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THE TRUTH UNBRIDED

VOLUME 97 - NUMBER 47 DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA - SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 2018 TELEPHONE (919) 682-2913 PRICE: 50 CENTS

Happy Thanksgiving

Tight race in Georgia shines light on voting restrictions

By Russ Bynum and Christina A. Cassidy

ATLANTA (AP) - He aggressively deleted inactive voters from registration rolls, enforced an "exact match" policy that could have prevented thousands of Georgians from registering to vote and launched an investigation that disrupted a major voter registration drive.

Now Republican Brian Kemp is declaring himself the victor in Georgia's race for governor, a race so close that even marginal differences in voting and turnout could make the difference in determining whether the race goes to a runoff.

The Associated Press has not called the race between Kemp, who until this week was Georgia's secretary of state, and Democrat Stacey Abrams, a former state lawmaker seeking to become the nation's first black woman to be elected governor.

In a state dominated by Republicans, Abrams staked her campaign largely on getting new and infrequent voters to participate in the election.

Meanwhile, Kemp and the state's Republican legislature have imposed tighter voting and registration rules that can make it more difficult for just those voters to register and cast ballots. Most of those rules have come since the U.S. Supreme Court overturned a key provision of the Voting Rights Act in 2013.

"Georgia uses every tool in the voter-suppression tool kit," said Andrea Young, executive director of the ACLU of Georgia. "It's unfriendly the way that voting happens in Georgia. It's more like cashing a check than casting a ballot."

Kemp defends his tenure, noting increased voter registration on his watch.

Like other Southern states, Georgia after the Civil War had a history of suppressing black voters by disallowing votes from people who owed taxes, imposing literacy tests and implementing white-only primary elections. Those efforts eventually were stopped by the courts and the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965.

But the Supreme Court ruling five years ago rolled back a provision of that act that had required Georgia and eight other states to get federal approval before changing voting laws. That gave those states the freedom to impose new restrictions.

The ACLU's Young said Georgia's recent voting restrictions have been made in the name of preventing fraud. But she believes they're also born out of a desire to keep minorities from voting.

"It's hard to see good faith in so many of these measures that advocates repeatedly say have disproportionate impact on African-Americans and other minorities," she said.

Some of those restrictions predate Kemp.

In 2005 - five years before he took office - Georgia implemented a law requiring voters to show a photo ID at the polls. The Justice Department approved it, but a court struck it down as an unconstitutional poll tax because it required voters to pay for IDs unless they could prove financial hardship. Lawmakers responded in 2006 by revising the law to make it easier to get IDs for free.

In 2014, Kemp launched an investigation of a voting drive run by a group that Abrams had started. The investigation eventually forwarded to law enforcement just 53 allegedly forged registrations out of a total of 87,000, but critics said the probe disrupted the overall registration drive.

The Brennan Center for Justice at NYU, which tracks voting issues nationally, said Georgia was among the most aggressive states in the country in removing inactive voters from its registration rolls between 2012 through this year. The stated purpose is to clear lists of voters those who have moved or died, but the purges also can mistakenly remove legitimate voters.

Data provided by the Georgia Secretary of State's office show the state removed more than 937,000 voters from the rolls from the start of 2015 through Aug. 1 of this year.

Kemp also used an "exact match" policy for voter registrations. To sign up, voters' names and other information had to match precisely how they appeared on other government databases. Kemp agreed to end the practice amid litigation last year. But within months, legislators put the policy into law.

As Election Day approached this year, it resulted in 53,000 voters - most of them minorities - with their registrations on hold. Civil rights groups sued while Kemp insisted those on the list could vote if they brought to the polls a photo ID substantially matching the information on file. Voters who failed to do so were to cast provisional ballots.

Dr. Carlos del Rio, chairman of global health at Emory University, said a poll worker at his precinct in the Atlanta suburb of Decatur initially told him he was not registered. The issue: His voter registration has a space between "del" and "Rio" in his last name, but his driver's license does not.

He had to explain to the poll worker that the state Department of Driver Services does not allow for spaces in a name, and he was then allowed to vote.

"It did require a little of me knowing how to defend my rights," del Rio said.

Bryan Sells, a former U.S. Justice Department lawyer who now specializes in voting rights, has sued Kemp over the exact match policy and other issues. He said Kemp and Georgia Republicans have been targeted in the rules they have chosen to implement in recent years.

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H.M. "MICKEY" MICHAUX TALKS POLITICS, LEGACY -From left to right are Andre Vann, NCCU and moderator for the program; Rep. H.M. "Mickey" Michaux and Zack Hawkins. Hawkins challenge is to continue the legacy of Michaux. See page 8.

Republican official tells black woman he belongs to 'master race'

LEAVENWORTH, Kan. (AP) - A white county commissioner in northeast Kansas said he belongs to "the master race" as he critiqued a land-use proposal by a black city planner at a board meeting.

According to the Kansas City Star, he was appointed by the Republican Party to fill a vacancy.

Leavenworth County Commissioner Louis Klemp cited the Nazi ideology of Aryan supremacy Tuesday, Nov. 13 in response to the presentation by Triveece Penelton on road development options in Tonganoxie, just west of Kansas City.

Klemp told Penelton : "We are part of the master race, don't you forget that."

Commissioner Robert Holland said he was shocked by the comments and that he wants Klemp to resign before his term ends Jan. 15.

Klemp told KSHB-TV off camera that his comment was a joke.

Klemp, who once ran for governor, has come under criticism in the past for making racist comments.

School board names building after late Oklahoma NAACP leader

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) - The Oklahoma City School Board will name its future administration building after the woman who organized civil rights sit-ins to integrate city businesses.

The board voted 7-0 Tuesday, Nov. 13 to name the building The Clara Luper Center for Educational Services. It is scheduled to open in 2019.

Luper was a long-time teacher and leader of the NAACP Youth Council who led peaceful protests against drugstores, helping end segregation at retailers in downtown Oklahoma City.

Luper led the sit-ins in 1958, preceding the 1960 demonstrations in Greensboro, North Carolina, a defining moment of the civil rights movement. Luper died in 2011 at 88.

The Tulsa-based Woody Guthrie Center in August awarded Luper and the group its Oklahoma Changing World Prize in honor of the 60th anniversary of the local demonstrations.

Dems: Latino and African-Americans turnout up 157-174 percent over 2014 in early voting

By Alonso Lugo

WASHINGTON (AP) - The Democratic Party says a \$30 million investment in engaging Latino and other minority voters helped the Democrats achieve a net gain of 34 House seats and improve on 2014 turnout numbers.

Rep. Ben Ray Lujan, chairman of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, said that in early voting, compared to the previous midterm election, Latinos increased their participation by 174 percent in 2018 while Pacific Islanders increased their numbers by 218 percent and African-Americans by 157 percent.

"Latino voters played a pivotal role in taking back the House," Lujan told reporters during a conference call organized by the political action committee Latino Victory to discuss the impact of the Latino vote. "Evidence is clear: Early and active and robust outreach to communities of color - in this case, into the Hispanic community - clearly pays off."

Lujan, the first Hispanic to head the party's arm focused on House races, said the engagement effort included an investment of at least \$21 million in Latino candidates and in 17 Spanish-language district specific ads. His office also launched the first multistate Spanish-language TV ad the last week before the election to get out the vote in the Latino community.

The Democrats targeted 111 Republican House congressional districts, 29 of which had at least a 10 percent Hispanic electorate.

Dan Sena, the DCCC executive director, said the polling company Latino Decisions conducted nationwide focus groups to better identify the needs of Latino voters and to tailor a proper message.

"What we wanted was a real, organic way to engage Latino voters and Hispanic voters across the country with a message that was positive and a reason to participate," Sena said. "We did a fair amount of studying how to create urgency without it feeling overly heavy."

During the campaign, President Donald Trump kept up a daily drumbeat of warnings about a caravan of "bad thugs" and potential terrorists intent on invading the U.S. from Mexico. He suggested sending up to 15,000 troops to the border to contain hundreds of Central American immigrants heading toward the southern U.S. border with the intention of claiming asylum.

Lujan highlighted the victory of Antonio Delgado in New York as an example of how a Latino candidate won by keeping a positive message even when facing racist attacks.

Delgado, a Harvard Law School graduate and Rhodes scholar, defeated Republican Rep. John Faso for a congressional seat representing the Hudson Valley. Republicans seized on his brief hip-hop career to portray Delgado, who is black, as unfit for office.

"Antonio did not get distracted by any of that. What he did was he talked to the American people and the people of the 19th District of New York about the economic challenges that they are facing every day," Lujan said.

The Hispanic community will have a record level of representation on Capitol Hill with at least 42 members: 34 Democrats and eight Republicans in both chambers. One House race featuring a Hispanic candidate has yet to be decided.

Harvard's student newspaper elects 1st black woman leader

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. (AP) - Harvard University's student newspaper will be led by a black woman for the first time in its 145-year history.

The Crimson announced this week that junior Kristine Guillaume was elected president of the paper and will take over Jan. 1.

The 20-year-old Guillaume told The Associated Press she's honored to be a part of history at Harvard, which she said can feel "like a very white and male-dominated place."

She added that she hopes her achievement helps other women of color feel that they belong on the Ivy League campus.

The president is the top job at the paper, helping coordinate the news and business operations. It's elected by the previous year's staff.

Guillaume, of New York City's Queens neighborhood, is jointly studying African American studies, and history and literature.

Supreme Court to hear Virginia GOP's districting appeal

WASHINGTON (AP) - The Supreme Court will hear an appeal by Virginia Republicans who are trying to preserve state legislative districts that have been struck down by a lower court as racially discriminatory.

The court's action Tuesday, Nov. 13, districts in the Virginia House of Delegates. Democratic voters accused majority Republicans of packing black voters into certain districts to make surrounding districts whiter and more Republican.

A three-judge federal court in Virginia ruled 2-1 in June in favor of the Democratic voters and has appointed a redistricting expert to draw a new legislative map.

The Supreme Court already has ruled once in the case. Last year, the justices voted 7-1 to throw out an earlier ruling that had upheld the challenged districts.