



Watt ready to run in new 12th District

By HERBERT L. WHITE
CONSOLIDATED MEDIA GROUP

Mel Watt represents a different kind of 12th congressional district than the one that sent him to Congress six years ago.

A federal court approved the redrawn 12th last week, clearing the way for a Sept. 15 primary in a district that has changed dramatically since 1992. Instead of a 53 percent black majority, the district is 33 percent African American. It's still heavily Democratic, howev-

er, which favors Watt. Filing for office begins July 6; the general election is Nov. 3.

"I intend to be a candidate in the newly approved 12th District," he said, "and I will reach out to every voter in the new district and challenge them to look beyond race and any factor other than qualifications and experience as they decide who to support."

The 12th is one-third Republican, a third white Democrats and a third black Democrats, which opens the possibility of reduced black congressional repre-

sentation, says Ted Arrington, chairman of UNC Charlotte's political science department. Although incumbents such as Georgia Democrat Cynthia McKinney have won in redrawn districts that went majority-white, that doesn't guarantee success for black candidates.

"Usually a black Democrat, especially an incumbent, can count on being elected," he said. "It's not a sure thing, though. It presents a possibility that a white Republican could beat him, but it's just a possibility. If there's a white Republican who is a good, strong candi-

date, he could give Mel a run for his money."

The Supreme Court ruled in 1993 that the 12th's serpentine shape amounted to racial gerrymandering; a federal appeals panel declared the redrawn district made race an overriding factor in its creation.

"What they're saying is that you can't provide representation for the black community in this district," Arrington said. "Everybody in the state should

See 12th on A4

75 cents

WINSTON-SALEM GREENSBORO HIGH POINT

Vol. XXIV No. 44

THE CHRONICLE

The Choice for African American News and Information

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THURSDAY JULY 2, 1998

Joyner says 'no' to head coaching job

By SAM DAVIS and HERBERT L. WHITE
CONSOLIDATED MEDIA GROUP

It doesn't appear that Steve Joyner will be coming to Winston-Salem State as the Rams' new head basketball coach.

Joyner, a Winston-Salem native, was the choice of a search committee put in place by Anne Little, WSSU's athletics director. But he has turned down WSSU's offer. He said unless something drastic happens in the next couple of days he won't be coming home.

That opens the door for Ricky Duckett, Fayetteville State University's head coach to become WSSU's next men's basketball coach.

Duckett, who has compiled a 73-62 record in five seasons as the head coach at Fayetteville State, was out of town and was unavailable for comment. But The Chronicle sources said Duckett would be offered the position if Joyner and WSSU are unable to come to terms.

Joyner said Wednesday that he is staying put as Johnson C. Smith basketball coach.

After meeting with Winston-Salem State officials Saturday, Joyner withdrew his name from consideration earlier this week. The Winston-Salem Journal reported Wednesday that Joyner would take over for Sam Hanger, whose contract was not renewed at the end of the season.

"I did have some conversation with them, but at this point, my plan is to stay at Johnson C. Smith," Joyner said Wednesday. "It's unfortunate that I didn't get a chance to deliberate more before word got out, but I like the situation we're in now."

Joyner, who led the Golden Bulls to a 22-9 record and a berth in the Division II tournament last season, said family considerations played a part in his decision to stay at Smith. Joyner has three children, and one son, Steve Jr., is a Bulls point guard.

"On an emotional level, my family and (their) being comfortable and stable (determined) that we not move right now," he said.

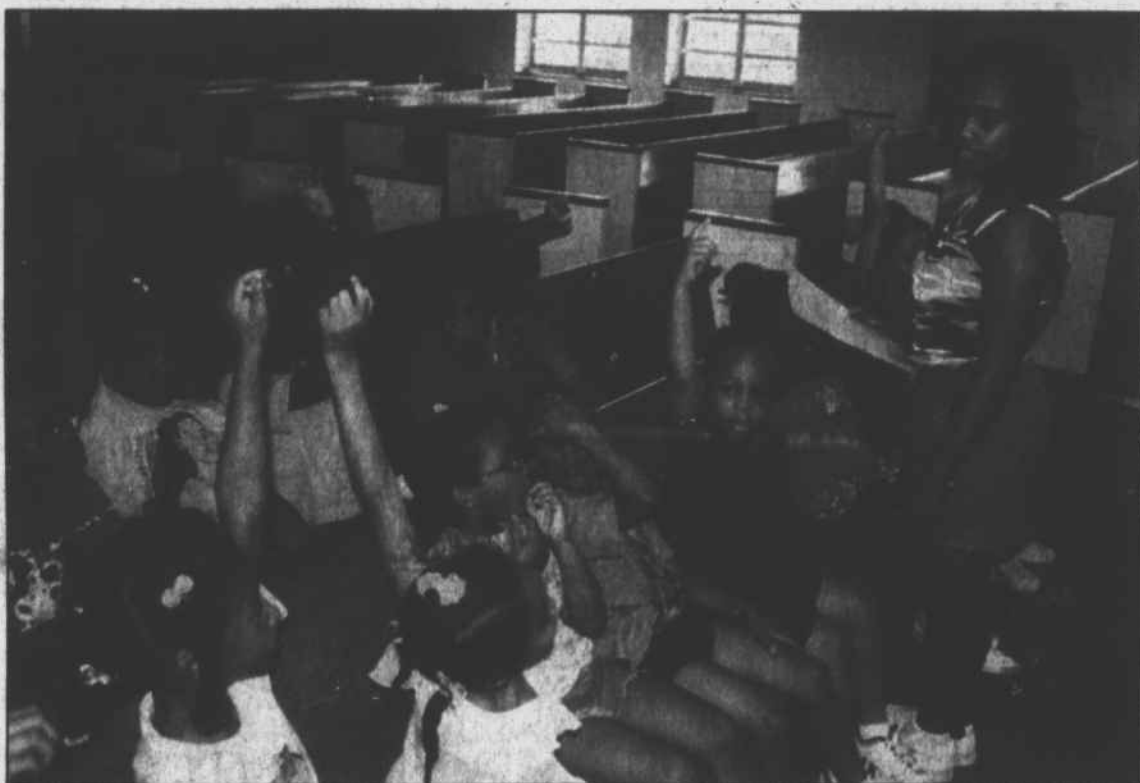
There's also the team, which returns four starters next year and would likely enter the season as a favorite to win the CIAA's Western Division title.

On the other hand, Winston-Salem State is coming off a 15-15 season and the Rams lost four of its top seven players on the team. WSSU basketball has also been in a constant state of upheaval, having gone through four head basketball coaches in five seasons.

Joyner said he likes his situation at Smith and isn't

See WSSU on A4

A history lesson



Nancy Hickman, a counselor at The Kemet School, works with children during an afternoon session. The school is one of several local programs that teach children about the contributions of African Americans.

Children learn about contributions of African Americans in programs

By KEVIN WALKER
FOR THE CHRONICLE

When 31-year-old Cheryl Johnson received her diploma from East Forsyth High School in 1985, she graduated with extensive knowledge of George Washington, Abraham Lincoln and Thomas Jefferson. But the history lessons covering the contributions of Malcolm X, Nelson Mandela and other black luminaries never came.

Johnson, a married mother of four, says she does not want the same fate for her young children.

"Our kids need to know where they came from," she said. "In school I learned nothing about black history, nothing about our people and how important they are in history."

Johnson's experience is not unique. Pluralistic learning, multiculturalism, diversity programs, over the decades the names have changed but the issue has not: the need for a more inclusive, less European-centered education.

Last week, that issue took center stage at a Winston-Salem/Forsyth County School Board meeting, where board members, under pressure

from citizens, reinstated the coordinator's position for the African American Infusion Project.

The coordinator's job was meant to be a temporary one and infusion efforts would have continued on schedule, according to Superintendent Don Martin. But supporters feared their six-year effort would have fallen flat without a coordinator guiding its way.

AAIP was first conceived in 1992 when professors from Winston-Salem State University, Wake Forest University and Salem College undertook the task of developing texts on black history to add to the school system's social studies curriculum.

The program was first introduced into schools in 1994, but 11 of the system's 64 schools have yet to start the program.

In a nation that is becoming increasingly more brown and black, changes in the way we teach children will not only help them become smarter but more tolerant of others, says school board member Geneva Brown.

See Walker on A11

Black farmers get relief from Congress

House waives statute of limitations on discrimination claims

By DAMON FORD
THE CHRONICLE

The door that was once slammed in the faces of black farmers is now open thanks to the U.S. House of Representatives.

In a meeting last week, House members voted to waive the federal statute of limitations on the Equal Opportunity Credit Act for farmer discrimination complaints filed between 1983-1996. The federal limitation statute had served as a blockade to civil rights discrimination complaints being processed by U.S. Department of Agriculture on behalf of thousands of black farmers across the nation.

The complaints allege the USDA discriminated against black farmers for 20 states, including North Carolina. Attorney General Janet Reno issued an official Department of Justice opinion April 1998 interpreting the statute "as barring" many of the claims backlogged at USDA.

"The Congress has sent a clear unambiguous signal to both the courts and the Clinton administration lawyers at the Department of Justice that real constitutional rights don't have a statute of limitations," said Sam Taylor, a member of the farmers professional team.

Black farm activists said the ruling was a blessing. "Of course, now we hope the administration will use this opportunity to finally acknowledge in court and comply with Judge (Paul) Friedman's request to settle the case," said Gary Grant, the National Black Farmers and Agriculturalist Association president.

The suit, Pigford vs. Glickman languished in federal district court in Washington, D.C. Friedman admonished the government for not reaching a mediated settlement in a timely manner. The legislation passed by the House as a provision of the House Agriculture Appropriations spending bill must now go to the Senate for conferencing.

"Black farmers have been losing land at the rate of 9,000 acres per week and find themselves now less than one percent of the U.S. agriculture community," Grant said. "Figures like these indicate that we are destined to be extinct by the turn of the century. If the present trend is allowed to continue, black people for the first time in their more than 400-year history in this nation will not be an integral part of the agriculture food producing system of this nation."

See Farmers on A4

Charter schools face off to end quotas

By DAMON FORD and JERI YOUNG
THE CHRONICLE

A small group of people turned out Tuesday morning to laud a bill that may save the state's predominantly black charter schools.

"We're here to make an appeal for our concerns about our charter schools and their progress," said H.B. Harris, a member of the board of directors at Woodson. "There's currently a legislation out there that might keep charter schools like C.G. Woodson from running in the upcoming year."

In North Carolina, charter schools are public schools operated by parents, teachers or the community.

Charter school supporters are trying to drum up support from Senate Democrats to pass House Bill 1739, which will allow charter schools more freedom to operate. The bill, which was sponsored by Rep. Stephen Wood, R-Guildford, would replace language in the law requiring that the schools reasonably reflect the racial makeup of their school district with a



Ruth Hopkins talks with reporters during Tuesday's press conference.

requirement that they make a good-faith effort to

achieve racial balance.

The change is important to the schools because racial imbalance is technically illegal. Yet the racial quota does prevent a challenge to charter schools. Proponents worry that schools may lose loans because a bank loan officer wouldn't grant the money knowing the school wasn't in compliance with state law and could be shut down.

The State Board of Education, however, has indicated it will not revoke any charters over it.

The bill also provides some much needed financial support for the schools which often operate with small budgets.

If passed, it will allow the schools to join the state retirement's system, which would aid in attracting teachers. The bill would also waive fees for gasoline and license plates that aren't paid by traditional schools and ensure that tax money earmarked for public schools finds its way into charter school coffers.

See Charter on A4

E CHRONICLE

- This Week's News A1-A5
- Opinion A6
- Forum A6
- Business News A7
- Community Calendar A7
- Sports A7-A8
- Classified A9
- Community A9
- Health A9
- Collect & High School A9