

Work First program still in need of fine-tuning

Womble calls for study of former welfare recipients

By HERB WHITE
CONSOLIDATED MEDIA GROUP

North Carolina's Work First program has lowered dependence on welfare, but it's still in for some fine-tuning.

Reps. Beverly Earle (D-Mecklenburg) and Alma Adams (D-Guilford) met last week to work out a compromise bill in the House. The Welfare Reform Committee Earle co-chairs is considering seven different provisions between the two bills, five of which are the same or are contained in only one bill or the other. The House probably won't debate wel-

fare reform until it votes on a budget bill next week.

"There probably won't be any movement until the budget is out on the House floor," Earle said.

The bills contain identical language regarding the maintenance of the standard of need, the maximum allowable income a family can have and qualify for Work First. The amount would be cut in half if the proposed bill is not passed this session.

Although legislators are look-

ing at ways to streamline welfare, Work First has been a success at balancing self-sufficiency with a social safety net, Earle said.

"The program is going well," she said. "It's moving people off the rolls, but it's not moving people to high paying jobs. A lot of people are working their first jobs and don't have a lot of training, but a lot of first jobs don't require training. This has the potential to help them along" to better-paying jobs.

Adams' provisions would allow up to 20 percent of Work First recipients to count post-secondary education toward their work requirements and require N.C. Department of Health and Human Services and N.C. Department of Transportation to create strategies to provide low-income

people and workers with transportation.

Earle's provisions are a biennial review and a review of all cases three months before they reach the end of their time limit. The two remaining provisions are addressed in each bill in differing manners. They are pay-after-performance for two parent families and the state-set two year time limit. Earle's bill would provide two-parent families with three months of benefits before pay-

after-performance applies, and would shorten the 36-month ineligibility period to 18 months, once a family has used their two-year time limit.

"If we don't encourage people to get out and work, North Carolina is going to have to pay more money back to the federal government" in welfare benefits if two-parent families don't meet minimal federal guidelines for hours at work, Earle said. "It's a significant amount of money when we're already facing hard times" as the state tries to find new revenues.

Adams' bill prohibits pay-after-performance from being applied to two parent families and prohibits the state or any county from implementing a time limit other

than the federally required five-year lifetime limit.

Rep. Larry Womble (D-Forsyth) asked questions regarding the well-being of families who have left the rolls.

"I wonder if welfare reform is doing what its supposed to and if not why not," he said. "I don't think it is working."

He then called for a study commission to be established to allow current and former recipients of welfare to tell their stories. Earle, co-chair of the committee, said they were planning a public hearing on welfare reform and Work First for the week of June 8.

"I'm optimistic we'll be able to pass something," Earle said. "We have to be mindful of who we're doing this for."



Womble



Adams

St. Aug vice president alleges sexual harassment in lawsuit

By JOHN MINTER
CONSOLIDATED MEDIA GROUP

A St. Augustine's College vice president and her husband, a former assistant to outgoing President Bernard Franklin, have sued Franklin, the college and several top officials in a federal sexual harassment complaint.

The lawsuit filed by Angeline and Gregory Sligh comes as Franklin ends his six-year career at St. Aug's. He leaves May 31 to become head of Virginia Union University in Richmond.

But correspondence received by The Triangle Tribune, a Consolidated Media Group paper, indicates the lawsuit may be only an overt indication of the contentions within the Episcopal Church-supported school over the past year.

A number of top administrators, including Gregory Sligh,

have been fired. When admissions director Keith Powell was fired in March, four members of his staff resigned.

The Sligh lawsuit, which seeks \$7 million in damages, alleges that Senior Vice President Maurice Taylor made sexual advances toward Angeline Sligh and retaliated against her when she refused.

The lawsuit, in addition to naming Taylor and Franklin, also names St. Aug's attorney Charles T. Francis, who Sligh alleges defamed her by telling a computer software company she was not authorized to sign a contract for software.

Sligh is St. Aug's vice president for technology.

Both Slighs are St. Aug graduates. Gregory Sligh was director of alumni affairs from 1984-1996, when he became special assistant provost. In 1997, he became assistant to the president.

He was fired on Oct. 15 after Angeline Sligh's attorney contacted the school about her complaints.

Angeline Sligh alleges in her

lawsuit that although she told Franklin and other school officials about sexual harassment by Taylor, an investigation was not ordered until after she filed a complaint with the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Several St. Aug's alumni, including the alumni representative on the Board of Trustees, have criticized Franklin's handling of school affairs in the past year.

In a lengthy letter to alumni dated May 8, George Quiett expressed his concerns about Franklin's management, including the possibility that a large sum of money was embezzled from the school, though Franklin did not order a criminal investigation.

Quiett said trustees ordered the matter turned over to legal authorities.

"This is another time bomb waiting to explode," he said. "We

must insist on a full disclosure of this matter and move forward to secure an explanation as to why this has not been properly handled. Is this administration covering up something? Let's not wait until Dr. Franklin moves to Virginia Union before we demand some answers."

The Tribune was unable to contact Francis, who has acted as spokesman for St. Aug officials regarding the court case.



Franklin



Deacon Thomie Douthit offered expressions of love to Gloria Jackson during the Evening of Fellowship at Union Baptist Church.

Jackson honored at Union Baptist Church

Special to THE CHRONICLE

Gloria J. Jackson was recently the guest of honor at "An Evening of Fellowship" at Union Baptist Church, which marked her move to Raleigh. She will relocate to work for the N.C. Raleigh Housing Authority as the assistant director of Section 8 and leased housing. She worked as the assistant Section 8 manager for Housing Authority of Winston-Salem (HAWA) for more than 23 years. She started out as a temporary employee, but now she is accepting a promotion in Raleigh.

"It was a very hard decision, but when God elevates you, you have to answer to the calling. And he moves in His own time," she said. Jackson has fond memories of her years spent at HAWA. "I grew up in this agency, and I learned how to respect people, how to be a leader as well as a follower and how to serve those we are here to serve," she said.

Although she plans to relocate, she has no intention of leaving her church family behind. She plans to return fre-

quently to attend services at Union Baptist Church, where she sings in the B.F. Daniels Gospel Choir and the A.H. McDaniel Amazing Grace Choir and served in the Willing Workers and the missionary group.

Jackson gives her church accolades for helping her mature into a responsible young woman. "I thank Union Baptist Church for rearing me. I joined the church at the age of 10, and this church is like home. I thank God for having a loving church family," she said. Tears spilled from her eyes as she spoke. "I am so happy and full this evening. My friends in the Birthday Club often accuse the members of this church of spoiling me. I'm not spoiled. I am loved," she said.

Jackson credits many of the women of the church with leading her down the right road in life. "I have so many mothers in this church body, and my own mother - Katie Jackson - has not been a jealous woman. She has been willing to share me with all of you. The ladies of this church keep me on the

See Jackson on A9

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