

NAACP deals with dispute

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The election results were challenged, but in February, the national NAACP board ruled that those election results would stand.

However, according to the complaint filed with the national office on April 11, Alexander refused to hold a meeting of the new executive board and only turned over a portion of the organization's financial records to the new treasurer, setting up a new account for the bulk of organization funds.

After investigating the complaints, NAACP officials learned Alexander had in April and May spent 16 checks signed by the previous treasurer.

The former treasurer, James Florence of Fayetteville, had not actually kept the state organizations books, board members alleged. The y said the books were kept by Linda Gaines. Apparently, the treasurer would sign blank checks which Alexander would complete as needed.

Alexander this week admitted to an error in judgement in using the old checks, but called his suspension "stupid."

"It is politics as usual out on the farm," Alexander said.

Alexander said he wasn't officially notified that the election results were certified until March 17, though an official memo from state NAACP executive director Mary Peeler is dated Feb. 13 and informs officials of the national board's final decision on the state election.

Until March 17, any transition was put on hold, Kelly said.

"The previous treasurer had provided pre-signed checks and there were 16 checks which cleared the bank in May and April statements," Alexander said. "Ten of those checks appear to have been written after the time the notice was received."

"State chapter checks require two signatures. Sometimes one of the parties will sign checks and other part will be signed when you pay bills. I do not defend the practice. It is a bad practice and bad judgement, but it is a common practice throughout the NAACP. You could suspend most NAACP presidents."

"All I'm saying is that the rush to suspend seems to be all out of proportion to the offense."

"I expected to be reprimanded," Alexander said. "I did not expect the suspension. I did not expect any kind of activity to imperil our ability to raise money."

The complaint against Alexander, which was signed by 20 members, including the officers elected in October, did not mention the pre-signed checks at all.

The so-called Article X complaint filed with William Penn, NAACP director of branches, said Alexander refused to call a meeting of the executive committee despite a written request 10 days prior to the March 16 winter session. The executive committee was unable to approve the organization's 1996 budget, which Alexander had presented to the ousted executive committee in December.

Citing the constitution and by-laws of the state and national branches, the complaint noted that the treasurer "will receive all monies of the conference and promptly deposit same in the bank in the name of the conference and ...is authorized to conduct audits of the financial records of the units in the

"It's politics as usual out on the farm."

Kelly Alexander Jr.

state, upon request of the state executive committee and the national office and...should submit reports to the conference and executive committee at all meetings, covering the financial condition of the conference showing receipts and disbursements and outstanding accounts unpaid....

"These functions cannot adequately be accomplished by the treasurer. The president, Kelly Alexander, has refused to turn over the account books and all the monies of the conference to the treasurer."

"He has taken a percentage of the conference income and started a separate account for the current treasurer to make payroll. Mr. Alexander has chosen to keep a balance of the income in an account with a lone signature of the President."

"The Treasurer before the new regime relinquished the one book that he had, but it is evident through various account documentation that books are missing," the complaint alleges.

The complaint requested national office intervention and asked that it "conduct a full audit of the North Carolina Conference."

"We are also strongly urging the National Office to instruct Mr. Alexander to relinquish all duties as an elected officer of the association, as he is not in compliance with the rules and regulations of this association."

Penn visited North Carolina to investigate the complaint and recommended Alexander's suspension. That suspension was upheld by the committee on branches and, on Saturday, by the national board.

Penn said Wednesday he could not confirm Alexander's reasons for the audit.

"I can only confirm that he was suspended on May 18 at the national board meeting in Baltimore, Md., Penn said.

He said he could not confirm Alexander's statement that the suspension was only tied to the misuse of pre-signed checks.

Some national NAACP officials will be in Charlotte tonight for the local chapter's regular meeting to discuss convention planning.

Alexander has cast the suspension as a continuation of the politics that rocked the NAACP with the ouster of former chairman William Gibson of South Carolina.

If the matter is one of politics, it is the politics of a national board and officials, including new chief executive officer Kweisi Mfume, who vowed to restore the integrity of the NAACP and correct financial improprieties found during audits of the national organization books and in the handling of NAACP affairs by former president Ben Chavis.

That movement contributed to the ouster of Gibson as national president by Myrlie Evers-Williams. Alexander also lost his board seat in the election.

The cry of NAACP officials these days is restoration of the financial integrity of the organization and of its focus on civil rights and economic empowerment.

Local NAACP officials are backing Alexander. The executive committee of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg branch, official hosts of this summer's national convention, issued a statement of support.

"We are extremely disap-

pointed and appalled that the National Board would make a decision, at this time, that could ultimately affect the outcome of the convention," the statement read. "It is apparent that the Board did not have the host branch, the state of NC (sic) or the purpose of the NAACP at heart. This National decision is an insult to all of us who work hard to promote the purpose of the organization."

However, the local executive committee said "we will work to make the convention as successful as possible for the delegates."

Bob Davis, newly-elected chair of the Black Political Caucus and chair of the local NAACP chapter's education committee, also voiced support for Alexander, calling the suspension "overkill."

"It was an error in judgement, but there's some politics involved," Davis said. "We are going to support the convention and we are going to support Kelly."

Woodard refused to comment on the suspension, but said it should not affect the convention.

National board member Lenny Springs, a First Union Corp. vice president, also said he felt the convention is "on track."

"I hope everyone will continue to work hard as they have in the past," Springs said. He refused to comment on the national board's action, however.

"There is no need to beat a dead horse," Springs said. "It was an unfortunate situation."

First vice president Melvin Austin of Greensboro will run the state chapter during Alexander's suspension.



Springs

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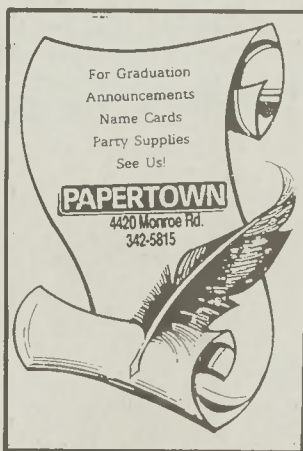
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