

San Antonio Branch NAACP Newsletter



Volume 1 Number 3



November 2011

NAACP Victory

The Texas Department of Motor Vehicles gave a stunning blow to the Sons of the Confederate when the board voted 8-0 to deny the symbol of the Confederate Flag to be affixed to Texas license plates. A group of civil rights advocates led by the State Conference of NAACP Units appeared at a hearing in Austin, Texas on November 10, 2011 to voice concerns that the flag represented oppression, discrimination and racism by hate groups in this country and would cause tension and fear of acts of violence and discrimination against African Americans.

The Sons of the Confederate sought to use the Buffalo Soldiers' proposal for specialty license plates as an issue for acceptance of their proposal by indicating the campaigns of the Buffalo Soldiers against the American Indians were commensurate with the Civil War fought by the Confederacy. The NAACP refuted this idea in that the Buffalo Soldiers fought under the banner of the United States while the Confederates fought against the United States.

This victory could be short-lived since the Sons of the Confederate Soldiers have filed lawsuits to retain the presence of the flag on other States' specialty license plates and on State Buildings. The State Conference of NAACP Units however, has been successful in having all symbols of the Confederacy removed from State property at the Capitol in Austin, Texas.

Redistricting Hearings

A three Federal Judge panel heard arguments covering the Redistricting lines drawn and passed by the Texas 82nd Legislative Session this summer from plaintiffs representing the State Conference of NAACP Units, MALDEF, LULAC and other civil rights organizations. The two weeks of hearings held at the Federal Building called on Congressional witnesses, some who were represented by the State NAACP Legal Team. These witnesses included Congresspersons Sheila Jackson Lee, Houston, Texas; Al Green, Houston, Texas; and Eddie Bernice Johnson, Dallas, Texas. The local President of the NAACP, Oliver Hill, was also called upon to give a deposition on the diluted effect a fifth Congressional District would have on the African American vote in Bexar County.

Several members of the San Antonio Branch covered the entire hearing proceedings. These members were Horace Brown, Jr., Ann Johnson Brown, Minnie Hill and Nettie Hinton. In addition, William Johnson, Sr. attended the first session. The arguments for the all-day sessions by the Plaintiffs were to show that the State-drawn maps were politically motivated. Even though four new districts were gained in Texas as a result of the increase in population, the Legislative body drew lines that either fractured, packed, or cracked communities that prevented minorities from being able to elect a representative of choice.

(See Redistricting on page 3)

Notice of Required ID for Future Elections

*Prescribed by Secretary of State
Section 63.0012, Texas Election Code
8/11*

New Forms of Identification: Upon U.S. Department approval of a photo identification law passed by the Texas Legislature in 2011, effective 2012, a voter will be required to show one of the following forms of photo identification at the polling location before the voter will be permitted to cast a vote.

- Texas Driver's License issued by the Department of Public Safety (DPS)
- Texas Election Identification Certificate issued by DPS
- Texas Personal Identification Card issued by DPS
- Texas Concealed Handgun License issued by DPS
- U.S. Military Identification Card containing the person's photograph
- U.S. Citizenship Certificate containing the person's photograph
- U.S. Passport

With the exception of the U.S. citizenship certificate, the identification must be current or have expired no more than 60 days before being presented for voter qualification at the polling place.

If you do not have a valid form of photo identification, you may apply for a free election identification card at your local Texas Department of Public Safety office.

Exemption: Voters with a disability may apply with the county voter registrar for a permanent exemption. The application must contain written documentation from either the U.S. Social Security Administration evidencing the applicant's disability, or from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs evidencing a disability rating of at least 50 percent. In addition, the applicant must state that he or she has no valid form of photo identification. Those who obtain a disability exemption will be allowed to vote by presenting a voter registration certificate reflecting the exception.

Provisional Voting: If voters do not present one of the forms of photo identification listed above and do not have a permanent disability exemption indicated on their voter registration certificates, voters may cast a provisional ballot at the polls and will have six (6) calendar days after election day to present a valid form of photo identification in the presence of the county voter registrar. Voters who have a consistent religious objection to being photographed and voters who do not have any photo identification as a result of certain natural disasters as declared by the President of the United States of the Texas Governor, may vote a provisional ballot, and if they appear at the voter registrar's office within six (6) calendar days after election day and sign an affidavit swearing to the religious objection or natural disaster, then their ballot will be counted.

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From the President's Pen

The first year of this administration is fast coming to an end and I am grateful for the gains that have been made, yet somewhat disappointed that more could not have been accomplished. I am grateful to the hard and difficult work that our volunteers have made thus far, those who are committee chairs and their committee members, and those who volunteer weekly to perform administrative duties in the office to help move this organization forward.

Although there are times that dark clouds appear to be hovering over our attempts to change the dynamics of this community, I continue to receive encouragement from the most uncommon places resulting in renewed and reenergized efforts to continue the works of this organization.

Our goal for next year is to continue the Fire Fighters Examination Training, continue advocating for the Walking Trail at the Davis-Scott YMCA, hold quarterly meetings with the San Antonio Police Department, make further attempts on ban-the-box initiative to help ex-offenders seeking employment, and a very strong effort for voter empowerment which includes voter registration and voter education.

These are just a few of the initiatives we believe will be successful during 2012 and we can be more successful, when, not if, a few more members volunteer to give a few hours of their time each month in committee work to help these initiatives. We look forward to hearing from you.

As I close, I want to wish each of you and your family members a Merry Christmas and a very prosperous New Year. I pray an abundance of good health and peace for each of you in the New Year.

Sincerely,

Oliver

San Antonio Branch NAACP
Annual Meeting
Thursday, December 8, 2011
7:00 p.m.
Barbara Jordan Community Center
2803 E. Commerce Street

Highlights 102nd Annual Convention

More than 2,000 delegates, Alternates and observers attended the National Convention of the NAACP held in Los Angeles, California July 23 through July 28, 2011. The convention was highly motivational by the enthusiasm captivated by the speakers and the workshops that were presented. The theme "Affirming America's Promise" was permeated throughout the convention sessions, reminding the delegates that the promise has **not** been fulfilled even though many gains in civil rights have been made. Racism, prejudices, bigotry and inequality continues to plague this country because of race, gender, and age inequality and unfairness.

During the Region VI Caucus, in which Texas is a part, members of the San Antonio Branch were elected to several posts. Mr. Horace Brown, Jr. was elected to the Resolutions Committee, Mrs. Marvinette Smith was elected to the Rules Committee and Mrs. Dorothy Collins was elected as a Sergeant-at Arms member. Additionally, the President of the Texas State Conference of Branches, Attorney Gary Bledsoe, was Region VI's nominee for the National Board of Directors.

A special Plenary Session was held in which it was a "wake-up" call to remind NAACP members of the climate in these United States relative to equal rights, civil rights, and an apparent effort to "turn the clock back." It was implied the Supreme Court opened the door on an assault on voter enfranchisement, trying to ensure political dominance because of the ruling to allow unlimited contributions by corporations. Throughout the discussion, the consensus of the panelists was that the 42 cases of Voter ID Laws that crept up after the 2010 elections were not coincidental. Several ideas were presented that are to be enacted at the Branch and Unit levels.

Throughout the convention, emphases were placed on Voter apathy, economic, education and health conditions that are impacting African Americans disproportionately. There was a cry to all members of the organization to become fully engaged in these areas to further meet the goals of the organization of assuring equality for all persons.

The Freedom Fund-Thalheimer-Spingarn Awards Dinner closed the 102nd Annual Convention. The Thalheimer Awards recognized Branches throughout the country that exemplified outstanding achievements in the areas of civil rights and equality/fairness. The 96th Spingarn Medal was presented to Mrs. Frankie Muse Freeman in recognizing her public service, which included being the first woman Commissioner of the United States Commission on Civil Rights, serving for 16 years under four successive U.S. Presidents, and for her vital role in the landmark case *Davis et al v the St. Louis Housing Authority*, which ended legal racial discrimination in Public Housing.

The 102nd Annual Convention closed sine die.

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(Redistricting from page 1 continued)

The Plaintiffs, upwards in numbers twenty between Attorneys and Interveners, continued to present strong evidence that the increase of four Congressional Districts did not increase a minority District or attempt to have a district where minorities could form a coalition to select a candidate of choice. The maps did, however, packed minorities in districts where a division could occur rather than the development of coalitions.

The last information that has been received was the interim maps drawn by the three-panel Judges that changed the State Legislative Districts to be friendlier to minorities and a further ruling was recently received that removed the controversial Congressional District 35 from Bexar County.

ACT-SO Winner

The San Antonio Branch delegates cheered loudly and proudly at the 102nd Annual Convention of the NAACP when it was announced that one of our ACT-SO participants won a Silver Medal in the ACT-SO competition. She is Jacqueline Jamir Thompson, a senior honor student at Keystone School and was the recipient of the highest medal offered in the category of Chemistry/Bio-Chemistry.

Jacqueline plans to enter MIT or Stanford, majoring in biochemical or biomedical engineering and then attend medical school. In addition to the ACT-SO Silver medal, Jacqueline was also named a Semi-Finalist at the 2011-2012 Siemens Foundation Competition in Math, Science and Technology, the only student recognized in San Antonio.

The Branch is extremely proud of Jacqueline and believes she will continue to excel in all that she does in the future.

The Selective Service System

The Selective Service System is an independent agency within the Executive Branch of the Federal Government, which is to provide the numbers of men needed by the Armed Forces, within the time required, should Congress and the President of the United States decide to return to a draft. Registration with Selective Service does not mean a registrant is joining the military.

With few exceptions, all male United States citizens and male aliens residing in the United States and its territories must register within 30 days of their 18th birthday.

Federal and many state laws require registration-age men to be registered with Selective Service to remain eligible for applying for the following benefits: student financial aid, government

employment, employment with the U.S. Postal Service, job training, and U.S. citizenship for male immigrants.

For further information, go to www.sss.gov or call 847-688-6888.

NAACP Partners with IDRA

The Texas State Conference of NAACP Branches has formed a partnership with the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) for fair funding of the school systems in Texas. Members of the Education Committee of the San Antonio Branch NAACP met with IDRA, along with the State Representatives, in strategies sessions intended to bring attention to the losses of each school district in Texas.

Bexar County was denied more than \$235 million as a result of the budget cuts during the 82nd Legislative Session. Listed below are the losses School Districts in Bexar County will experience during this biennium:

Alamo Heights	\$5,237,844
East Central	5,551,702
Edgewood	5,803,046
Ft. Sam Houston	N/A
Harlendale	7,086,063
Judson	14,637,122
Lackland	N/A
Northeast	70,406,922
North side	86,333,186
Randolph Field	N/A
San Antonio	23,126,192
Somerset	1,951,475
Southside	2,563,135
Southwest	9,901,701
South San Antonio	4,496,700

The IDRA partners encourage all persons to become involved and contact your State Legislators to ensure fair funding of all public schools.

Walkable Community Project

The Economic Development Committee, chaired by Mr. Bill Burman, has partnered with the Davis-Scott YMCA and the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to provide better and more adequate infrastructure in the eastern quadrant of the city to facilitate traveling modes for its citizenry. This initiative is to identify issues that prohibit walking, bicycling and using transit by improving sidewalks and streets for easy access by pedestrians, cyclists, and wheelchairs.

(See Walkable on page 4)

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Several neighborhood associations attended planning sessions, the results of which will be used by the MPO to further engage other partners, such as the Alamo Area Council of Governments (AACOG), Bexar County, City of San Antonio (COSA), Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT) and VIA Metropolitan Transit to bring this initiative into fruition.

75th Annual State Convention

The State Convention began with a “Red Carpet” reception held at the Fort Worth YWCA premiering a play entitled “Two Months.” The play was commissioned by the Health Committee of the Texas State Conference of NAACP Units to bring the HIV/AIDs epidemic to the attention of African Americans, who have exceeded all other races in America as having contracted the deadly disease. The actors were local talent.

The first Plenary Session, called to order by the State President, Attorney Gary Bledsoe elected persons to serve on committees. Mr. Horace Brown, Jr. and Mrs. Minnie Hill served on the Resolutions Committee and Mrs. Ann Johnson Brown served on the Credentials Committee. Other elections that took place were for positions of Election Supervisory Committee and Time and Place Committee.

The Chairperson of the Election Supervisory Committee reported no additional names were nominated for State offices and moved that the secretary cast one ballot to elect all persons on the ballot. The officers for the 2012-2013 years are:

Gary Bledsoe	President
Bob Lydia	1 st Vice President
Aubry Hooper	2 nd Vice President
Secretary	Linda Lydia
Lawrence Myer	Assistant Secretary
Terry Mills	Treasurer
Brian Rowland	Assistant Treasurer

The theme for workshops strongly emphasized the necessity for African Americans to become more engaged in the political process to ensure the elected candidates of choice have the interest of African Americans at heart. The constant reminders of the National Theme “Affirming America’s Promise” with the addition of the State’s message “Holding Texas Accountable,” led to energized discussions towards meeting the challenges facing the nation.

Congratulations to our Awards Winners

Mrs. Regina Horne-Espree was recognized as the Outstanding Youth Council Advisor of the Year. Her exemplary commitment and dedication to the Youth Council was noted in the presentation of the

award. Congratulations to Mrs. Horne-Espree for her outstanding leadership to the young people and her extraordinary gifts in instilling in them interests in civic activities, social justice, voter empowerment and health issues. The Branch can truly pass the mantle to this generation of young people with the training they are receiving in the Youth Council.

Mr. Horace Brown was awarded the Trailblazer Award for his dedication and commitment in NAACP work at the Branch, State and National level. His commitment to the organization is unwavering.

The San Antonio Branch NAACP is honored to have these persons as part of the team that promotes equality and justice for all.

In Memoriam

Mrs. Kathy Clay-Little

Freedom Fund Dinner and Awards Ceremony

A sell-out crowd of members and friends of the San Antonio Branch NAACP embarked upon The Villita Assembly Building on October 28, 2011 in support of the organization’s only fund raiser that sustains the Branch from year-to-year. The Dinner and Awards Ceremony recognized Journalists Eugene Coleman, Jesse Henry, Carey Clack and Kathy Clay-Little (Posthumously), William “Bill” Sinkin, Civil Rights advocate and St. Philip’s College with the Excellence in Education award. Dr. Adena Loston, President of the College accepted the award on behalf of the school. Scholarships were also given in honor of Mr. Coleman to three deserving students who will be attending St. Philip’s College – Robert Tre’ Young, Al Gibrán Gulley and Dominique Walker.

The speaker for the occasion was Dr. John E. Arradondo, a member of the National Board of the NAACP, a medical doctor and a Diamond Life Member. General Edward A. Rice, Jr., Commander of Air Education and Training Command, Randolph Air Force Base, spoke of the Military “as another choice.”

As customary during the Freedom Fund Dinner, new Life Memberships are acknowledged during the program. A Gold Life Membership Plaque was presented to Mr. Johnnie Lee Roy Thompson and Silver Life Membership Plaques were presented to Dr. Gregory Hudspeth and Mr. Travis Wiltshire. Recognized for having reached this milestone in Silver Life memberships were Mrs. Lanita Wiltshire, Ms. Verlene More, Mr. Donald Hunt and Ms. Mary Jo Cobbs.

Office Closed

Due to the Holiday Season, the office will be closed
Friday, December 23, 2011
Monday, December 26, 2011
Friday, December 30, 2011
Monday, January 2, 2012