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TELEPHONE (919) 682-2913

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Supreme Court: 2 amendments fought by Cooper to be on ballot

By Gary D. Robertson

RALEIGH (AP) - North Carolina's highest court decided Sept. 4 that two proposed amendments to the state constitution addressing judicial vacancies and the state elections board will be on the ballot this fall.

Both referendums were fought by Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper, but the state Supreme Court affirmed a lower court decision denying his request to block for now the questions for those amendments from appearing on ballots.

Cooper's attorneys had argued the referendum language remained flawed for voters even after the Republican-controlled legislature altered them in response to an earlier court ruling.

The decision means there will be six referendum questions on the November ballot in all - the same number that GOP legislators submitted to voters in June, although two were scaled back. An earlier decision Sept. 4 by the justices kept in place two referendums that had been challenged by the state NAACP.

Both of the one-sentence rulings by the court did not explain the reasoning of the justices. No dissenting opinions were identified. The justices also dissolved an order they issued last week that prevented state officials from preparing state ballots until told otherwise by the court.

When combined with a separate ruling Sept. 4 by a panel of federal judges deciding against requiring a new congressional map this fall, the decisions mean the state elections board can move on creating ballots to meet a Sept. 22 deadline for overseas and military absentee voters.

"It's time we let the people vote," said GOP state Rep. David Lewis of Harnett County, who sponsored many of the amendments, referring to "a truly exhausting amount of litigation."

Cooper and Democratic allies have criticized the proposals because they would swing control over filling bench vacancies from the governor to the legislature and give General Assembly leaders direct say over who would serve on the elections board.

"These amendments are deceptive and will erode checks and balances in state government," Cooper spokesman Ford Porter said in a release late Tuesday, Sept. 4 adding the governor will "continue to urge voters to understand their true impact."

Two weeks ago, a majority of judges on a trial-level panel had prevented previous versions of these questions approved by the General Assembly from going on ballots. That prompted legislators to hold a special session and submit slightly different amendments and questions.

Cooper contended the new questions were still misleading and didn't explain that a significant power shift from the executive and legislative branches would occur if they were approved. But the same judicial panel agreed unanimously last Friday, Aug. 31 it was "unable to find beyond a reasonable doubt that that language is facially unconstitutional." The Supreme Court took the case quickly.

Attorneys for GOP lawmakers argued the differences between Cooper and the GOP legislators were political questions, so the judicial branch should have steered clear of them.

Regardless, they said, the new referendums were clearly written.

"The ballot text is fair and accurate, and despite the governor's best efforts, the courts agree," state GOP Chairman Robin Hayes said in a statement.

The judicial vacancy amendment would require the governor to fill a judicial vacancy with someone from among at least two nominees agreed to by the legislature. Those nominees would originate from a pool of qualified candidates examined by an outside commission. Currently the governor makes a choice, in most cases, without any legislative participation.

NAACP To Meet Sept. 23

The next NAACP meeting is scheduled for September 23 at 4 p.m. at Kyle's Temple Church 409 Dunston Ave. Rev. Solomon Missouri is the Pastor.

NCCU School of Law Boosts North Carolina Bar Exam Passage Rate to 75 Percent University's Passage Rate Third-Highest in State

North Carolina Central University (NCCU) School of Law boosted its North Carolina Bar Examination passage rate to 75.5 percent, nearly 20 percent higher than 2017 results. Fifty-three 2018 School of Law graduates sat for the North Carolina Bar Exam on July 24-25, 2018.

NCCU's first-time bar exam participants achieved the third-highest passage rate in North Carolina. In April 2018, the university announced that it was investing more than \$300,000 to support May 2018 graduates as they prepared to take the North Carolina Bar Examination in July.

"The hard work and commitment demonstrated by our recent law school graduates who sat for the bar exam is well evidenced by this year's impressive results," said Johnson O. Akinleye, Ph.D., chancellor of North Carolina Central University. "I applaud our administration, faculty, staff and alumni at the School of Law for ensuring that our students are successful as they officially begin their career as our newest Legal Eagles."

The School of Law is in the process of preparing for North Carolina's transition to the Uniform Bar Examination (UBE) in 2019. The UBE provides a transferable score that allows admission to other UBE jurisdictions based on a test taker's score in one UBE jurisdiction. The law school has formed an ad-hoc committee comprised of faculty, staff and alumni to assist current students with exam preparation for the new exam format.



MISS AMERICA Twitter Photo courtesy Miss America Pageant

Nia Franklin Wins Miss America; Another Black Girl Rocks

By Stacy M. Brown, NNPA Newswire Contributor
@StacyBrownMedia

The genius, intelligence, beauty and spirit of Black women, which continues to transform the world, shined brightly again Sunday as Nia Franklin became the first Miss America in the post-swimsuit era.

"It took a lot of perseverance to get here," Franklin, the freshly crowned beauty queen, said after her win. "I want to thank my beautiful family, my mom and my dad, who is a survivor of cancer."

"I grew up at a predominately Caucasian school and there was only five percent minority, and I felt out of place so much because of the color of my skin," Franklin said. "But growing up, I found my love of arts, and through music that helped me to feel positive about myself and about who I was."

An opera singer, Franklin is a native of Winston-Salem, North Carolina and earned her master's degree in music composition from UNC School of the Arts, according to her biography as reported by CNN.

She moved to New York after being accepted at the Kenan Fellow program at Lincoln Center Education in Manhattan.

During the competition, Franklin described how music helped her find her identity.

"I grew up at a predominately Caucasian school and there was only five percent minority, and I felt out of place so much because of the color of my skin," Franklin said. "But growing up, I found my love of arts, and through music that helped me to feel positive about myself and about who I was."

Her win set Twitter and all of social media ablaze.

"Congratulations to our new Miss America," famed radio and television personality Donnie Simpson said. "Nia Franklin represented New York and won the crown last night. She's obviously very smart, very talented and absolutely stunning. I'm so proud."

Another popular radio show host, Michael Lyle, Jr., also couldn't contain his joy for Franklin. "Huge congratulations. Well-deserved and another reason why Black Girls Rock," Lyle said.

Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr., the president and CEO of the National Newspaper Publishers Association - the trade organization that represents 220 African American-owned newspapers across the country - said Franklin's win is just another statement on the outstanding achievements of Black women today.

"The NNPA Congratulates 2018 Miss America, Nia Franklin. The genius, intelligence, beauty and spirit of Black women impact and transform the world," Chavis tweeted.

Franklin, who plans to advocate for the arts during her tenure as Miss America, told reporters that she was also happy that the swimsuit competition - which had been part of the overall contest throughout its 92-year history - had been discontinued.

"I'm happy I didn't have to wear a swimsuit," she said. "I'm more than just that."

Voter ID, tax cap questions to remain on N Carolina ballots

RALEIGH (AP) - It appears at least four proposed amendments to the North Carolina Constitution will be on fall ballots now that the state Supreme Court has rejected a civil rights group's request to block questions on voter identification and income taxes.

The justices on Sept. 4 denied a motion by attorneys for the state NAACP asking those questions the General Assembly submitted not appear before voters. One proposal would mandate photo identification to vote in person. The other would reduce the cap on income tax rates from 10 percent to 7 percent.

The Supreme Court is apparently still weighing arguments from Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper and Republican legislators over two other proposed referendums addressing judicial vacancies and the state elections board.

Two referendums addressing crime victims' rights and hunting and fishing weren't challenged.



SENATOR KAMALA HARRIS
AUGUST 14, 2018

CBCF Annual Legislative Conference begins Wednesday in DC/CBCF CBCF Prepares for 48th Legislative Conference in DC

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Newswire Contributor
@StacyBrownMedia

Two senators - Sen. Cory Booker of New Jersey and Sen. Kamala Harris of California will serve as honorary co-chairs for the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation Inc.'s 48th Annual Legislative Conference scheduled Sept. 12 through Sept. 16 at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center in D.C.

It will mark the first time that co-chairs will come from the Senate. Historically, members of the U.S. House of Representatives have served that role.

The premier conference, which annually attracts nearly 10,000 people from across the world and is the only event of its kind in the United States, will have the theme, "The Dream Still Demands Courage, Resilience, Leadership and Legislation."

The five-day conference offers more than 90 forums on public policy issues affecting black Americans. "For more than 40 years, the Annual Legislative Conference has provided an extraordinary platform for people - domestic and abroad - to come together and discuss vital issues related to social justice, leadership, economic prosperity, entrepreneurship and much more," Texas Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee, the chair of the CBCF board of directors, said in a statement.

"As we continue to grow and expand the conference, we know that we must be unwavering in our approach to have the difficult conversations, elevate debates about the state of Black America, and also define new and innovative solutions."

The impact of civil and social movements over the last 50 years has played a major role in changing the trajectory of American history, CBCF officials said.

This year's theme focuses on the influence and legacy of these moments, while uplifting present-day champions in the fight for racial equality, justice and freedom.