

North Carolina
Black Leadership Caucus



The Leader

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Protecting, Promoting, and Pursuing African American Interests Since 1976

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Mr. Benjamin S. Ruffin
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Questions of the Month

- Have you planned to attend the 2007 **Black Summit**?
- How many additional prison beds will be required by **HB 274**? Whose children?
- Is the Senate killing HK on J legislation?
- Will the apology for slavery reduce racial disparities?
- What is the Department of Public Instruction doing to recruit black male teachers?
- Thirty-nine years after total desegregation, are NC black students better off?



Rep. Alma Adams

Leadership Matters: The New Legislative Black Caucus



Rep. Larry Womble

by N. CARNELL ROBINSON

Amid the scandals surrounding former House Speaker Jim Black, the Legislative Black Caucus returned to Raleigh in January for the 2007 legislative session. One of the first priorities was to organize their caucus. **The times emphasized, what everyone now knew, that “leadership matters”.**

Senator Larry Shaw, the late Senator Jeanne Lucas and Representative Alma Adams all campaigned vigorously for the leadership position with letters and appeals for support to other black members. However, during their caucus’ organizational meeting, Senator Shaw withdrew his name and offered his support to Representative Adams.

Representative Alma Adams, a seven term member of the House, with a reputation for effectiveness, tenacity, compassion and advocacy **was elected Chair**. Representatives Larry Womble and Earlene Parmon were elected respectively as 1st and 2nd Vice Chair. Ty Harrell, a newcomer to the House, was elected Secretary, Senator Malcolm Graham will serve as Treasurer and Representative Larry Hall serves as Parliamentarian.

The New Legislative Black Caucus moved quickly to embrace and expand upon the agenda from the HK on J Coalition. They have established clear legislative priorities and are increasing their visibility across the state. Regular caucus meetings have been scheduled for each Wednesday at noon to hear from constituents/advocates and to plan legislative strategies.

The great challenge for the NCLBC will be unity. Historically, members have exhibited more external cohesiveness, voting with the larger democratic caucus. Internal cohesiveness would create opportunities for coalition building and create a powerful swing vote or veto power. Reputational cohesiveness by the twenty black House members or eight black Senators could produce more good for constituents across the state than their individual actions.

Continued on Page 2

Leadership Matters cont'd from page 1

Many issues deserve the attention of the NCLBC during this session. However, quality of life issues like education, economic inclusion, affordable housing, collective bargaining, a living wage, environmental justice, the death penalty and access to health care should be assigned priority status.

Special effort should be given to address the high rate of school suspensions and expulsions. These items tend to feed the school to prison pipeline and result in extremely low graduation rates. **Approximately 50% of black males are currently leaving school without a diploma.** Full funding of Leandro with specific funding for the 19 failing high schools would be a great start.

A statewide disparity study is required to address North Carolina's poor record of economic inclusion. A disparity study should include both contracting and the purchase of goods and services. Records of state spending tend to indicate that supporting black and minority economic development is considered a non or extremely low priority in North Carolina. House Bill 1827 should be revisited/repealed.

Representative Adams and the NCLBC are not expected to address these important issues alone. They must rely on the support of other legislators/elected officials. Traditionally, many white legislators/elected officials who receive their margins of victory from black voters renege on issues important to black, poor and working citizens. Speaker Hackney has helped to expand the influence of certain NCLBC members with key committee appointments. How well these individual members exercise power will determine, to some extent, how successful the NCLBC will emerge from this session. **And, leadership will matter!**

Key appointments in the House include: Rep. Mickey Michaux – Senior Appropriations Chair; Rep. Adams – Appropriations Chair; Rep. Bell – Education Chair; Rep. Parmon - V Chair Commerce, Small Business and Entrepreneurship. In addition, Rep. Wainwright is Speaker Pro Tempore and Rep. Hall serves as Democratic Freshman Chair.

In the Senate key appointments include: Senator Malone - Education Senior Chair; Senator Dannelly – Appropriations/Base Budget Vice Chair; Senator Dorsett – Health Care Vice Chair; Senator Shaw – Transportation Chair. In addition, Senator Charlie S. Dannelly serves as Deputy President Pro Tempore of the Senate.

The NC Legislative Black Caucus

Representative Alma Adams	Chair
Representative Larry Womble	1 st Vice Chair
Representative Earlene Parmon	2 nd Vice Chair
Representative Ty Harrell	Secretary
Senator Malcolm Graham	Treasurer
Representative Larry Hall	Parliamentarian

Members

Senator Charlie S. Dannelly
 Senator Katie G. Dorsett
 Senator Tony Foriest
 Senator Malcolm Graham
 Senator Edward Jones
 Senator Vernon Malone
 Senator Floyd McKissick, Jr.
 Senator Larry Shaw
 Representative Alma S. Adams
 Representative Larry M. Bell
 Representative Daniel T. Blue
 Representative Angela R. Bryant
 Representative Linda D. Coleman
 Representative W. Pete Cunningham
 Representative Beverly M. Earle
 Representative Jean Farmer – Butterfield
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 Representative Henry M. Michaux
 Representative Annie Mobley
 Representative Earline W. Parmon
 Representative Garland E. Pierce
 Representative William L. Wainwright
 Representative Larry Womble
 Representative Thomas Wright

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"OUR FUTURE IS BLEAK"

Courtesy of The Wilmington Journal Editorial Staff

As our continuing series about how to stem the high rate of African-American student dropouts from our public schools continues, and we further focus on the dire need for Black teachers, particularly Black male teachers, it has become very clear to us the NC Department of Public Instruction couldn't give a happy hoot.

A strong charge, no doubt, but backed up by one of the most ignorant, insensitive and thoughtless answers to a question we've ever heard.

Question – What is the state's Dept. of Public Instruction doing to get more Black teachers, and particularly Black male teachers, into the classrooms throughout the state?

Answer – nothing!

Didn't matter who we asked, or how high up the flagpole they were.

Heck, some folks just never bothered to return our phone calls.

But of all of the reactions and nonreactions we received, the one from Linda Fuller, spokesperson for the NCDPI, disturbed us the most.

"The state of North Carolina is only really interested in recruiting teachers overall to the state," Linda Fuller, Communications Officer for the NC Dept. of Public Instruction told *The Wilmington Journal* this week. "We don't target particular groups of teachers. We want just teachers. So when we go and we have our recruitment effort, we target more toward, "Hey come to North Carolina to teach."

When pressed to understand why the state apparently isn't concerned that we had more Black male students drop out of high school last year than we had Black male teachers in the entire state, Fuller couldn't see it.

"If we have 10,000 to 12,000 [teacher] vacancies a year, why would we go out and just recruit certain groups of teachers? Why wouldn't we want to recruit all teachers?"

Your tax dollars at work.

By the state's own admission, students drop out because they've disconnected from their schools, and the instructors in it. Is it that hard to make, as part of the state's effort to hire at least 12,000 more qualified teachers for the classroom, a special effort to recruit the

kinds of teachers who can relate to Black males and females, and encourage them to continue their studies, and improve their futures.

Sen. Larry Shaw is correct. If the spokesperson for the NC Dept. of Public Instruction is indeed echoing the philosophy and view of the state Board of Education and the state superintendent, then the African-American community in North Carolina is in serious trouble.

Where will the Black teachers of tomorrow be coming from?

It's a question we have to find the answers to, and quickly.

If young Black students in primary and secondary schools are having such negative experiences, so much so, that the last thing they want to do is teach, then that means the teacher education programs at many of our finest historically Black colleges and universities will remain anything but filled to capacity.

When school systems recruit at these colleges and universities, instead of having to pull out date books to squeeze in a plethora of interviews over the next few weeks, they whip through the available candidates before lunch.

That means if the educational experience of our children is corrupted in the early years, then we're guaranteed a severe shortage of Black teachers in the later years.

So what do we do?

Well, one thing we can't do, and that's count on the public schools to lift one finger to help produce the talented, dedicated Black teachers of tomorrow.

In fact, we can't even count on our Black elected school board members to stand on principle concerning issues of pivotal importance to their Black constituency. When those Black officials vote to support seeking funding for magnet school plans that ultimately support the resegregation of the New Hanover County Schools, we wonder where their principles are.

If Jesse Helms could be an army of one with his votes, so can our school board members.

What we must do to ensure that there are more Black teachers in our community's future is to start early identifying young people who exhibit the promise of being talented and nurturing educators.

Our Future Is Bleak cont'd from page 3

Since the public schools won't do it, then let's get our churches and civic organizations to join in partnership to sponsor programs that encourage teaching careers for our youth.

Charter schools and church-based private schools with retired educators can also get involved, showing our young people the positive of teaching.

Those schools can also give our young people the positive side of education and teaching, something we know from years of experience they simply don't get from public schools.

In short, as a community, we now have to join hands and become proactive about the education of our children.

Leaving the lion's share of the work to someone else has proven disastrous. If we want more qualified Black teachers in the classroom for our children of the future, then we have to get to work in producing them today.

That's why we are focusing on this urgent need week after week. Education is that important to our community.

That means it has to be important to you.

Kindergarten Enrollment May Be Delayed

by Sheria Reid

If North Carolina state legislators have their way, more than 15,000 children who turn five between September 1 and October 16 in 2009 will not be eligible to enroll in the state kindergarten program. House Bill 150 (H150) and an identical Senate Bill 751 (S751), propose to change the cut off date for initial school enrollment in kindergarten from October 16 to August 31, effective fiscal year 2009-2010.

Under the current law, as long as a child will be five by October 16, that child may enter kindergarten in August of the school year in which the child turned five. A child whose fifth birthday is as late as October 16 may enroll in a state funded program when school begins in August prior to the child reaching age five in October. The proposed bills, both entitled *Every Child Ready to Learn*, would not allow a child to enroll in August of that school year if he or she will not be five by August 31. If this legislation passes, a child who turns five after August 31, 2009 will have to wait until the school year beginning

in August 2010 to enroll in a state funded kindergarten program. The fiscal note accompanying H150 estimates that the change would result in 15,360 fewer children statewide beginning kindergarten in August 2009.

Based on the long title of H150 and S751, *AN ACT FOR MODIFYING THE SCHOOL ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS TO ENSURE THAT EVERY CHILD IS READY TO ENTER KINDERGARTEN AND THEREBY REDUCE STUDENT DROPOUT RATES IN LATER GRADES*, both bills are being presented as having the potential to address some of the troubles that currently beset public education in North Carolina--an unacceptable dropout rate and school readiness.

However, there is insufficient evidence to conclusively support that delaying initial enrollment in school will decrease the dropout rate in the future. However, there is research that suggests that low income children are disadvantaged by lack of a quality pre-school experience and that the disadvantage magnifies as they age, leading to higher dropout rates. A student that is older than his or her peers in that grade level is more likely to become a dropout statistic. **The student who is six when beginning K or turns six within the first two months of beginning K, will reach the current legal dropout age of 16 nearly a full year before his or her peers.**

The other stated purpose of these bills is to make certain children are ready to learn when they begin school. Unfortunately, there is no solid scientifically based research that conclusively supports the notion that a six year old is automatically more ready to learn than the same child was one year earlier without some intervening experiences designed to prepare the child to be ready to learn. **In other words, just hanging around the house another year does not correlate with improved academic readiness for children who are already at-risk of academic failure.**

A 2006 study on the impact of delaying initial entry into school, concludes that positive gains in achievement shown in students who are older when they begin school are more likely connected to their experiences prior to beginning school than any effect from delaying kindergarten for a year. In other words, middle and higher income children who have educational experiences prior to entering kindergarten benefit from the delay but no such benefit is seen for lower income children. (<http://www.ilir.uiuc.edu/lubotsky/Elder%20Lubotsky%20June%202006.pdf>)

Continued on page 5

Kindergarten cont'd from page 4

This change will most seriously impact children from lower income and working class families who are unable to afford private day care or pre-school, depriving them of any significant formal educational experience for as much as an additional school year. Under current law, the mandatory school age is seven; parents already have the option to choose not to send their child to kindergarten when he/she turns five. Some parents choose not to do so based on their beliefs as to the physical and emotional maturity of their child. The proposed change will only force parents who do not have options for providing a solid pre-school experience for their children to delay access to education for their children.

In addition, it is essential to weigh the economic costs to families of the proposed change on low-income and working class parents. They will have an extra year of child care expenses while waiting for their child to reach school age.

According to the fiscal note attached to H150, the proposed bills will have an economic benefit to state and local government. Assuming all factors remain constant regarding average daily membership, the fiscal note anticipates reduced state General Fund expenditures and reduced county government expenditures in public school spending for a period of twelve years beginning with implementation of the bill in 2009-10 fiscal year.

<http://www.ncleg.net/Sessions/2007/FiscalNotes/House/PDF/HFN0150v1.pdf>

An additional bill, House Bill 130, proposes an earlier cut off date of June 16 and would be effective for the 2008-09 school year. There currently is no Senate equivalent for this bill.

Before you drop out of high school...

Take a look at what it does to your earning power.

Level of Education	Yearly Income*
Not a high school graduate	\$10,838
High school graduate	\$18,571
Some college, no degree	\$20,997
Associate's degree	\$26,535
Bachelor's degree	\$35,594
Master's degree	\$47,121
Professional degree	\$66,968
Doctorate	\$62,275

Now take a look at one month's basic living expenses.**

Rent	\$575
Food	325
Utilities	175
Car	215
Car insurance	65
Total	\$1,355

That's **\$16,260** a year. You still haven't bought gas. And don't even think about the movies, music, new threads, having fun with your friends. Because you can't afford it. **Do the math. Stay in school.**

*Source: US Census Bureau, March 2003. **Source: Estimated from current Triangle market Conditions North Carolina Black Leadership Caucus Reproduction