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## A Voteless People is a Hopeless People - L.E. Austin

# Trump says he and Republicans bear 'no blame' for bomb suspect's actions

By Jonathan Lemire and Catherine Lucey

WASHINGTON (AP) - President Donald Trump said Oct. 26 that he knows the pipe bomb suspect was one of his supporters, but said he bears "no blame" for the suspect's actions.

"There is no blame. There's no anything," Trump told reporters at the White House before leaving for a political rally in North Carolina.

"If you look at what happened to Steve Scalise, that was a supporter of a different party," he said, recalling the 2017 shooting at a Republican baseball practice that left several wounded, including the congressman from Louisiana.

Asked if he planned to tone down the partisan rhetoric at rallies, which his critics contend has deepened political divisions in the country, Trump replied: "I think I've been toned down. You know, I could really tone it up."

With a suspect in custody, Trump pledged to prosecute those responsible for the pipe bomb scare "to the fullest extent of the law." He called for national unity just hours after complaining that all the focus on "this 'Bomb' stuff" was distracting from the midterm elections.

Trump, in his first remarks since Cesar Sayoc was apprehended in Florida, declared that "we must never allow political violence take root in America." At least a dozen explosives have been sent in recent days to political opponents of the president, gripping the nation and escalating political tensions just days ahead of the midterms.

His remarks came a short time after he tweeted a complaint that the media's focus on bombs was distracting from Republican efforts in the upcoming midterm elections.

"Republicans are doing so well in early voting, and at the polls, and now this "Bomb" stuff happens and the momentum greatly slows - news not talking politics," Trump tweeted in the hours before Sayoc was taken into custody. "Very unfortunate, what is going on. Republicans, go out and vote!"

Trump's tweet was an effort to refocus attention on the midterms that could alter the path of his presidency. His quote marks around "Bomb" were striking, suggesting the president might doubt the authenticity of the scare. That theory had gained steam in some quarters on the right.

A number of Trump's allies, including his eldest son, Donald Jr., and conservative commentator Lou Dobbs, have used social media to promote the idea that the bombs may be a Democrat-run hoax. And the president's favorite television show, Fox & Friends, ran a segment Friday (Oct. 26) morning in the hours before his tweet that raised the possibility that the bombs were a "false flag" operation meant to gin up Democratic enthusiasm.

The White House did not immediately respond to a request for an explanation as to the president's meaning.

Trump also issued a 3 a.m. tweet in which he complained that CNN and others were blaming him for the scare, saying they were "ridiculously comparing this to September 11th and the Oklahoma City bombing, yet when I criticize them they go wild and scream, 'it's just not Presidential!'" One of the packages was sent to CNN, forcing an evacuation of their Manhattan studios.

While he updated the nation Oct. 26 about the suspect in custody, Trump heaped praise on law enforcement agencies for doing "an incredible job" and said that, in America, "every day we are showing how truly great we are."

Moments later, in his address to members of the 2018 Young Black Leadership Summit, he returned to delivering broadsides against the media.

"Come to think of it, who gets attacked more than me," Trump told the cheering crowd. "I can do the greatest thing for our country and on the networks ... it will show bad. No matter what."

Some in the crowd began to yell "Fake News," a staple at any Trump rally, while one person shouted "CNN Sucks!" After Trump mentioned globalism, there was a jeer about George Soros, the liberal donor who was the target of one of the pipe bombs.

Trump also complained that coverage of the manhunt distracted from his announcement Oct. 25 about an effort to lower prescription drug prices. Trump said the announcement "was competing with this story" about the pipe bombs. He added that with apprehension of the suspect, "maybe that can start to disappear rapidly because we don't like those stories."

Among those in attendance was Candace Owens, a prominent African-American conservative activist who cast doubt earlier in the week on the authenticity of the bombs.



Hillside High School held its Homecoming Parade recently. See pictures on pages 8 and 9.

## Abrams, Kemp spar over voting access in Georgia debate

By Ben Nadler

ATLANTA (AP) - Charges of voter suppression and counterclaims of encouraging illegal voting dominated the first debate between Democrat Stacey Abrams and Republican Brian Kemp in the race for Georgia governor.

Disputes over voting access took center stage at Tuesday (Oct. 23) evening's debate, highlighting Abrams' historic bid to become the first black female governor in American history and the long-simmering politics of race in the Deep South. Kemp, who is white, continued to fend off charges that he's using his position as Georgia secretary of state to make it harder for minority voters to cast ballots. Libertarian candidate Ted Metz also participated in the debate.

Abrams said Kemp's record as secretary of state "causes great concern" and pointed to the release of voter data under Kemp's watch and the state's "exact match" voter registration system.

The Democrat said she takes voting rights "very seriously" and said her own father had once been arrested trying to help people get registered.

"Voter suppression isn't only about blocking the vote: It's also about creating an atmosphere of fear, making people worry that their votes won't count," Abrams said.

Kemp said accusations that he was suppressing the vote were "totally untrue." He fired back, citing a recent video clip in which Abrams seems to say that "undocumented" immigrants were part of her coalition.

"Why are you encouraging people to break the law to vote for you?" Kemp asked.

Abrams denied the allegation, saying Kemp was twisting her words and her record of making it easier for legal citizens to vote.

The two also traded barbs over education and health care policy.

Abrams repeatedly emphasized her plan to expand Medicaid in Georgia, calling it a "bipartisan solution" that Vice President Mike Pence embraced when he was Indiana's Republican governor.

Kemp said Abrams wants a "government takeover of health care" and will raise taxes to pay for it.

The race is being watched as a barometer for Democrats' success in the midterm elections, as they try to make gains in Congress and in important state positions to counter President Donald Trump's agenda.

Tensions escalated following a recent Associated Press report that more than 53,000 voter applications - nearly 70 percent of them from blacks - were on hold with Kemp's office ahead of the election in large part due to the "exact match" verification system.

Abrams has leveraged media coverage of the list and accused Kemp of actively suppressing minority votes.

Kemp vehemently denies it and says those on the "pending" list can still vote with an approved ID that substantially matches registration information. Kemp has hit back hard at Abrams, saying she's "too extreme for Georgia."

Two reports surfaced just before the debate that played into their competing narratives.

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## White woman fired over filmed racist rant at black neighbor

CHARLOTTE (AP) - A white North Carolina woman filmed going on a racist rant at her black neighbor has been fired from her job.

News outlets report the video shows Susan Westwood approaching sisters Leisa and Mary Garris this month and saying "I am white and hot. So what are you doing here?"

Charter Communications spokesman Patrick Paterno said Oct. 28 that Westwood has been fired from her \$125,000-per-year job referenced in the video.

An apparently drunk Westwood is heard asking where the sisters live, if they're visiting their "baby daddy" and if she needs to reveal her concealed weapon. The sisters ask Westwood to leave them alone as they're waiting for AAA. They eventually call 911.

Westwood has been issued criminal summons of communicating threats and simple assault. She wasn't reached for comment.

## Rev. William Barber begins three-state get-out-the-vote effort

FLAT ROCK (AP) - The Rev. William Barber has started a three-state get-out-the-vote tour that will take him to North Carolina, Georgia and Florida.

The tour started Oct. 26 in Flat Rock and will go to five other North Carolina locations: Henderson, Dunn, Warsaw, Winston-Salem and two stops in Greensboro.

On Nov. 3, Barber goes to Atlanta and then Cuthbert, Georgia. The tour ends Nov. 4 in Jacksonville, Florida.

Barber is known as the architect of the "Moral Monday" movement in North Carolina, where he also was president of the state chapter of the NAACP.

He is doing the get-out-the-vote effort through his role as president of Repairers of the Breach, a not-for-profit social justice organization focused on several groups, including communities of color, workers and immigrants.

## Police: Armed white man confronts black GOP volunteer

CHARLOTTE (AP) - Police in North Carolina say an armed white man confronted a black Republican volunteer at a polling place and has been arrested.

Volunteer Derek Partee tells The News & Observer that three white people angrily approached him Wednesday at a poll in Charlotte. He posted pictures of the people on Facebook, saying they were calling him racial slurs and threatening him. Charlotte-Mecklenburg police say in a release that the armed man was carrying a BB gun. His identity hasn't been released yet.

Partee says the people approached him asking about his party, but "they didn't care whether I was a Democrat or a Republican, they just cared that I was black." Police say the other people won't be charged because they were found to have not violated any laws.

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