

# Gantt gets rematch in U.S. Senate race

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at a press conference in Raleigh to announce their cooperation in the upcoming battle against Helms, who is seeking a fifth six-year term.

Also, in Tuesday's primary, Vilma Leake led the Democratic field in the at large race for Mecklenburg Board of County Commissioners, and Hoyle Martin beat Sarah Stevenson in the county board's District 2 race, effectively claiming the seat Jim Richardson will give up after two years. Richardson was appointed to replace the late Bob Walton.

Democrats are seeking to recapture control of the seven-member county board.

Leake, an Independence High School teacher, said she's elated with the win. She lost a race for the school board last fall.

"History was made," Leake

## Leake leads Democrats in County Commissioners race

said. "No black female has ever run for county commissioner at large and to come in first in a primary was a first. I feel good about it. I feel the community made a statement of trust."

In the general election, Leake said, she will be working hard to keep the focus on issues and not personalities. "My message will be to make sure we focus on the role and job of a county commissioner and that we give our fullest attention to issues and that we not get bogged down in personalities, but to have this total community as our focus."

"I need the support of the total community to win," she said.

Leake said she knows this is

her first electoral victory, but she's been active throughout her life, including campaigning with her late husband, Bishop George Leake, who ran for Charlotte mayor in 1969, and her leadership in the North Carolina Association of Educators.

"I've labored hard," she said. "I am a qualified candidate."

Culp said Leake benefited from the turnout for the Gantt-Sanders and Martin-Stevenson races. He said the Democrats have a strong ticket going into the November elections if they can unify white and black Democrats. Both groups sometimes cast single-shot ballots, rather than vote for party candidates of another ethnic group, Culp

said.

Martin, with excellent name recognition, apparently was aided in his race with Stevenson by a failure of African American women, about 65 percent of the District 2 electorate, to vote for an African American woman, as white women often do.

"With the county commissioners taking a decidedly adversarial role, voters may have decided Hoyle Martin would operate better in that adversarial arena that Sarah would," Culp said. "Hoyle is tougher. Everybody thought it would be a much closer race."

"What is surprising to me is none of the younger potential black leaders got into it," Culp said. "There is evidently a 'Young Turk' uprising in the Republican Party. Why is that not happening in the minority community?"

## Cruising solutions sought by community, police, youth

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pected of cruising onto I-85 or other streets. The city spent more than \$20,000 for the effort, designed to ease the complaints of neighborhood residents who complain about the traffic, littering even public urination.

Cruisers say they are just enjoying their right to drive on a public street.

"I understand how the residents feel, but they don't want any trouble," Hines said. "They just want somewhere to go, hang out with their friends, look at girls, get phone numbers. You can't have fun being watched and hounded."

A public meeting is set for tonight, under the auspices of an NAACP task force on cruising, to try to find a solution that will be agreeable to the community and cruisers. The meeting will be held at 7:30 p.m. in the McCrorey YMCA on Beatties Ford Road.

The differences between cruisers and neighbors has sparked debate in City Council chambers, with some calling for an outright ban on the practice and others pushing for alternative locations and activities to keep cruisers off Beatties Ford Road.

The problem has a bit of history. Cruising used to occur at Freedom Park, and it was residents of the Dilworth community who complained. Efforts to sponsor Sunday afternoon concerts to attract cruisers to Memorial Stadium failed because of the cost and the lack of interest by cruisers.

That debate led some to call the anti-cruising complaints of the Dilworth residents "racist."

Again, cries of racism have arisen, along with complaints about heavy-handed police tactics, which several cruisers view as an effort to intimidate them.

Amid what is becoming an increasingly emotional debate over the issue, Terry Belk, head of the NAACP political action committee, is seeking a compromise. Belk said he worries that the cruisers' rights to assemble and passage on pub-

lic streets are being violated.

"I want the public to understand that the NAACP is not just sponsoring cruising," he said. "We support individual freedom and individual rights. Anything that restricts and impedes that is an injustice, such as restricting access to neighborhoods. It's unacceptable. Seeing police barricades on streets that people pay taxes for is unacceptable."

"We want to let the cruisers select an ad hoc committee to go to Charlotte City Council with concrete suggestions on what alternate activities that will naturally interest them," Belk said. "They tried before, but there was not things cruisers were interested in. There can be no constructive dialogue without the cruisers there. Without their voice and input, I don't see anyway possible of solving this problem."

Belk said many proposals include an alternate place for cruisers to gather and show off their cars, perhaps the huge Charlotte Coliseum parking lot or the 8- to-10 lanes of Tyvola Road between the Billy Graham Parkway and South Tryon Street.

But Police Chief Dennis Nowicki says that's not as simple as it sounds.

"If we didn't have the problem on Beatties Ford Road, that would be nice," he said. "If it moved, you would still need a police presence when a large crowd gathers."

"The other question," he said, "is how large would the crowd be. If you relocate, to what extent would you attract more and more people from out of town and to what extent would that be a problem."

"When the crowd is mostly local young men and women, crowd behavior is friendly and appropriate. But when you get more and more folks from out of town, behavior changes."

And, Nowicki added, cruisers favor the unorganized nature of the pastime. "One of the things that attracts cruisers is the unsupervised activity," he said.

Belk said the cruisers feel police efforts like Sunday's traffic diversion is an attempt

to intimidate them. "All we are doing is angering these young people," Belk said.

"Let these young people come together," Belk said. "There's cruising in other parts of town and you don't see the police there."

He said there's cruising on Albermarle Road and around the Arboretum in south Charlotte.

"A lot of people think it is not so much cruising, but who is doing the cruising," Belk said.

Nowicki said he's not recommending a complete ban on cruising, however.

"(The traffic diversion) is not a long term solution," the

police chief admits.

He said the traffic restrictions is not a violation of civil rights.

"We have an obligation to insure access to that community the best we can," Nowicki said. "We have the right to divert traffic. It is done all the time, at small events that occur, such as traffic wreck, a fire or a parade."

Belk disagreed, noting that only cruisers were diverted Sunday, one point onto I-85, at Beatties Ford Road.

"You have a right in a free society to go where you want to," Belk said. "You can't restrict the going and coming of one group of people."

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