

Some want penalty for not reporting child abuse in N.C.

By DENNIS PATTERSON
Associated Press Writer

RALEIGH (AP) — Forty-five children died of abuse in North Carolina in 1996, the most in any year since records have been kept, a state task force said, urging penalties for people who fail to report abuse.

"We don't really want to punish anybody," said Ilene Nelson, co-chairwoman of the Child Fatality Task Force. "What we want is to make the public aware of child abuse and their obligation to report it."

The task force released the figures Monday. The 45 deaths are the most in the decade that abuse deaths have been tracked, officials said. The previous highest total was 28.

"In every one of those cases, people knew and did not call the Department of Social Services," said Nelson. "Forty-five children who died from abuse is way too many."

The 45 deaths compares to 18 deaths in 1995, 28 in 1994 and 24 in 1993. Marcia Herman-Giddens, medical director of the N.C. Child Fatality Prevention Team, said preliminary numbers for 1997 show 35

child-abuse deaths. She said the death rate has been climbing about 12 percent a year since 1985.

Last year, the state Senate approved a task-force supported bill that would make it a misdemeanor to be aware of child abuse and not report it. The crime would carry a maximum penalty of a \$200 fine and 20 days in jail. That bill is now in a House committee.

The task force's annual report on overall child deaths showed 1,606 children under age 18 died in 1996. That included 237 children who died from birth defects; 471 from other birth-related conditions; 101 from sudden infant death syndrome; 327 of illnesses; 69 from homicides and 37 from suicides.

Unintentional injuries resulted in 329 deaths: 182 related to cars; 18, bicycles; 33, fires; 35, drowning and 61 from other injuries. Another 35 died of unspecified reasons.

The task force this year will seek penalties for landlords who fail to provide smoke alarms at rental properties and for tenants who disable their smoke detectors, Nelson said.

The task force also wants the current law requiring that all children under 12 wear seat belts expanded to cover anyone up to 18 no matter where they are sitting in a vehicle.

The group also will seek \$3.2 million to expand the state's home visiting programs, and \$190,000 for more employees in the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner to investigate child deaths.

The task force is endorsing proposals to register beer kegs so they can be traced when beer is served to underage drinkers. It also wants to increase the penalty for 19 and 20-year-olds arrested for underage drinking. The penalty now is \$25



(AP Photo) Scott Applewhite
President Clinton and Surgeon General David Satcher take part in a ceremony at the White House Monday, April 27, 1998 where Satcher presented the president with a report on smoking. The president urged Congress to "do the right thing" and crack down on tobacco companies.

Elections

The legal maneuvers that ensued went all the way to the Supreme Court — and back. In 1997, the high court ruled that it is unconstitutional to construct a district with the primary intent of consolidating black voters into a "minority majority" district. Since that ruling, several maps attempting to redraw the districts have been proposed and rejected.

Earlier this month, a panel of federal judges declared that the most recent attempt at redistricting still placed too much emphasis on voters' race. Consequently, North Carolina's congressional primaries have been delayed. For the Triad, that also affects the 5th District seat held by Rep. Richard Burr (R-Winston-Salem) and the 6th District seat held by Rep. Howard Coble (R-Greensboro).

Just days ago, two blacks were competing against one another for the opportunity to face Sen. Lauch Faircloth in the fall. However, that number has since dwindled. Last week Gene Gay of Charlotte pulled out of the Democratic primary. Still, six candidates remain. One — Ella Scarborough, also of Charlotte — is African American.

In Guilford County, voters will choose five county commissioners, five school board members, judges, a district attorney and a sheriff.

Black candidates among them are Donnie Dunovant and Walter Pritchett. Dunovant, an incumbent on the Board of Commissioners is being challenged by Penny Mack. Pritchett, a black incumbent currently serving on the Guilford County Board of Education does not face a challenger in the primary.

In Forsyth County, two blacks — Victor Johnson and Nigel Alston — will face the voters in the fall, however, they do not have primary contests next Tuesday. Both Johnson and Alston are school board candidates. Voters in Forsyth will also select a sheriff, an associate justice for the state Supreme Court, as well as a Superior Court judge.

The most widely talked about issue centers around the baseball initiative. Will African-American residents say 'yes' or 'no' to Major League Baseball.

Don Beaver, already has signed an incentive agreement — which has been dubbed a "covenant" — with African Americans in Winston-Salem.

The deal stipulates that at least one senior management job within the baseball organization must be reserved for a black person. Additionally, the covenant calls for the involvement of minority vendors and professionals in exchange for widespread support from black

voters in Forsyth and Guilford counties.

On Wednesday April 29 (after The Chronicle's deadline), Beaver was scheduled to meet with black leaders in Greensboro to make a similar pitch. If a vote of 'yes' is given and a team does come to the Triad area, a 1 percent prepared food tax will be put on Forsyth and Guilford County residents to build a stadium in the Kernersville area, which straddles the boundary line between the two jurisdictions.

Some African-American leaders in the Triad who are against this tax say that more taxes will come with the stadium. State Representative Larry Womble of Winston-Salem says a "double tax" awaits residents.

"A tax for the stadium and then a tax for the roads, streets, lights and sewers," said Womble.

Womble heads Winston-Salem's Black Leadership Roundtable, which decided to neither endorse or oppose public financial support of the stadium, which carries a \$210 million price tag. That's the same official position taken by the Winston-Salem Board of Aldermen. In Guilford County, last week the county commissioners voted 6-5 to oppose the referendum question.

On the request of Commissioner Mary Rakestraw, the Guil-

ford board has asked the General Assembly to postpone the referendum until another plan for financing the stadium construction can be considered. Rakestraw, a Republican, got support from John Harris, a black Republican who launched a failed bid last fall for a seat on the Greensboro City Council. However, the three black members of the Guilford County Board of Commissioners — Melvin "Skip" Alston and W. G. "Donnie" Dunovant and Warren Direct — wanted the board to endorse the baseball initiative.

In Winston-Salem, the efforts to get blacks to go out and vote even included a few hundred boxes of Cracker Jacks. School Board Member — and baseball supporter — Geneva Brown opened the "Vote Yes for Major League Baseball" campaign office in East Winston-Salem on April 26. The office is located at 50 Martin Luther King Drive.

According to Brown, the campaign launched a door-to-door campaign several weeks ago. And this weekend, the last weekend before the May 5 vote, the public can go by the campaign office to get refreshments as well as information about the baseball initiative.

Beyond the baseball question, though, there has been little public effort to lure blacks to the polls.

NOTICE OF AN OPEN-HOUSE PUBLIC HEARING ON THE PROPOSED NEW RAIL CROSSING OVER US 311 AND THE RELOCATIO OF US 311 REQUIRED FOR THE NEW CROSSING NORTH OF WALKERTOWN

Project 8.1623101 R-2712 Forsyth County

The North Carolina Department of Transportation will hold the above open house public hearing on Thursday, May 21, 1998 from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. in the Walkertown Middle School Multi-Purpose Room located at 3175 Ruxton Drive in Walkertown. interested individuals may attend this hearing at their convenience between the above stated hours. Division of Highways personnel will be available to provide information, answer questions, and take comments regarding this project.

This project proposes to construct a new rail crossing over US 311. A short segment of US 311 will be relocated to properly align with the new crossing and to improve highway safety through this area. The proposed relocation of US 311 if planned as a two-lane roadway with shoulders. Approximately 2500 feet of the Norfolk Southern Railroad will be relocated and provisions made for a future additional track through this area. The total length of the proposed project is approximately 0.46 miles. Additional right of way will be required for these improvements.

Plans setting forth the location and design and a copy of the environmental document - Categorical Exclusion - are available for public review in the Town of Walkertown Government Complex located at 2735 Old Hollow Road in Walkertown. Anyone desiring additional information about the hearing may write to Mr. L. L. Hendricks, Citizens Participation Unit, P. O. Box 25201, Raleigh, NC 27611; FAX (919) 250-4208, telephone (919) 250-4092; or email at lhendricks@doh.dot.state.nc.us.

NC DOT - in compliance with the Americans With Disabilities Act - will provide auxiliary aids and services for disabled persons who wish to participate in the hearing. To receive special services, please call Mr. Hendricks at the above number to give adequate notice prior to the date of the hearing.

Bank loans a worry for black women

By MAGGIE JACKSON
AP Business Writer

More than one quarter of black female entrepreneurs and 20 percent of Asian female business owners were turned down for a bank loan when they started their businesses, according to a national study released today.

The first such study of female business owners of all races reveals that access to capital remains a thorny issue for the nation's 1 million minority female entrepreneurs.

"Here is a population that has tremendous economic potential for our country," said Sharon Hadary, executive director of The National Foundation for Women Business Owners, which conducted the study. "If they don't get the capital they need, our country is going to suffer." While female-owned businesses — which number 8 million —

are being created at twice the rate of all businesses, those owned by minority women are being created at triple the rate.

Yet 18 percent of Hispanic female entrepreneurs, 27 percent of blacks, and 20 percent of Asians were turned down for a bank loan when they started their business, the study said. That compares with 19 percent of white female business owners.

Half or fewer of minority female entrepreneurs currently have bank credit, compared with 60 percent of white female business owners, the telephone survey of 770 minority women revealed.

Former banker Carmen Ramos had been the boss of her own successful business for six years when she applied for a \$50,000 business loan last year. Two banks turned her down. "I don't want to shout discrimination," said Ramos, whose Washington, D.C., consulting business had \$250,000 in sales last year. "But I'm a woman and a Hispanic. It's much more difficult to get capital."

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VOTE JUDGE JOE JOHN Supreme Court

The North Carolinians listed below unreservedly support the candidacy of Judge Joe John for the NC Supreme Court and encourage you to vote for this outstanding judge in the May 5 primary.

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Financial planning for most people has meant credit card problems and income tax audits. Until we make the effort to totally participate in the capitalist system as investors, we're really not a part of the American fabric of business and you know why? Because we are not trying," Stephens said.

The Brooklyn, New York resident says there are no excuses for anyone not to save or invest.

"If you can go shopping, you can invest," stated Stephens. "Twenty-five to fifty dollars a week can be put into those same stocks of the companies that you usually go and spend money on."

"You can buy one share at a time of AT&T, Colgate, Tide, Exxon, Ford Motor Company, Sara Lee or Rubber Maid. Dividend reinvestment plans and mutual funds are what you can get into for as little as \$50 a month. Read the book and get some education, that's why I wrote it," stated Stephens and she added.

"You must have a vision for your future."