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N Carolina university, group argue over race in admissions

CHAPEL HILL (AP) - North Carolina's flagship public university is defending its use of race in admitting students and wants a lawsuit filed against it by a group representing past and potential applicants and parents to be dismissed.

The University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill filed written arguments in federal court on Jan. 18, as did lawyers for the organization called Students for Fair Admissions that sued in 2014.

The plaintiffs contend the university's practices are unconstitutional and fail to comply with U.S. Supreme Court guidance from a University of Texas case, The News & Observer of Raleigh reported.

"UNC's use of race is the opposite of individualized; UNC uses race mechanically to ensure the admission of the vast majority of underrepresented minorities," the group's legal brief says.

Chancellor Carol Folt and Provost Bob Blouin, in a campus-wide message Jan. 18, said the school's admissions policies and practices comply with the letter and spirit of the law. The university also has a longstanding commitment to diversity, the school's brief said.

"In its academic judgment, the university has determined that pursuing the educational benefits of diversity is integral to fulfilling its mission to prepare the next generation of leaders," the school's filing read.

Students for Fair Admissions also sued Harvard University over its admissions policies, and a trial in the case wrapped up in November. The judge, however, has yet to rule in the closely watched case.

In the Texas matter, the Supreme Court said race can only be considered in college admissions if it's used in a narrowly tailored way to achieve a compelling government interest. The court also said universities should first try "workable race-neutral alternatives." UNC says such alternatives don't promote the university's diversity goals.

Edward Blum, president of Students for Fair Admissions, said the group's filing contain calculations from an expert witness saying an Asian-American male applicant from North Carolina with a 25 percent chance of getting into the school would have his probability increase to about 67 percent if he were Latino. It would rise to more than 90 percent if he were African-American.

But UNC-Chapel Hill, which wants U.S. District Judge Loretta Biggs to hold a hearing on its dismissal motion, says there are no racial or ethnic quotas in the admissions process, and race is one of many factors considered.

"No reasonable trier of fact could conclude on this record that the university uses quotas, engages in racial set asides or point allocations, or intentionally discriminates against applicants based on race," the school's brief said.

More than 4,300 first-year students entered UNC-Chapel Hill last fall, with over 43,000 first-year applications filed.

Durham Civil Rights Workers Reunion Committee Honors Three



Some of the young people in the Annual King Day March here. See photos on page 8.

Capitol Watch: A more diverse Legislature, early actions

By Chris Carola

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) - In New York government news, an increasingly diverse state Legislature is back in Albany for its 2019 session, the first in the state's history with African-Americans holding the top leadership posts in both the Senate and the Assembly.

Andrea Stewart-Cousins, a Yonkers Democrat, formally became Senate majority leader when the Legislature convened this past week. She's the first woman to hold the post. Carl Heastie, a Bronx Democrat, was elected Assembly speaker for the third time.

Women now hold 70 of the Democrat-controlled Legislature's 213 seats, the most ever.

Meanwhile, lawmakers were back Jan. 16 at the Capitol for their first full session day, with some of the year's top issues expected to be on the agenda this week. Democratic Gov. Andrew Cuomo, Stewart-Cousins and Heastie have all said getting many of those issues passed during the session's first 100 days is a priority and some could be done within 30 days.

And Cuomo again pushed aside talk about a run for president in 2020 while pushing for his favored candidate for the White House: former Vice President Joe Biden.

Here's a look at stories making news:

DIVERSE LEGISLATURE

Heastie mentioned in his session-opening speech that women hold 50 of the 150 seats in his Democrat-controlled chamber. Also, women now hold three of the Assembly's top four leadership positions: Majority Leader Crystal Peoples-Stokes, of Buffalo, the first African-American to hold the chamber's No. 2 post; Deputy Speaker Cathy Nolan, of Queens, and Ways and Means Committee Chairwoman Helene Weinstein, of Brooklyn.

In the now-Democrat-controlled, 63-seat Senate, women now hold 20 seats, the most ever. Democrats regained control of the chamber from Republicans in the November elections after a decade in the minority.

"Think about it. It wasn't that long ago that women weren't even allowed to set foot on this Senate floor," Stewart-Cousins said during the opening session. "Let's have all the women senators stand up! Look at us now! Amazing!"

The majority leader went on to highlight several firsts for the Senate: first Muslim, Robert Jackson, of Manhattan; first Iranian-American, Anna Kaplan, of Long Island; first Chinese-American, John Liu, of Queens; first Salvadorian, Monica Martinez of Long Island; first Costa Rican, Zellnor Myrie, of Brooklyn; first Indian-American, Kevin Thomas,

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The 32nd Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday Celebration sponsored by the Durham Civil Rights Works Reunion Committee was held Jan. 21 at St. Joseph A.M.E. Church.

The Civil Rights Reunion Committee recognized three citizens who have made a positive impact on the community in the spirit of the Civil Rights Workers Committee. They are, From top to bottom, :

*Ms. Kitora Mason for her work as a co-founder of "Walk for Life", a program that has worked with 175 drug dealers and users and gang members helping to get them into housing and jobs. She said that have had only 8 residents to return to their previous lives.

* Mrs. Chabella Brame Dark for sponsoring an Annual Easter Egg Hunt, feeding the homeless and service to the Durham Civil Rights Workers Reunion Committee. Presented by Ms. Sandra K. Burt.

* Mrs. Patricia Nobles Jenkins James for her work with a Youth Minor League Baseball program that has enlisted over 2,000 youth. With the assistance of President Pat O'Connor and the Duke Law School, the program has also awarded scholarships to high school senior members. to continue their education. Presented by Ms. Sandra K. Burt.

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