



36th Annual Legislative Conference to Focus on Major Issues Facing the African American Community

Planning for the 36th Annual Legislative Conference (ALC) has taken significant shape under the leadership of Conference Co-Chairs Reps. Carolyn Cheeks Kilpatrick and Barbara Lee. The ALC will be held September 6-9, 2006.

More than 20,000 people will gather in Washington, DC around the theme, "Changing Course, Confronting Crises, Continuing the Legacy," to address policy and social issues of primary concern to African Americans.

CBC Members have made a special effort this year to reach out to students and young professionals, identifying a cohort of Emerging Leaders that will travel from Member districts to attend ALC as special guests and have a great amount of visibility and participation in the conference.

With the loss of historic icons like Coretta Scott King, Rosa Parks, Dr. C. Delores Tucker, Gordon Parks and others, it has become increasingly clear that Emerging Leaders must be exposed to conversations within the African American community and build on the work accomplished during the Civil Rights Movement. The Co-Chairs have expressed a strong dedication to that task.

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Highlights of the 2006 ALC include:

- Over 50 Issue Forums and Braintrusts focusing on timely topics such as protecting pensions and health care benefits, the War in Iraq, equality among men and women in business, voting rights, saving African American males, and the devastating genocide in Darfur;
- A National Town Hall meeting on Thursday, September 7, 2006 at 9:30 a.m. titled, "Confronting Crises: Achieving Energy Independence";

Cont'd. on pg. 4

CBC Members Provided Strong, Influential Leadership In The Passage of the Voting Rights Act by the U.S. Congress

Members of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) played an active and influential role in the passage of the Voting Rights Act by the U.S. Congress.

In Congress, members of the CBC and the civil rights community, including the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the National Urban League (NUL), led the effort in the passage of the VRA. The bill recently passed the U.S. House by a vote of 390 to 33

Cont'd. on pg. 4



Surrounded by members of the U.S. House and Senate, President George W. Bush signed into law the Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks and Coretta Scott King Voting Rights Act Reauthorization and Amendments Act of 2006. Show is CBC member Rep. John Conyers, Jr., Ranking Member of the House Judiciary Committee.

in this issue

Wal-Mart
\$1 Million Contribution
to CBCFPage 2

CBC Spouses –
Dollars for Scholars .Page 6

Addressing the Scarcity of
Minorities In the Financial
Services Industry ...Page 8

Identifying Job Opportunities
For Less-Educated
Black MenPage 9

Protecting the Vote ...Page 10

CBCF Chairman's Corner

Wal-Mart Partners with CBCF to Strengthen & Expand Opportunities for Students

*By Rep. Kendrick B. Meek
Chairman, Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, Inc.*

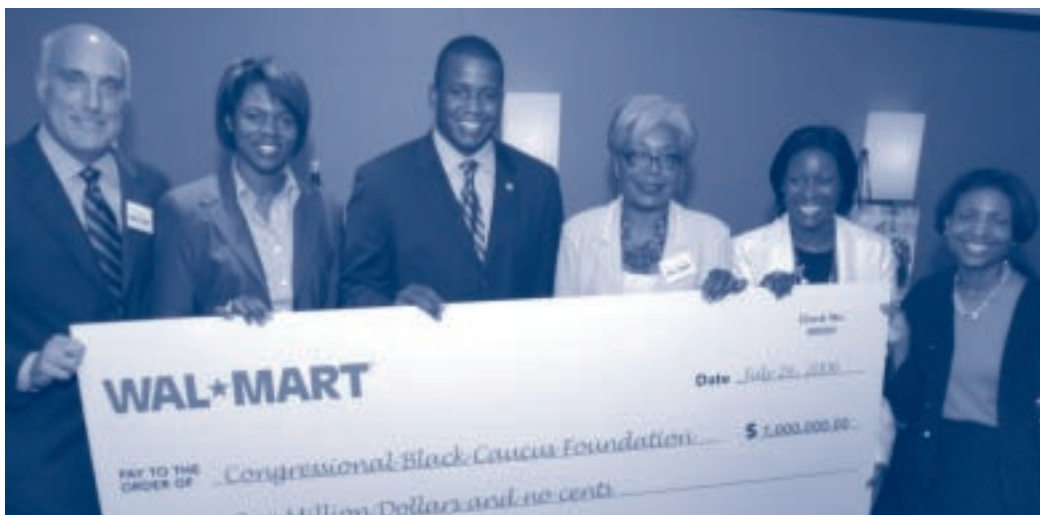
Helping our young people receive the opportunities, knowledge and experience they need to succeed and become leaders in business and government is one of the core missions of the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, and one that we are working hard to expand.

That is why the decision of Wal-Mart Stores Inc., to commit \$1 million over the next three years to the CBCF, to aid our scholarship and internship programs, is so significant. As Chairman, I thank Wal-Mart for not only recognizing the value of these programs, but for stepping up to the plate with this tremendous gift, on top of their annual giving.

The generous support of Wal-Mart will help hundreds of promising students from the districts of all our CBC members to further their education and gain practical, hands-on job experience. From Capitol Hill to the college classroom, these programs allow us to give our future leaders the tools they need to address the challenges ahead.

Wal-Mart's gift will also make it possible for the CBCF to expand our internship opportunities. With the newly created *CBCF/Wal-Mart Emerging Leaders Internship Program*, the CBCF will have the capacity to provide internships beyond the offices of the current 43 members of the Congressional Black Caucus, and allow students to gain invaluable experience in Congressional leadership offices, the Executive Branch and the Federal Judiciary.

Expanding our program beyond CBC offices will allow us to increase the number of CBCF interns, so that even more



Rep. Kendrick B. Meek, CBCF Chairman (center) with (L to R) Ray Bracy of Wal-Mart; Leslie Meek, Chair of the CBC Spouses; Esther Silver-Parker of Wal-Mart; Kimberly Woodward of Wal-Mart; and Dr. Elsie Scott of the CBCF at the July 26th presentation of Wal-Mart's \$1 million gift to the CBCF's scholarship and internship programs.

students will have the chance to contribute and participate, eventually in all three branches of the federal government and not just the Legislative branch.

Wal-Mart's \$1 million commitment will further strengthen the CBCF's scholarship program—the *CBC Spouses Educational fund*. The *CBCF/Wal-Mart Strive for Excellence Scholarship Program* will provide funding to academically talented and highly motivated students who are pursuing full-time undergraduate degrees.

As my term as Chairman continues, I will be working closely with the CBCF Board, Corporate Advisory Council and staff to approach other large employers in an effort to urge them to follow Wal-Mart's example. Continuing to build our fundraising base is crucial to our efforts to offer more programs, more research and more solutions. We will also be actively engaging foundations and others in the philanthropic community in our efforts to strengthen and expand the CBCF.

Our educational leadership programs: scholarships, internships, fellowships and our Emerging Leaders program

Cont'd. on pg. 3

CBC Chairman's Commentary**The Prophecy of Congressman George H. White**

By Rep. Melvin L. Watt
Chairman, Congressional Black Caucus

When U.S. Representative George H. White of North Carolina rose to address the members of the United States House of Representatives on January 29, 1901, he was the last African American remaining in Congress following Reconstruction.

By then, all other African American members had been defeated by the systematic removal of Black voters from the voting roles or by the refusal to allow Black citizens to register using such racist means as poll taxes, literacy tests, fraud, intimidation or other mean tactics.

Making it clear that his election had been stolen from him, Rep. George H. White cited voting returns from his final election defeat confirming that in one township where only 345

...in North Carolina it had taken 92 years to fulfill Rep. George H. White's prophecy that African Americans would "rise up some day and come again"...

voters were registered, 539 voters had voted against him and in another township 492 more votes had been cast against him than there were registered voters. White climaxed his speech to the House with the following historic words:

"This, Mr. Chairman, is perhaps the Negroes' temporary farewell to the American Congress, but let me say, Phoenix-like, he will rise up some day and come again."

Recently, as I stood behind President Bush at the White House when he signed the Fannie Lou

Hamer, Rosa Parks and Coretta Scott King Voting Rights Reauthorization and Amendments Act of 2006 into law, I couldn't help feeling a small touch of vindication for the many Black voters who had been deprived of their most basic right as citizens — the right to vote.

I also couldn't help lamenting the fact that in North Carolina it had taken 92 years to fulfill Rep. George H. White's prophecy that African Americans would "rise up some day and come again" and that Rep. Eva Clayton and I, as

his successors, were the proud beneficiaries of his historic prophesy.

We have paid well-deserved tribute to Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks and Coretta Scott King by naming the Voting Rights Reauthorization Act of 2006 in their honor. The role of Rep. George H. White also deserves to be noted. I came to Congress as his successor 92 years after his historic speech on the floor of the House and I find it ironic (perhaps prophetic) that I was actively involved in the reauthorization process.

I chuckled to myself as I stood on the stage at the White House and kept recalling the historic prophesy of Rep. George H. White and the powerful reminder that so many have uttered - "What goes around, comes around." ■

Wal-Mart Partners with CBCF *Cont'd. from pg. 2*

continue to be a success, but it is also important to address the other needs of our community.

Two key programs targeting financial literacy needs are currently expanding their reach. The *With Ownership Wealth* (WOW) housing initiative aims to create intergenerational wealth by helping participants achieve the dream of homeownership, while the *SHOP for Wealth* program specifically targets young people in moving away from debt and towards financial preparation, for homeownership and beyond.

We are also working to increase the number of minority-owned businesses in the Small Business Administration's certification program through an important partnership with GlaxoSmithKline. This CBCF Supplier *Business Initiative* is a groundbreaking effort to create more opportunities for minority businesses where few previously existed.

As we come together around the Annual Legislative Conference's theme, "*Changing Course, Confronting Crises, Continuing the Legacy*," I hope you will take the time to learn more about these and our other important programs designed to make change. Thank you for your continued support. ■

36th Annual Legislative Conference *Cont'd. from pg. 1*

- Mentoring sessions with business leaders and young professionals; a Community Breakfast at the So Others Might Eat (SOME) facility where Members of Congress serve the homeless; a host of evening social activities;
- At the CBC Spouses Celebration of Leadership, Grant Hill, a member of the Orlando Magic professional basketball team and an avid black art collector, will be honored, and Rep. John Lewis will speak on the history of the Civil Rights Movement.
- The Annual Prayer Breakfast co-founded by Dr. Barbara Williams-Skinner will feature dynamic keynote, Bishop Vashti McKenzie, Chair, of the AME Council of Bishops, and singing sensations Tramaine and Edwin Hawkins. The Prayer Breakfast will include a presentation from well-known actor, Blair Underwood.
- Six humanitarians will be honored during this year's Annual Awards Dinner. The dinner will showcase a moving musical tribute to survivors of Hurricane Katrina, marking the one-year anniversary.
- The Exhibit Hall will host hundreds of vendors, particularly well-branded companies selling retail products and offering giveaways and contests to thousands of attendees. The author's pavilion draws top authors for book signings; the job fair brings out scores of Fortune 500 companies that accept resumes and conduct onsite

interviews. The health pavilion offers free health screenings and accommodates countless uninsured citizens; the Dell cyber café offers Internet connection; and the live stage features local and national talent, cooking segments, and fun and informative sessions conducted by motivational speakers, presenters, and authors.

The CBCF plans to acknowledge the historical legacy and accomplishments of the Congressional Black Caucus with the unveiling of AVOICE—a unique, one-of-a-kind online repository for rare political documents, historic speeches and photographs.

The site will feature rarely and never-before-seen private letters and documents from CBC members like Shirley Chisholm and Adam Clayton Powell. The Virtual Library will also be an online education tool to describe details surrounding occurrences of major importance such as the passing of the Civil Rights Bill and the Martin Luther King Holiday Bill.

The ALC is an educational, fun event for the entire family. Register today. Tickets for the Prayer Breakfast, Emerging Leaders events, and the Annual Dinner are selling out fast. For ticket and event information, visit www.ALC2006.org or call 202-263-2800. ■

Voting Rights Bill *Cont'd. from pg. 1*

and the U.S. Senate by a margin of 98 to 0.

The bicameral, bipartisan bill, also known as the Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks and Coretta Scott King Voting Rights Act Reauthorization and Amendments Act of 2006, provides the legal basis to protect the right to vote for all Americans. CBC members joined other members of Congress and civil rights leaders at the signing of the bill by President George W. Bush in the White House Rose Garden.

"I applaud my colleagues in both the House and Senate for passing the VRA, which will extend the

expiring provisions of the bill for another 25 years and I applaud the President for signing it promptly," noted Rep. Melvin L. Watt, CBC Chair." The passage and signing of the bill is a triumph for the legacy of civil rights pioneers and those individuals who sacrificed so much and worked tirelessly to ensure that all minority citizens can participate fully in our democracy."

Rep. John Conyers, Ranking Member of the House Judiciary Committee, said, "With the passage of the Voting Rights Reauthorization Act, our nation makes the commitment to protecting the right to vote



Members of the U.S. Congress from the Senate and House gathered in the Rose Garden of the White House for the signing of the Voting Rights Bill by President George W. Bush, who shakes the hand of Rep. John Conyers, Jr., the Ranking Member of the House Judiciary Committee. At the far left is CBC Chairman Rep. Melvin L. Watt.

in the 21st century. While there is much to celebrate over the last 40 years, we must remain vigilant be-

cause efforts to suppress or dilute minority votes are still all too common."

Cont'd. on pg. 5

History of ALC Mirrors History of African American Community

By *Elsie Scott, Ph.D.*

Interim President, Congressional Black Caucus Foundation

We, the CBCF staff, are busy preparing for the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation's Annual Legislative Conference (ALC).



The co-chairs of the ALC, Congresswoman Carolyn Cheeks Kilpatrick and Congresswoman Barbara Lee have chosen a most appropriate theme of our 2006 gathering: "Changing Course, Confronting Crises, Continuing the Legacy."

The theme represents an acknowledgment of the need for change, the necessity for a game plan to deal with life's crises, and the importance of honoring those people and ideas that helped us get to where we are today.

In keeping with the theme, we will launch a virtual library, AVOICE, an online research tool that captures the history of the Congressional Black Caucus. AVOICE is a result of a collaboration between CBCF and Dell, Inc. to preserve the rich history of African American Members of Congress.

We are continuing the successful Emerging Leaders Empowerment Series which has increased the number of young persons attending the ALC. The Instant Apprentice Luncheon, which had an overflow crowd last year, has been expanded to accommodate more young leaders and a number of young elected officials are expected to share their experiences.

The history of the ALC actually mirrors the history of the African American community, in that the founding Members knew they could be most effective

by bringing their constituents under the umbrella of mutual interests.

The ALC has always been a meeting designed to capture the interests of private citizens, community organizers, and politicians on the local, regional and national levels. All come to Washington, DC with their private and public needs, hoping to engage in meaningful discussion and to receive information that help them become more effective citizens, organizers, community leaders, politicians, students and business persons.

They are never disappointed, because ALC offers an impressive array of discussions, during which world leaders, elected officials, business CEOs, community activists, and ordinary citizens, are all united in the quest to share their resources and ideas.

Those discussions often lead to lasting relationships that engender change. Whether the subject is education, jobs, health care or criminal justice, those

who attend ALC have an excellent opportunity to express their viewpoints.

They have the opportunity to talk about what is working in their communities, and to learn from the experts on how to initiate positive and lasting change.

We are excited about the forums and braintrusts that are being offered during the 2006 ALC. We hope you will take advantage of the information, resources and networking opportunities provided by the Conference.

Together we will be a mighty force for, "Changing Course, Confronting Crises, Continuing the Legacy." ■

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Voting Rights Bill *Cont'd. from pg. 4*

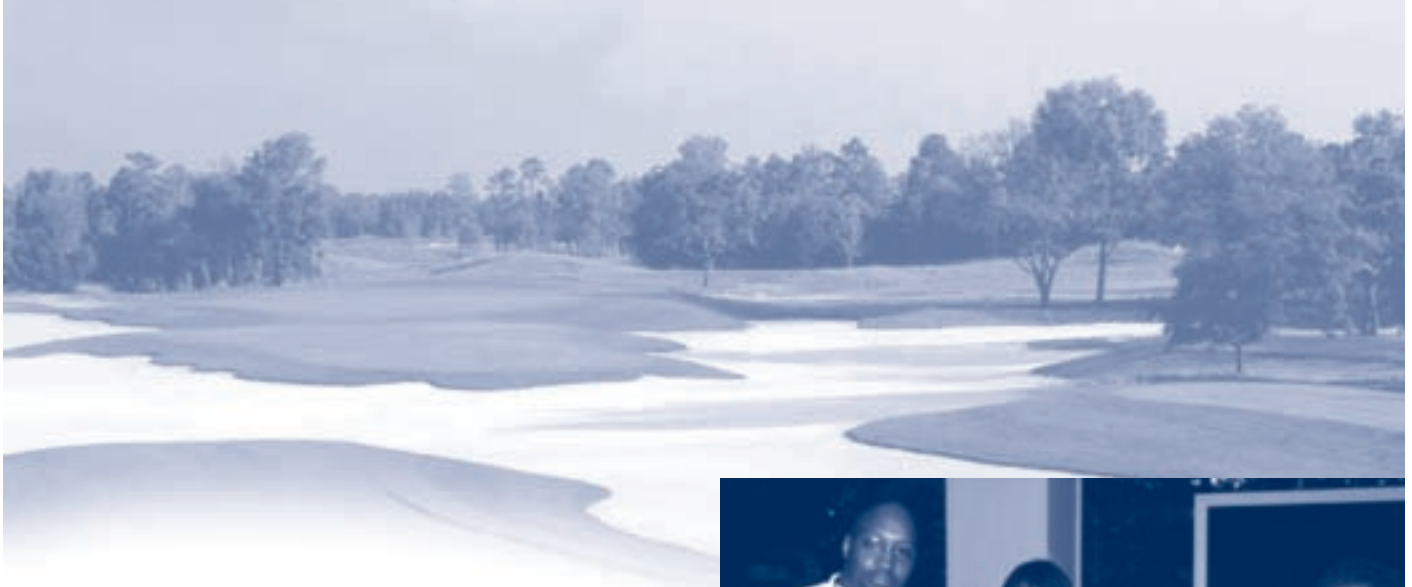
According to Rep. Maxine Waters, "American democracy cannot endure without the protections guaranteed under the Voting Rights Act. We must continue to build a nation where every citizen values every vote. Our nation must view any barrier to the

ballot box as an assault on freedom and liberty."

Rep. John Lewis, a veteran of the civil rights movement, commented, "With this signing, the members of the Congress

and the President have done their part. The President's clear message that he would sign this bill, from the very beginning of the public debate, was helpful to its passage." ■

CBC Spouses Continue with their Tradition of “Dollars for Scholars”



2006 Golf and Tennis Tournament

This has thus far proven to be a successful year for the Congressional Black Caucus Spouses (CBC Spouses). Under the leadership of its new Chairwoman **Mrs. Leslie Meek (Florida)** and a dedicated Golf and Tennis Tournament Committee, the 2006 Mervyn L. Jones Memorial Golf and Tennis Classic (named in honor of the late husband of Rep. **Stephanie Tubbs Jones**) made history this year when it raised over \$200,000 for the Spouses Education Fund. This accomplishment brought the CBC Spouses steps closer to reaching their goal of disseminating up to \$430,000 in cash scholarships to deserving students from the Districts of CBC Members for the upcoming school year.

Styled after a Weekend Getaway

This year's tournament was likened by guests to a retreat as the Spouses selected a location that accommodated overnight stay, hence fellowship amongst CBC Members, Spouses, Congressional Black Caucus Foundation (CBCF) Board Members, Corporate Advisory Council members, CBCF staff, and special guests. The night before the tournament the Spouses continued the tradition of their Pre-Tournament Gala which included a performance by singer, Rachele Farrell, music and dancing, and the very popular silent auction.



From l to r: special guest, Mrs. Leslie Meek, Mrs. Vivian Bishop and Rep. Stephanie Tubbs Jones

An Exciting Wrap Up

Despite the rain, the golf, tennis, and bid whist competitions were a great success. Many players completed 18 rounds of golf and towards the end commented that this was one of the most enjoyable events they had ever attended. The tournament ended with an exciting awards reception where winners of the golf, tennis, and bid whist competitions received valuable gifts. In addition, participants were able to bid on many attractive items during the award reception's live auction.

The CBC Spouses look forward to this tournament becoming a million-dollar fundraiser in the near future. Save the date on your calendar for next year's "Mervyn L. Jones Memorial Golf and Tennis Classic" scheduled for June 24th and 25th. For more information please call or email the CBC Spouses at 202.263.2837 or cbcspouses@cbcfinc.org.

The Spouses Rear Up for ALC

The CBC Spouses are working diligently in preparation for this year's Annual Legislative Conference. Their four major events for the week include the **Celebration of Leadership Event** on Wednesday at 7:30 pm; the Annual Community Breakfast which is being held on Thursday morning at 7:00 am and the **issues forum (focusing on Civil Rights)** which is held on Thursday at 1:00 pm.

The CBC Spouses **Annual Community Breakfast** will take place on Thursday, September 7th at the Washington, DC shelter, "So Others Might Eat", located on O Street NW in Washington DC. The special event, sponsored by General Motors, will host up to four hundred people, and will feature health screenings as well. In a time-honored tradition, Members of Congress and their spouses will serve breakfast to the attendees.

Recognizing the Performing and Visual Arts

The **CBC Spouses Celebration of Leadership** will continue its tradition of hosting one of the most popular and elegant gatherings during the Annual Legislative Conference. The location will again be the National Museum of Women in the Arts, and this special event will kick off the week's festivities on Wednesday September 6 at 7:30 pm.

The Honorees, all of whom will be in attendance include, **Elizabeth Catlett**, Master Artist; **Simmie Knox**, the first African American to paint a presidential portrait — and

Grant Hill, avid Black Art Collector and member of the NBA team, the Orlando Magic. The event will include performances by past recipients and a live band.

Event Chairwoman, **Mrs. Gaines Clore Wynn (Maryland)** is elated to honor such distinguished leaders in the Arts. She also looks forward to the addition of the new Visual Arts scholarship and the opportunity to award both performing and visual arts students with scholarships to use toward their college education. ■

NBA Star Grant Hill will be honored by the CBC Spouses this year at the Celebration of Leadership Event (Wednesday, September 6, 2006) at the National Museum of Women in the Arts

Congressional Black Caucus Spouses ALC 2006 Schedule

Preliminary Schedule September 2006

Wednesday, September 6, 2006

Celebration of Leadership

7:30 pm - 10:00 pm

The National Museum of Women in the Arts

1250 New York Ave., NW

Washington, DC

Thursday, September 7, 2006

Community Breakfast

7:00 am - 9:30 am

So Others Might Eat

71 O Street, NW

Washington, DC

Essay Contest & Issue Forum

1:30 pm - 2:30 pm

Washington Convention Center

Washington, DC

Addressing the Scarcity of Minorities In the Financial Services Industry

By Rep. David Scott



It is neither simply a matter of opinion nor a subjective case of feeling or belief, but a statistically supported fact that diversity in the financial services industry has not substantially increased over the last decade.

As a member of the Financial Services Committee in the House of Representatives, my colleagues and I have begun to investigate the current state and progress of diversity measures within this industry.

As a small business owner with an MBA from the Wharton School of Finance, the financial sector has played an integral role in my life. Thus, it concerns me that a recent Government Accountability Office (GAO) report entitled the Overall Trends in Management-Level Diversity and Diversity Initiatives 1993-2004, found that still too few minorities enter and rise to heights of great responsibility and influence within the financial services industry.

I, along with several colleagues, requested this GAO report following a 2004 hearing on diversity issues. To address the GAO's findings, the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee held a second hearing on July 12,

2006 entitled "Diversity: The GAO Report."

This report cites that "between 1993 and 2004, overall diversity at the management level in the financial services industry did not change substantially....," 4 percent over an entire decade.

The GAO report goes on to enumerate several critical areas that mitigate diversity gains, including recruitment; no "critical mass" of minorities lowering the retention of minorities, an industry-wide under utilization of existing pipelines of minority and women employees, and lack of commitment from midlevel employees responsible for implementing diversity programs.

Evidence shows that diversity programs are lagging in their effectiveness. However, current challenges might serve as a starting point for solutions and a catalyst for future action. Witness testimony from the 2004 and 2006 hearings highlight how industry firms might improve current efforts by incentivizing diversity efforts, ensuring that minori-

ties are given the opportunity to work on major accounts, and requiring senior personnel responsible for diversity efforts report directly to the CEO.

At a 2004 hearing, one witness estimated that only 20-25 percent of senior diversity officers do currently. Suggestions were also offered on how Congress can address this issue such as including diversity in the evaluation requirements used by the government when selecting firms to manage its

slacking profits should not be complacent about its poor report on the hiring and retention of minorities.

It took the corruptive financial disasters and subsequent aftershocks of Enron and WorldCom to encourage increased corporate accountability. Let us not wait on cataclysmic losses to change lackluster and unsuccessful diversity efforts. I and my colleagues on the Financial Services Committee will continue to evaluate Congress' role in changing the status quo.

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assets and requesting that the GAO investigate the diversity of federal regulatory agencies.

The financial services industry can and should rededicate itself to meeting diversity goals. An industry that does not settle for

I encourage the Boards of Directors and Senior Officers of financial services companies to reexamine this critical issue and retool their efforts to increase diversity. ■

Identifying Employment Opportunities For Less-Educated Black Men

By Kenya L. Covington, Ph.D.

The growing underemployment of the African American male is one of the most pressing problems facing the nation.

Persistent losses of economic contributions to black households and communities as a result of able bodied men's absence from the labor force exacerbate many of the social ills plaguing the country.

Increasingly, substandard employment has very serious implications to the economic viability of the black family. As a community of advocates, policy makers and concerned citizens it is critical that we proactively identify opportunities to significantly boost the employment of African American males, especially those with a high school education or less.

In response to these concerns, the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation sought to explore an industrial sectoral analysis providing a detailed picture of the employment reality for African American males by industry.

The CBCF also aimed to identify opportunities where less-educated males can penetrate the labor force within specific industries. The analysis is detailed in a newly released report entitled: ***"Taking Stock of the Employment Opportunities of Less-Educated African American Men."***

The author of this report, Michael A. Stoll, PhD, an Associate Professor at UCLA Public Affairs Department examined the persistent employment problems of less-educated Black men within 17 metropolitan statistical areas highly populated by African Americans.

- First, the report documents labor force participation rates over the 1990s and shows that labor force participation has fallen for almost all less-educated men, but most sharply for less-educated black men.
- The report also analyzes labor demand for less-educated black men. The analysis reveals that the industries with the greatest demand for less-educated black men include transportation/utilities, and business and entertainment services. Employment growth in the transportation/utilities and business and entertainment industries has been relatively

good over the past decade, and thus will likely continue to provide employment opportunities to less-educated black men.

- The construction industry is one of the few industries over the decade that has provided substantial employment opportunities for less-educated male workers as a result of robust employment growth in this sector, yet, unlike less-educated white and Latino men, less-educated black men did not attach to this source of employment demand during the 1990s.
- Information from this research should better focus work force development efforts being undertaken by nonprofits, practitioners and local and state officials in major metropolitan areas.

Finally, the findings suggest that there is a dire need for federal policies to return to targeted training and job development of inner city youth and adults. A concerted national policy initiative is necessary to address the inferior employment of less-educated black men. In the absence of job development and training programs such as the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) in existence from 1973 to 1983 it will be difficult to reign in the array of problems associated with the inferior employment of black men.

Funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, this report is a part of a series of CBCF research products that closely study the problems that low-income families face with a particular focus on the development of policy solutions that will enable low-income families to advance economically.

In addition to the report, the CBCF is systematically reporting labor force penetration by sector for less-educated black men in major Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) across the country. This analysis allows a greater understanding of the sectors wherein employment opportunities exist at regional and local levels; the supporting research will be disseminated over the course of the year.

For more information on this research, log on to www.cbcfinc.org or call 202-263-2800. ■



Protecting the Vote: Oversight Hearing With Election Assistance Commission

By Rep. Juanita Millender-McDonald

As the Ranking Member of the Committee on House Administration, one of my areas of responsibility is the oversight of federal elections.

I am hard at work making sure that the fallout surrounding the 2000 & 2004 elections does not happen again.

Recently, my Committee held a Hearing with the Election Assistance Commission (EAC) regarding the progress of election reforms and to determine what Americans can expect during the 2006 and 2008 elections.

An important part of election reform is the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) of 2002. Congress passed HAVA as a direct result of the challenges from the 2000 Presidential election.

During the hearing, I inquired about the status of the following provisions:

- **Are voting facilities fully accessible to disabled voters?**

States may satisfy this obligation with the use of a direct recording Electronic Voting System (DRE).

- **What measures are in place to prevent voter fraud?**

An interactive and centralized system to handle statewide computerized voter registration lists is meant to address this issue. The lists are to be defined, maintained, and administered at the state level.

They will contain the name and registration information of every legally registered voter in the state, and assign a unique identifier to them.

- **What is being done to improve Poll worker training and recruitment?**

For the most part, volunteers run our election facilities for many long hours and on very little pay.

It is a problem that can be traced back to the 2004 election. That is why I am pleased that my amendment for \$250,000 was approved for college students to be trained as poll workers.

EAC Leadership will continue to update me as results come in.

Further, I have sent letters to Governors across the country requesting that states become compliant with the provisions of HAVA.

I understand that HAVA has been underfunded by \$800 million dollars and this puts a financial hardship on states to become compliant.

Therefore, I have sent a letter to the House Appropriations Committee requesting that they allot dollars that would fully fund HAVA and take this burden off of the states.

Eligible voters should have the reasonable expectation that their ballots are being counted. We must protect the vote; as it is one of our most precious rights as citizens of this great nation. ■

CBCF Launches Online Virtual Library—A VOICE

By Adrena Ifill, Virtual Library Project Consultant

On September 6, 2006, CBCF officially launches its online virtual library—Avoice.

This online library represents a history of African American participation in Congress by providing documents and legislation from African American Members of Congress.

Dell President and CEO Kevin Rollins, University of Texas President William Powers, Jr. and Howard University President H. Patrick Swygert will be in attendance.

All three institutions are committed to preserving the legacy of African American leadership. From Dell's perspective, by funding a virtual library of this scope and transcen-

dence, the company reaffirms its commitment to diversity and to educating the public on the contributions of African Americans to our nation's history.

The University of Texas is partnering as the technology librarian and Howard University's Moorland-Spingarn Research Center is the initial content provider.

Funded by Dell, Inc., the project is an innovative resource for the legislative history of African American congressional members. Avoice contains archives of the CBC, including landmark legislation that has shaped the social, economic and political landscape of the United States.

Cont'd. on pg. 11

Targeting Black Children for Obesity and Bad Health

By Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton



Black consumers should be outraged that two-thirds of ads on Black TV during afternoon cartoons and “tween” shows are for fast food, compared to only 34% on the WB Network and none on the Disney Channel, with their largely white audiences.

We are all part of a national obesity and overweight epidemic, but Black children have become top targets.

By last year, an avalanche of almost 500 new kids food product introductions, loaded with sugar, fat and calories, had increased from just 52 in 1994. Fast food ads aim directly at our youngest kids, with African American children in the crosshairs. Congress is AWOL, letting proven legislation expire, despite definitive studies showing that childhood obesity is one of the nation’s most serious health problems, creating a surge in permanently debilitating diseases

not seen before in children.

Type 2 diabetes, an adult disease, has become widespread among Black children. Overweight children have a more than a 70 percent chance of being overweight adults, increasing their risk for such serious health conditions as hypertension and heart disease.

Television ads during children’s programs featuring fatty foods with little nutritional value are prime culprits, according to the Institute of Medicine. Congressional and community action is urgently required. Black consumers should be outraged that two-thirds of ads on Black TV during afternoon cartoons and “tween”

shows are for fast food, compared to only 34% on the WB Network and none on the Disney Channel, with their largely white audiences.

We are to blame for our children’s eating habits. They are being targeted because they are where the market for fast food is. Besides action at home and in school cafeterias and food machines, however, we must let outlets *know that we know* they are targeting our kids, and that we want it stopped. The far right has shown that consumer pressure works.

Congress has shamelessly punted, allowing funding to lapse this year for the successful VERB Youth Media Campaign, I co-spon-

sored that, according to studies, turned television on its head, effectively using TV to get children active.

The toothless 1990 Children’s Television Act provisions limit advertising minutes during children’s programming *only to already established industry norms*. In 1980, Congress stripped the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) of authority to issue industry-wide regulations against unfair advertising practices.

Short of censorship, advertising, to children is less stringently protected. I have introduced H.R. 5737, the Children’s Health Federal Trade Commission Authority Restoration Act, to restore FTC’s authority to regulate marketing to children.

We need a Congress that will get serious about children’s health. However, responsibility also lies with African American parents and communities. ■

Virtual Library Project *Cont’d. from pg. 10*

It provides current and historical information that positions the library as the leading online resource for African American political history and leadership. Offering interactive learning tools for educators that highlight the history of African American political involvement in Congress, it intends to promote civic engagement among youth.

The Avoice site is designed to inspire and to educate. It contains a historical and legislative account of the CBC and its role in American history.

The launch site will have four exhibits that relate to significant legislative achievements of the CBC.

The four exhibits are the Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Bill, the Anti-Apartheid Movement, the Voting Rights Act and the History of the CBC. Currently, the old-

est document on the site is from Congressman Charles Diggs in 1959.

The CBC makes history every day and the Avoice project is designed to represent the enduring contribution of African American legislators. More exhibits and primary documents will be added to reflect the contributions of African American legislators from the 1800s to the present.

Video and audio materials also will be available. In addition, a “For Educators” section will include interactive materials for civic courses and curriculum.

A smaller version of the site has been developed through the University of Texas’ Digital Libraries, UTopia. In limited release, Avoice has received over 224,743 pageviews through July to its Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday exhibit. The incredible response to the pilot site proves that the site’s information has broad public appeal. ■

We Must Continue to Push to End the Genocide in Darfur

By Rep. Donald M. Payne

As the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights and International Relations, I am continuing to fight for an end to the genocide in Darfur, a tragedy of epic proportions.

I recently sent a letter to President Bush which 158 other Members of Congress signed expressing our alarm over the worsening humanitarian situation in Darfur and urging the immediate appointment of a Special Envoy.

This summer, I had a chance to meet with Mr. Minnie Minawi, who heads the Sudanese Liberation Army (SLA), while he was visiting Washington, D.C. The SLA is the only rebel group who signed the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) with the government of Sudan.

I also had an opportunity to talk to Mr. Salva Kiir, (who succeeded the late Dr. John Garang as the First Vice President of the Republic of Sudan and President of South Sudan), during his visit to Washington to meet with President Bush and other officials.

Both these meetings confirmed that the humanitarian situation in Darfur remains dire; the DPA is fragile and the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which came into effect early last year, has also been very slow at best.

Despite the signing of the DPA between the government of Sudan and the SLM, prospects for lasting peace remain uncertain and precarious. Civilians in Darfur remain extremely vulnerable to attacks by the Janjaweed and other pro-government militias. Fighting has been going on for some time and civilians continue to suffer.

We need immediate action. Deputy Secretary Zoellick has left his post. No one is there to keep Darfur high on the agenda. We need a Special Envoy to ensure a UN Security Council resolution is introduced to set up a peacekeeping mission, to force the government of Sudan to accept that mission, and to see that the DPA is implemented.

The signing of the DPA presents an opportunity for peace in Darfur; however, the challenges ahead are enormous. Many in Darfur and in the Darfuri expatriate community, including two rebel groups, are opposed to this agreement.



Representative Donald Payne, Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights and International Relations, recently met with the actor George Clooney in support of the Save Darfur Now campaign. The Congressman has held a series of meetings and forums to focus attention on the dire situation in Darfur.

Despite the signing of the DPA between the government of Sudan and the SLM, prospects for lasting peace remain uncertain and precarious.

The DPA calls for the disarmament of the Janjaweed and contains about \$300 million for Darfur reconstruction. The government was, in fact, supposed to disarm the Janjaweed two years ago, as per a UN Security Council resolution.

Rather than disarmament however, it has instead, simply absorbed them into the army. Moreover, the amount to be provided for reconstruction is simply not enough. Much work remains to be done in convincing Darfuris that the agreement will bring an end to the violence and bring those responsible for the atrocities to justice.

By now, hundreds of thousands of innocent people have been killed as a result of the actions of the government of Sudan and the Janjaweed, who they armed and told to do most of their dirty work. Some say up to 400,000 have died but it is hard to get precise numbers.

The fact is too many have died—some from violence, some from extreme hunger and malnutrition, some from preventable diseases and illnesses like cholera and diarrhea.

We must continue to raise our voices, to remain active and engaged on Darfur, to demand justice for the people of Darfur. We need a UN mission, a Special Envoy, and accountability for government officials and Janjaweed commanders and fighters. **Finally, the people of Darfur must have security and safety so they can return to their homes and begin to rebuild their lives. ■**

Stem Cell Research Legislation Will Give Health and Hope to Americans

By Rep. Carolyn Cheeks Kilpatrick

I supported the veto override of H.R. 810, the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act.

This bipartisan legislation would have expanded federal funding for embryonic stem cell research. Despite the fact that this measure passed both chambers of Congress, the President vetoed the legislation, the first of his presidency. I am disappointed he chose this bill to be his first veto.

The American Medical Association and 92 other organizations, including scientists and researchers supported H.R. 810. Federal funding would enable further research to examine many new lines of stem cells, increasing the potential for cures.

Each year, 8,000 to 10,000 embryos created for in-vitro fertilization are destroyed. H.R. 810 would have allowed federally funded research of stem cells, which scientists believe can yield cures for diseases and injuries, to be harvested from surplus frozen embryos that are stored at fertility clinics and slated for destruction.

Stem cells are the building blocks of our bodies. For more than 50 years, scientists have conducted research using adult stem cells. While the study of adult stem cells has produced medical treatments like bone marrow transplants to treat leukemia and sickle cell disease, their medical potential is limited.



Human embryonic stem cells are prized because they can replicate themselves and become almost any type of human tissue. This capability gives them the potential to provide cures for many illnesses and injuries, such as diabetes, Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease, Lou Gehrig's disease, some cancers, and spinal cord injuries, which cannot be cured with adult stem cells.

Human embryonic stem cells are prized because they can replicate themselves and become almost any type of human tissue.

We all know people—our children, our sisters and brothers, our parents, and our friends—in our community who are affected by an array of incurable and chronic illnesses that could benefit from stem cell research. Science should prevail over politics.

The President did not make the right choice. His veto is standing in the way of hope and progress in curing many diseases. It also ignores our country's healthcare needs and slows our potential to eradicate life threatening and chronic diseases.

Critical, lifesaving legislation like H.R. 810 is greatly needed. We must increase awareness about the importance of stem cell research in our community.

We need to remain engaged in the ongoing struggle to enact legislation that will expand federal funding for embryonic stem cell research. We must fight to keep millions of Americans—and hope for cures to many debilitating, life threatening diseases—alive. ■

Fighting Colorectal Cancer in the African American Community

By Rep. Albert R. Wynn

The C word, Cancer, is rarely discussed in the African American community.

Worse, discussion of colorectal cancer is almost taboo because of squeamishness about screening procedures. However, it is the third most common form of cancer and the second leading cause of cancer death. More to the point, our community disproportionately suffers from this disease.

We are 15% more likely to suffer from colorectal cancer and 40% more likely to die from colorectal cancer. Sadly, we are also less likely to receive aggressive treatment for colorectal cancer after detection.

In response to this disparity, I was pleased to join my colleague Congresswoman Kay Granger (R-TX) as the lead Democratic sponsor of H.R. 5790, the Colorectal Cancer Early Detection, Prevention, and Treatment Act.

This bill would provide funding for colorectal cancer screenings, specifically targeting low-income and uninsured individuals. If passed, it would authorize over \$50 million for state and local health centers and agencies to implement their own screening and treatment programs.

According to the American Cancer Society, 148,610 new cases will be diagnosed and 55,170 deaths will be caused by colorectal cancer this year alone. Many of these cases and deaths could have been prevented with access to colorectal cancer screenings.

Cont'd. on pg. 14



Safe Blood Saves Lives

By Rep. Chaka Fattah

The facts are devastating. Sixty-four percent of all people living with HIV reside in sub-Saharan Africa.

That's 24.5 million men, women and children infected with the deadly disease. In 2005, an estimated 2.7 million people became newly infected with the disease, and 2 million adults and children died of AIDS.

Every 25 seconds, another person is infected with HIV. Something can and must be done to curtail this unnecessary death sentence.

Unscreened, tainted blood transfusions are directly linked to the escalation in the number of HIV cases. The World Health Organization estimates that less than half of all African countries have adopted national blood transfusion policies to curtail HIV infections.

In addition, about 10 percent of the total HIV/AIDS infections are estimated to be from unclean blood supplies and transfusions. A clean and safe blood supply will go far in preventing the spread of HIV and the subsequent deaths that follow.

Included in the FY07 Foreign Operations Appropriations bill is the Safe Blood Initiative. It calls for a strategic plan to be carried out by the Centers for Disease Control, the World Health Organization, USAID and the Global AIDS Coordinator to clean up Africa's blood supply to save millions from unnecessary death.

The bill also makes funds available to provide blood free of malaria, HIV and other transmittable diseases, as well as training healthcare professionals in proper medical procedures and practices for maintaining a clean blood supply.

The initiative has received international support from the United Nations, the European Union, and the United Kingdom.

United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan said, "The HIV/AIDS epidemic demands an exceptional response and Fattah's Safe Blood Initiative will play an invaluable role in preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS infected blood to millions of Africans."

European Ambassador John Bruton said the Safe Blood Initiative is a very timely and important goal, and gladly supports the effort. British Prime Minister Tony Blair expressed his support saying, "The initiative is vital to assist African countries to strengthen their health services, which includes ensuring an adequate supply of safe, uncontaminated blood."

In response to the Safe Blood Initiative, the Committee on International

Relations' Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights and International Operations held hearings to examine options of the best way to bring about an end to an increasingly preventable crisis.

The subcommittee heard from various experts whose work on the prevention of transmittable diseases such as HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis will be vital in determining an immediately implementable plan of action to assure the availability of safe blood in Africa.

Providing a long term strategy for cleaning up Africa's blood supply means millions face a more promising and brighter future. Safe blood means saved lives. ■

Fighting Colorectal Cancer *Cont'd. from pg. 13*

Unfortunately, many African Americans do not get screened due to lack of information and anxiety about screenings. To overcome these social barriers to access, we must educate the

public about this silent epidemic.

For instance, the most common and effective screening option is the colonoscopy, which is administered with a mild seda-

tive and, contrary to popular belief is not painful. Screening reduces the risk of late diagnosis, which increases your five-year survival rate from 10% to 90% with early detection.

Many in the community are needlessly suffering due

to misconceptions and inadequate cancer screening, treatment, and outreach programs. In turn, this leads to disparities in rates of treatment and mortality. HR 5790 makes a concerted effort to provide outreach and screening to ultimately save lives. ■

Katrina and Lebanon: The Neglected Moral Imperative

By Rep. Diane E. Watson

Almost a year has passed since one of the greatest natural disasters in American history hit the Gulf Coast.



Tens of thousands of residents, many of them poor and African American, did not have the means to escape the storm and ended up stranded in the ensuing flood. One could not miss the fact that most of the devastation in the lower 9th Ward of New Orleans impacted people of color.

Many residents have not and may never return. Once again, members of the Congressional Black Caucus acted as the conscience of the Congress by drawing the nation's attention to the disaster's underlying issues of poverty and race.

Late last year, the CBC introduced the Hurricane Katrina Recovery, Reclamation, Restoration, Reconstruction and Reunion Act of 2005. HR 4197 highlights two critical objectives: the full restoration of the Gulf Coast and reunification of Gulf Coast families.

The legislation also calls on the President to eradicate poverty in the U.S. within ten years of the bill's enactment. It has not been given a hearing in any congressional committee to which it was referred, and it is doubtful that the bill will receive a serious hearing in the waning days of the 109th Congress.

Congressional inability to offer up a detailed reconstruction plan mirrors the administration's torpid response to the Gulf recovery effort. There is hardly a pressing sense of urgency in the Department of Homeland Security's rhetoric or actions.

A year after Katrina, we once again must focus on the never-ending bitter brew of the Middle East and Lebanon, the latest concoction. Lebanon is a disaster of a different sort but with parallels to Hurricane Katrina.

The nation's infrastructure is compromised. Hundreds of thousands of citizens are displaced with few options and no place to go, much less return. As in the Gulf Coast, the real victims in this battle are civilian casualties on both sides and Lebanon's poorest and largely Shia population. Once again, the human aspect of this disaster has been ignored.

Both disasters in Lebanon and the Gulf Coast illustrate the terrible predicament and consequences of those marginalized by society and the failure of our nation and the world to collectively confront and defeat poverty and racial and religious intolerance at home and abroad – issues that will continue to profoundly shape the fate of mankind.

The work of the CBC is needed now more than ever. ■

Rep. Barbara Lee Introduces Legislation To Promotes U.S.–Caribbean Educational Exchange

In July, Congresswoman Barbara Lee (D-Oakland) introduced legislation to promote educational exchange between the United States and Caribbean nations.

“Educational exchange programs are universally recognized as one of the best means to support economic development and promote democratic values, but for years we have taken our ‘third border’ to the south for granted,” said Rep. Lee.

“This bill will help close that critical gap, by strengthening relations with our Caribbean neighbors and offering new opportunities for future leaders from both the Caribbean and the United States,.” She added.

Rep. Lee's bill, the Shirley Chisholm U.S.-Caribbean Educational Exchange Act of 2006, would establish in the State Department's Office of Public Diplomacy a U.S.-Caribbean educational exchange program for high school, undergraduate and graduate students, and scholars.

It would also enable the U.S. Agency for International Development to develop a regional strategy to expand



existing early education initiatives, and it would allow both State Department and USAID to use public-private partnerships to implement the program.

Many Caribbean leaders have received post-secondary education in the United States, and have used their different fields of training to strengthen Caribbean democracy and community involvement.

From 2003-2005, 217 Caribbean leaders participated in U.S. exchange programs that centered on innovative ways to fight drug trafficking, anticorruption and good governance policies.

Rep. Lee, who got involved in politics after working on Shirley Chisholm's 1972 presidential campaign, serves on the Western Hemisphere Subcommittee of the House International Relations Committee and has been a champion of Caribbean issues, most recently leading the Congressional effort that resulted in June being named as Caribbean American Heritage month. ■

Black Colleges: Tiny But Still Jewels in the Crown

By Rep. Major Owens

In 1986 Black colleges and universities faced a time of significant, almost desperate, financial turmoil.



Several old schools had been shut down. Of the approximately four thousand such U.S. institutions of higher learning only about 135 are Black founded and administered.

After conducting a hearing in Atlanta University, where thirteen college presidents testified, the Owens' title IIIB amendment received support for both authorization and appropriation.

Since 1986, with the support of both parties, the Congress has provided **3.9 billion** dollars in direct aid to Black colleges. This is a wise investment for a small but vital sector in our much needed accelerated mobilization for education.

Our nation must more fervently embrace its duty to the mission of indispensable leadership for our earth civilization. Education must be at the core of the comprehensive plan, strategy, mobilization which accomplishes this vital goal.

Economic competitiveness, cultural creativity, governance genius, freedom of outlook, the determination

to pursue happiness, stubbornness in philosophy and ideology, and the continuing commitment to the spiritual and moral belief that we are born to serve a purpose beyond day-to-day individual survival; these are objectives which cannot be achieved without a massive and ongoing dynamic process emphasizing education.

Military shock and awe can defend us from fanatics and guarantee that we never lose a violent war. Winning, prevailing in the effort to keep humankind moving more rapidly away from our savage animal roots toward a paradise on earth can be achieved only if we accept education as the heart and blood of our political and social body. Aspiring toward such a healthy national physique must make use of every organ and resource we possess.

The brainpower in our inner cities and poor rural areas we can no longer allow to be wasted. Like the small veins in the heart or the tiny hormone producing glands in the throat, Black colleges have an unseen but critical role to play.

The brainpower deposited among the uneducated poor and minorities is the great untapped resource of America. To better recognize the need for this resource consider the following:

- A generally accepted barometer of degrees of global competitiveness is the size of a nation's

“middle class.” Beyond mere income, “middle class” should be defined as the segment of society able to earn a decent living for themselves and also capable of contributing something of value to society.

- Those who are not in this class would be persons lacking the capacity to support themselves and even in extreme cases becoming dysfunctional threats to society. Of its **1.2 billion** populace China is predicted to have one fourth or **300 million** people in its middle class by the end of this decade. India will have the same number or more — and they speak English.

Add the very potent middle classes of Russia, Japan and Europe and you will see an overwhelming imbalance against the potential middle class of the United States.

Our total population is only **300 million**. To maintain a position of global competitiveness our entire populace must become “middle class.” Japan and Ireland have achieved this level.

It is not an impossibility but a massive education mobilization must be mounted for the U.S. to catch up. And one great untapped brainpower resource is in the Black community. Black colleges and universities can be the catalysts for saving and developing this diamond mine.

Republican and Democratic bi-partisan support for Black colleges over the last twenty years has paid off and this investment could yield far more profitable results if we expand it. Beyond the funding for the HBCUs, we must obtain funding for the other forty Black colleges as rapidly as possible. In the recently published report, *Rising Above The Gathering Storm: Energizing and Employing America for a Brighter Economic Future*, the National Academy of Sciences, National Academy of Engineering, and the Institute of Medicine, all document the need for this creation of a totally middle class society.

The Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), which has for the last twenty years highlighted education as its number one priority, must adopt a more vocal and visible position advocating the key role that Black colleges can play in reaching this highly desired objective of establishing a society where all members may survive, prosper and make a contribution to the civic good.

Our neglected students in the great inner cities are not the only pool of raw material for this purpose; however, they are a large and vital starting point. Black colleges and universities are the finely tooled machines for bringing these diamonds to the surface. The CBC must guarantee their expanding and permanent support. ■

Celebrating National HBCU Week

Honoring Our History and Celebrating the Future

By Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson



For over 170 years, our Historically Black Colleges and Universities have been on the forefront of preparing our nation's youth for a bright path and successful future.

Originally founded for the purpose of providing educational opportunities for African Americans, HBCUs have profoundly changed the American economic and social climate.

The fact is that until 1964, HBCUs represented one of the only opportunities African American students had to obtain a degree in higher education. HBCU institutions have changed the face of this nation and enabled thousands of African Americans the opportunity and access to achieve a level of higher education and compete in the global economy.

It is a testament to Historically Black Colleges and Universities' success that today over 200,000 diverse students across the United States attend an HBCU.

Because of their unique resources, HBCUs continue to be extremely effective in graduating African American students and preparing them to compete in the global economy.

HBCUs graduate over half of all African American professionals, and fifty percent of all African American school teachers. Additionally, HBCUs remain extremely successful in graduating African American Ph.D.'s and scientists.

The fact is that we cannot move forward as a country until all our children have the opportunity to succeed academically. Each day Historically Black Colleges and Universities help us bridge that achievement gap.

On July 26th, my resolution to recognize National Historically Black Colleges and Universities Week, unanimously passed by the U.S. House of Representatives. Celebrated the week of September 10th, National HBCU Week serves as a time to celebrate the great accomplishments of these institutions and recognize their importance to our nation's history.

The overwhelming passage of this legislation represents a pledge by Congress to uphold the importance of Historically Black Colleges and Universities in our country. We must continue to strive for excellence in education; and through these colleges and universities we have built a strong foundation that stands as a backbone for success. ■

Rep. Cummings Introduces Minority Entrepreneurship Bill

Rep. Elijah E. Cummings, a strong supporter of increasing business opportunities to address economic inequality in this nation, has introduced the *Minority Entrepreneurship and Innovation Pilot Program of 2006, H.R. 5878.*

The legislation would set up a \$24 million, two-year pilot program to promote small business development in colleges and universities that serve African American, Native American and Latino communities. Through \$1 million grants, the institutions would provide students in highly-skilled fields such as engineering, manufacturing and science with the capital they need to start their own businesses. The bill would also allow institutions to set up Small Business Development Centers to provide counseling, capacity building and market niche development.

"A great legacy of this country has been the opportunity for ordinary citizens to improve their livelihoods by starting their own businesses," Rep. Cummings said. "The *Minority Entrepreneurship and Innovation Pilot Program of 2006* would give minority communities a chance build generational wealth through entrepreneurship."

Rep. Benjamin L. Cardin, an original co-sponsor of the bill, added, "Entrepreneurship is the key to the American Dream and this legislation gives communities that have faced barriers the tools they need to pursue that dream—to develop and start successful small businesses."

As of June, 2006, the U.S. Labor Department reported that unemployment rates among African Americans reached a high of 9 percent, nearly double that of the general population. In addition, the U.S. Census

Cont'd. on pg. 18

"A great legacy of this country has been the opportunity for ordinary citizens to improve their livelihoods by starting their own businesses."

Rep. Cummings

Minimum Wage Needs to Help Combat Poverty

By Rep. G. K. Butterfield

When Americans last heard President Bush talk about poverty after the devastation left in the wake of Hurricane Katrina he told us that “poverty has roots in history of racial discrimination, which cut off generations from the opportunity of America.

We have a duty to confront this poverty with bold action.” The words are certainly true, but nothing has been done since to combat this problem.

Today, 37 million Americans are living in poverty, including 13 million children. The number of impoverished Americans has grown by 5.3 million since Bush took office, and it continues to grow.

Some of the people living in poverty are working full time at minimum wage, but these meager salaries simply aren’t enough to pay for the rapidly rising costs of living. Each minuscule but hard-earned paycheck brings impossible decisions to the working poor: Do I pay my rent, or pay for heat, or pay for food, or pay for a pair of shoes from my child’s bare feet?

It is shameful that in America today, the richest and most powerful nation on earth, nearly a fifth of all children go to bed hungry at night because their parents, many of whom are working full time at the minimum wage, still can’t make ends meet.

These Americans work as hard as anyone else — often harder. But minimum wage that many people receive is simply inadequate to cover their bills or support their families. It’s long past time for a fair increase in the minimum wage.

A full-time minimum wage worker earns just \$10,712 per year — which is \$5,888 less than the \$16,600 needed to lift a family of three above the federal poverty threshold. So while the costs of housing, healthcare, education and energy has been rising dramatically over the last nine years, the federal minimum wage has held steady.

It’s estimated that 6.6 million people would benefit from a raise in the minimum wage, including 1.8 million parents with children. Nearly three-quarters of minimum wage workers are adults over the age of 20, and many are responsible for over half of their family’s income.

Some of the people living in poverty are working full time at minimum wage, but these meager salaries simply aren’t enough...

Many states have already grasped the problem and have moved to address this situation. Twenty-three states, including six this year, have already raised minimum wages above the federal level. And, the issue could be on the ballot in six more states this fall.

People in these states, including my own home state of North Carolina, understand that in the four years after the last minimum wage increase, the economy experienced its strongest growth in over three decades. Nearly 11 million new jobs were added, at a rate of more than 200,000 per month.

Increasing the minimum wage alone isn’t going to end the cycle of poverty in this country. Much more needs to be done. But we owe it to the millions of Americans suffering in poverty to make every effort to get a bill passed that will provide them with some assistance in their struggle in this difficult economy.

As elected leaders in Congress, we have a moral obligation to fight for the millions of Americans who are overlooked and suffer each and every day. We must come together immediately to develop comprehensive strategies to eradicate the growing poverty and hunger in the world’s wealthiest nation.

The lack of affordable housing, health care, child care and access to education, economic opportunity and public transportation are just a few of the many other challenges we must address. ■

Rep. Cummings Introduces Minority Entrepreneurship Bill *Cont’d. from pg. 17*

Bureau reports that the poverty rate for African Americans has increased substantially, with the income gap between blacks and whites widening to a ratio of 62 percent. The “wealth gap” separating Native American and Latino communities from white communities is similarly large.

“But the National Urban League, in its *2006 State of Black America Report* indicated that there may be a silver lin-

ing to this cloud,” Rep. Cummings said.

“The prevalence of black-owned businesses has been on the upswing. And minority-owned businesses provide real opportunity for individuals, families and communities. By supporting their growth, we can begin to reverse the increasing ‘wealth gap’ for good.” ■

CBC's Introduction of September as Sickle Cell Awareness Month

By Shawn M. Bediako, Ph.D.

Because people of African descent comprise the majority of individuals with sickle cell, race remains a significant consideration.

Nearly twenty-three years have passed since the Congressional Black Caucus introduced a resolution designating September as National Sickle Cell Awareness Month.

In a perfect world, one would expect that unanimous approval of the resolution might signal the beginning of an era in which increased public knowledge about sickle cell anemia clearly informed the need to marshal resources for providing comprehensive, quality care to those individuals afflicted with the condition and their significant others.

Yet, the state of things concerning sickle cell is not perfect. Although major strides have been made in

reducing sickle cell mortality rates, a need persists for incorporating social science research into health care protocols.

Given that the sickle cell population is growing older, there is a need for more research on psychological and social aspects of coping with the illness. Since 1983, an average of only twelve peer-reviewed articles per year have been published on psychosocial aspects of sickle cell—a scant number when we consider that nearly 2 million Americans have sickle cell trait.

The Sickle Cell Treatment Act of 2003 calls for the establishment of a national coordinating center to monitor up to 40 entities dedicated to the preven-

tion and treatment of sickle cell. This offers another opportunity for the CBC to assume a leadership role in ensuring that psychosocial research plays a substantial part in the research activities of each center.

Because people of African descent comprise the majority of individuals with sickle cell, race remains a significant consideration. Thus, psychosocial issues related to race and racism should be empirically evaluated to help us better understand both the delivery and utilization of health care. Additionally, increased resources should specifically be available for psychosocial research among adults.

Presently, very little is known about the adult experience of sickle cell and

this inhibits a broader understanding of lifespan development issues that may be important for adjusting to the illness. While the search for a sickle cell cure continues, it is imperative to find ways to promote an optimal quality of life for individuals who are currently managing the illness.

This aim can be best achieved by combining biomedical and psychosocial research. The CBC is historically well-positioned to continue its support of citizens with sickle cell anemia by advocating for the inclusion of psychological and sociocultural research perspectives within the 40 anticipated centers that will be funded by the Sickle Cell Treatment Act. ■

Shawn M. Bediako, Ph.D., is assistant professor of psychology at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County and a founding partner of the Nguvu Group, a think tank providing program development and consulting services to organizations seeking to improve minority health.

Rep. Stephanie Tubbs Jones Has Called on U.S. Congress To Pass Minimum Wage Bill

Rep. Stephanie Tubbs Jones has called on the U.S. Congress to pass legislation to increase the minimum wage.

Before the summer recess, the Senate defeated an increase in the minimum wage because it was linked to a permanent repeal of the estate tax.

Rep. Tubbs said, "According to the Economic Policy Institute, 14.9 million workers would benefit from this legislation. Of these workers, 80 percent are adults and 26 percent are parents of children under the age of 18. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities estimates that when adjusted

for the inflation, the value of the minimum wage is at its lowest level since 1955. The minimum wage has been frozen since 1997. The last period the minimum wage had remained stagnant for this long was from 1981 to 1990. Unless Congress acts before the end of the year, the minimum wage will have remained at the same level for the longest point since its establishment.

"It's time for new Congressional leadership that quits playing politics with America's paychecks and carries out the wishes of working families," Rep. Tubbs stated. ■

