judge panel tossed two congressional districts as unlawful. Instead, Lewis and other Republicans decided they would rework congressional boundaries with the goal of the GOP keeping 10 of 13 U.S. House seats.

Lewis didn't go so far this time as to offer criteria to specifically try to keep the party's current supermajorities in the state House and Senate, which were helped by the current 2011 maps. But despite calls by speakers last week, Lewis said redistricting isn't politically blind. Statewide election results for governor, president and U.S. Senate routinely have been used to project whether a district leans to the left or right.

"Every result from where a line is drawn will be an inherently political thing," Lewis said. "It is right and relevant to review past performance in drawing districts."