



Racial disparity in highway contracting to get another look

By SHARON BROOKS HODGE
The Chronicle Editor

If the N.C. Department of Transportation isn't doing business with black contractors, it's not because of any attempt to exclude them, state officials said this week when questioned about the dismal amount of roadwork awarded to African Americans.

Last month state NAACP president Slip Adams expressed concern over the growing lack of black participation in state highway projects. North Carolina spends about \$5 billion annually with private firms hired to build and main-

tain state roads. Of that, Alston contends, only 1 percent will be paid out to construction companies run by African Americans.

The NAACP's figures aren't significantly different from the numbers DOT officials have on their records. Over the past year, DOT awarded roughly \$760 million to disadvantaged firms that will be completing projects to be paid with either federal or state dollars. But that figure is deceiving, because it includes not only black firms, but all disadvantaged groups including women and disadvantaged white males.

Construction companies owned by white women actually do more business with the state than firms owned by black men, according to George Gibson, head of DOT's contractual services division. Firms owned by ethnic minorities participated in only 3.9 percent of all federally funded road work on state highways while firms owned by white women were awarded 7.1 percent of those jobs. On federal projects, a black woman is counted as an ethnic minority, not a woman.

On work paid from the state coffers, a black woman can choose whether to

be classified as a minority woman. Of all the state-funded contracts, minorities participated in 2.3 percent of the work.

Alston isn't the only person questioning why black contractors aren't a larger percentage of the work. Last week state lawmakers asked DOT to update a disparity in contracting that was originally completed in 1987.

Some state officials, however, believe

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THURSDAY NOVEMBER 7, 1997

Elections prove black voters have varied concerns

▲ Cavanagh gets the edge with black supporters

From staff reports

Winston-Salem has its first Republican mayor. But that's not a unilateral worry for blacks, because the new mayor drew some critical support from African Americans.

"The black support Cavanagh received was not in the traditional sense and will not show up in the figures as Cavanagh receiving a landslide victory," said William Andrews. He added, "The support will be dispersed throughout the numbers."

Andrews, former chairman of the Housing Authority of Winston-Salem, has a reputation for being a life-long Democrat. Yet he actively campaigned for Cavanagh, the mayor-elect. On election night, Andrews was at Cavanagh's side. But don't expect him to rush out and change his party affiliation. He's not switching parties. Rather, Andrews insists he backed Cavanagh because he believes the Republican will do more to move the city forward than the Democratic incumbent.

In a televised interview after unofficial returns indicated his victory over Wood, he specifically addressed race. He said his endorsement by people who historically do not support white Republicans is a sign that Winston-Salem is headed in a new direction. He also said that he is interested in working with African Americans.

On Wednesday Cavanagh told The Chronicle that he was "thrilled over the black support" he received. "I am especially grateful to Mel Scales and Bill Andrews for the luncheon they gave for me."

See ELECTIONS on A13



WSSU Student Tanjo Robinson works the polls at Ashley Middle School.

▲ Desire to keep Johnson on council motivates voters

By SHARON BROOKS HODGE
The Chronicle Editor

Municipal elections usually don't draw a significant level of voter participation, and Tuesday's races didn't change that trend.

Less than one-fourth of the registered voters in Greensboro went to the polls to decide the composition of the City Council, which will remain virtually intact. In the predominantly black districts, voter turnout was lower than the citywide 21 percent. That's an indication that black voters are content with the leadership in their district as well as with the overall leadership of the mayor, Carolyn Allen, said City Councilman Earl Jones.

Many of those who cast ballots said they did so for two reasons, out of civic duty, or to support a specific candidate. During interviews after exiting the polls, black people across the city stated a strong desire to return at-large incumbent Yvonne Johnson to the council. Her campaign enjoyed support across districts, which was evident by the number of people distributing literature and urging votes for her on Tuesday.

"I think the fact that Johnson was born and reared in the city appeals to a lot of people," said Marvin Watkins, who handed out purple Johnson flyers at the Windsor Center on Lee Street. "She knows the issues and is in tune with the people."

"Yes," agreed Clifton Hamer. "One thing I've noticed about Yvonne, she tries to coordinate the city and the county. She works well with both groups."

There were six candidates for the three at-large seats on the council. Because each voter could support three

See JOHNSON on A13



Vernon Jeffries (left) campaigns for his daughter in front of the Hayes-Taylor YMCA in Greensboro.

Grayhounds barred from championship on technicality

A local group of Top Gunners... being penalized for mistakes that... according to the team's coach... technicality in its paperwork.

The Top Grayhounds... which plays in the... League, was denied an opportunity to... league's championship... technicality in its paperwork.

But that, according to... coach, came at the expense of a team... nothing to do with it.

The Grayhounds were told... hour before last Saturday's... that they would not be allowed to... the Louisville Titans in the... championship game. The reason for the... that one of the team's players was certified...

According to NWMFL officials, the player...

Is Citizens Police Review Board allowed to be effective?

▲ Some question the board's accomplishments

By BRIDGET EVARTS
The Chronicle Staff Writer

Four years ago, relations between the Winston-Salem Police Department and many citizens, particularly members of the African-American community, were strained to the breaking point.

People complained that police officers harassed them routinely. Some said officers used excessive force when making arrests. And others charged that racism ran rampant in the department.

A coalition of community members and leaders, named Citizens United for Justice (CUJ), formed in part to address the concerns of residents more afraid of cops than criminals. The group acted as whistle-blowers, calling attention to every report of police misconduct.

Tension heightened with the death of Shelia McKellar. The young black woman died in police custody of an apparent cocaine overdose, trussed

and alone on a cold cell floor.

CUJ proposed that the city form a citizens police review board to restore public faith in the department. The board of aldermen split 4-4 on the vote, along racial lines, until Mayor Martha Wood broke the tie in favor of the review board's formation.

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Roundtable calls for halt in use of pepper spray

By ENGLISH BRADSHAW
The Chronicle Staff Writer

Citing a number of recent cases in which the Winston-Salem Police Department used pepper spray to subdue arrested offenders, and the increasing number of deaths in police custody, the Black Leadership Roundtable called for an immediate halt in the use of pepper spray.

"There have been three cases in which citi-

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