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**Lonnie Bunch - Credit**  
Michael Barnes, Smithsonian Institution Archives

## Lonnie Bunch to become new Smithsonian Institution leader

By Jesse J. Holland

WASHINGTON (AP) - When Lonnie Bunch started working on the Smithsonian's first black museum, he had no collection, no building and one employee.

The Smithsonian Institution rewarded the founding director of the wildly popular museum on May 28 by putting him in charge of all 19 of its museums, making Bunch the 14th secretary of the Smithsonian Institution.

Bunch, in an interview with The Associated Press, said his time leading the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture will serve him well. "The Smithsonian is the most amazing place, and sometimes it forgets to act like it. I want it to act like the best institution in the world," he said.

Bunch replaces David Skorton, who will become president and CEO of the Association of American Medical Colleges. Bunch will be the first African American to be Smithsonian secretary.

His success with the Smithsonian's black museum helped his candidacy.

Ground for the \$540 million museum was broken in 2012 on a 5-acre (2-hectare) tract near the Washington Monument. Construction was completed in 2016. Millions of donors contributed \$315 million in private funds ahead of the opening.

People still wait in line to get into the museum during peak vacation days. More than 3.5 million have visited it to see exhibits ranging from the glass-topped casket used to bury lynching victim Emmett Till to the "Mothership" used by Parliament Funkadelic and a slave cabin from Edisto Island, South Carolina.

"What I've learned is about the power of inspiration, the power of a good idea, the power of getting people excited about a story, so I hope to share that and bring that to the other museums," he said.

Chief Justice John Roberts, who is also the Smithsonian chancellor, said Bunch guided "the premier museum celebrating African American achievements."

"I look forward to working with him as we approach the Smithsonian's 175th anniversary, to increase its relevance and role as a beloved American institution and public trust," Roberts said.

Letting go of the Smithsonian's black museum will be difficult, Bunch said. "This has been the job of my career, the best thing I've ever done," he said.

As Smithsonian secretary, he will hire his eventual replacement. Spencer Crew will serve as interim director until then, Bunch said. Bunch doesn't plan to meddle, but there are some things he won't let be watered down in his former museum.

The museum "should never lose the fact that it's using African American culture as a lens to understanding what it means to be an American," he said. "That notion of reveling in your African Americanness but then celebrating your Americanness is really special. That, I don't want it to lose."

Founded in 1846, the Smithsonian Institution is the world's largest museum, education and research complex, with 19 museums and the National Zoological Park.

Bunch expects to lead a more active Smithsonian that gets involved in weighty issues outside of just history.

"My whole career has been about expanding the canon, making sure that African American issues, that Latino issues, that issues of gender are at the forefront," Bunch said. "And what I'm proudest of is that the Smithsonian will take the lead in grappling with these issues. ... No matter what happens, the Smithsonian will always be that place to help us understand a diverse America."



After hours of testimony before the House Finance Committee's Subcommittee on Housing, Community Development and Insurance, witnesses raise their hands in response to a question on whether homeownership discrimination against Blacks continues today. Seated left to right are: Alanna McCargo, vice president for Housing Finance Policy, Urban Institute; Nikitra Bailey, executive vice president, Center for Responsible Lending; Joseph Nery, president, National Association of Hispanic Real Estate Professionals; Jeff Hicks, president/CEO; National Association of Black Real Estate Brokers (NAREB); Carmen Castro, managing housing counselor, Housing Initiative Partnership; Joanne Poole, liaison for the National Association of Realtors; and Joel Griffith, research fellow, Financial Regulations, The Heritage Foundation. See story on page 9. PHOTO: Hazel Trice Edney

## Senate budget gets final approval, negotiations with House next

By Gary D. Robertson

RALEIGH (AP) - Negotiations between Republican legislative budget-writers will now begin in earnest after the Senate completed voting May 31 for its version of a two-year spending plan for North Carolina government.

The chamber voted 30-16 for the legislation, which would spend \$23.9 billion in the next fiscal year starting July 1 - just like a version written by House Republicans and approved four weeks ago. But the two chambers must settle dozens of details on where to spend and how, such as teachers and state employee raises, construction projects and savings reserves.

The two chambers will now fashion a consensus plan to present to Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper. What role Cooper will have in the ultimate outcome is uncertain. He's now equipped with a more potent veto stamp given his party's recent legislative gains.

The governor already has criticized both plans, particularly for another round of corporate tax cuts when he says education needs remain great. Neither proposal would expand Medicaid under the 2010 federal health overhaul law.

Still, three Democrats joined all the GOP senators present in voting for the proposal May 31 after less than an hour of debate. Senators held four hours of debate May 30 before giving preliminary approval.

The Senate did agree May 31 to a Republican

amendment restoring three legal support positions assigned to new Supreme Court Chief Justice Cheri Beasley that Senate budget-writers planned to abolish. The state's judicial branch, which Beasley leads, said the move would have cut in half Beasley's six-person staff. She's a Democrat and the first African American woman at the post.

That raised suspicions of Democrats that eliminating the positions was politically motivated. Cooper appointed Beasley as chief justice and not the most veteran justice on the court, who is a Republican. A Democratic amendment offered on May 30 to restore the positions had been blocked.

Sen. Danny Britt, a Robeson County Republican who offered Friday's (May 31) successful amendment, said budget-writers had been told recently the positions were vacant, so \$267,000 associated with them could be used elsewhere. But the court system has now told Republicans they are filled.

"This absolutely had nothing to do with party or anything else," Britt said before his amendment received unanimous support. Some bad feelings from Thursday's (May 30) debate extended into May 31.

Democratic Sen. Don Davis of Greene County kept blasting a budget provision that would essentially reduce Medicaid payments by \$35 million to Vidant Medical Center in Greenville, which is in a governance fight with the University of North

Carolina Board of Governors. He also jumped on the word that Republicans are considering whether it makes sense to build a new hospital to serve as East Carolina University's teaching hospital, replacing Vidant.

"I said yesterday that this was petty politics," Davis told colleagues May 31, adding, "I believe that this is actually downright evil." Senate Republicans told Davis in debate that they are involved in making peace with Vidant.

On May 30, Berger cut off Sen. Terry Van Duyn's microphone. Republicans said the Democrat from Buncombe County was cut off because Berger hadn't formally recognized her to speak, which Senate rules require, but she continued to interrupt.

Van Duyn, who is running for lieutenant governor, told supporters in a fundraising email it happened because GOP members didn't want to debate her amendment to expand Medicaid, which ultimately was ruled out of order.

## Judge, killer in tears during hearing for teen's death

GREENSBORO (AP) - A sentencing hearing for a North Carolina man who pleaded guilty in the death of a 16-year-old girl made both the judge and the killer cry.

The News & Record of Greensboro reports Superior Court Judge Lora Cabbage grew teary eyed as she sentenced 21-year-old Hajji DeQuan Johnson to at least 16 years in prison for second-degree murder.

Cabbage referred to both Johnson and his victim, Sateria Zoe Fleming, as "our babies." She said one is buried and one she must "put in a cage."

Both Cabbage and Johnson are black. A defense attorney said a woman told Johnson to shoot two teens who tried to steal marijuana. Fleming was killed in March 2018.

Johnson promised he would be a better man when he left prison. His tears drowned out the rest of his words.

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