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Problems on Wall Street Directly Affect African-Americans and Small Business Owners



Drew Daniels
Data News Weekly Contributor

For economic analysts, the future of Wall Street is optimistic. But for others, the future might not seem so bright.

Wall Street, as contrasted to the term Main Street, refers to big business interests against those of small business and the working of the middle class. The events happening on Wall Street not only affects large businesses, but communities all over the United States.

"Wall Street plays an important and necessary role in growing our economy, which can benefit everyone, including African Americans," said John Kimble, the author of "Insuring Inequality: The Role of the Federal Housing Administration in the Urban Ghettoization of African Americans."

As the stock market prices continue to plunge to an all time low, the state of Wall Street has a powerful effect on African Americans. New Orleans city officials, residents and small business owners expressed concerns about the plummeting market.

Kimble, a former New Orleans native, said Wall

Street fueled a dysfunctional industry that disproportionately steered African American borrowers into subprime loans with high interest rates and fees, even when those borrowers qualified for prime loans.

"Record job losses, stock market plummets, and a lack of access to capital and insurance as well as coupled with the rising inflation and costs of goods and services, all demonstrate the crisis that we face," said Rep. William Jefferson regarding the crisis.

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Wall Street has faced its own share of ups and downs in recent months, but homeowners are also left to deal with the repercussions of poor financial decision making by powerful financial institutions.



The subprime lending crisis has forced many homeowners into foreclosure after adjustable interest rates made their monthly mortgage payments soar to unbearable amounts.



Financial woes and the loom of a recession have many small business owners worried and stressed.

“It has a very severe impact on small businesses because some are in need of more working capital loans.”

—Ronald Cojoe,
CFO of Cojoe’s
Tax and Financial
Services, LLC”

Stocks around the world have continued to drop. The Dow Jones Industrial Average closed below 9,000 points last week for the first time since 2003. U.S. stocks are down more than 35 percent from their record highs of one year ago.

“The greed of many leaders on Wall Street has led to the worst financial crisis we have seen since the Great Depression,” Jefferson said.

Business owners are smart and resilient and are doing the best they can with what they have, said Jefferson. However, just to stay afloat, they are making really difficult decisions and are being forced to cut salaries, jobs and benefits just to stay afloat.

“Additionally, Wall Street has made itself intertwined with Main Street that we all collectively suffer from their wrongdoings. Now our children and grandchildren

will have to deal with this deeper debt that we were driven into by the actions of some very greedy individuals,” Jefferson said.

Even with the Bailout plan being approved on Oct. 3 by President Bush, some officials were hesitant to support to the plan. The Bush administration’s \$700 billion emergency bail-out for the banking industry will allow the US treasury to clean up banks’ balance sheets by purchasing distressed mortgage-backed securities.

Last Friday, stock prices began to spiral downward in the United States, Europe and Asia, even as President Bush tried to reassure Americans and the world the U.S.

and other governments were aggressively tackling the notion of a recession.

“I would have wanted a bill that did more to help individuals who were facing foreclosure and not just the banks,” said Jefferson. “It bailed out the banking institutions and its leaders but did not do anything to directly help working families, which it could have.”

For Ronald Cojoe, CFO of Cojoe’s Tax and Financial Services, LLC., Wall Street is hitting African Americans even harder right now and he looks forward to the economic plan to stimulate the economy.

“I hope the money appropriated by officials will start to trickle down so the credit crunch will be relieved,” Cojoe said. “It has a very severe impact on small businesses because some are in need of more working capital loans.”

Tightened lending requirements imposed by major banks are putting added

pressures on small businesses already coping with a slowdown in consumer spending since the housing slump took hold some months ago.

Cojoe said he notices a trend in the amount consumers are actually spending. More and more families are finding ways to cut expenses.

Most African Americans own small businesses, said Cojoe. “This has a more adverse affect on us because we own our own business,” he added.

Trial Begins in High Profile Money Laundering Case Just Days After Former Sen. Derrick Shepherd's Guilty Plea

Shaniece B. Bickham, Ph.D.

Jury selection began Tuesday, Oct. 14, in spite of defendant Gwendolyn Moyo's motion to delay the start of her trial. The end result? A jury of six men and six women along with four alternates were selected to hear testimony and review evidence concerning several counts of fraud, conspiracy and money laundering. Moyo, who is representing herself in the case, is accused of gaining \$2 million in illegal earnings from bond sales.

The case took an interesting

turn last Friday, Oct. 10, when Moyo's co-defendant, former Sen. Derrick Shepherd entered a guilty plea to one count of conspiracy to commit money laundering. He will be sentenced in January.

On the same day, Shepherd tendered his resignation to the Louisiana State Senate, forfeiting his 3rd District seat. Although Shepherd entered a plea, he was not on the prosecutor or defendant's witness list. In a statement outside of the courtroom, Shepherd expressed that he lost his legal, professional, and military careers as a result of his role in the case. Shepherd



Former Sen. Derrick Shepherd.

admitted to helping Moyo bilk \$141,000 in illegal revenue from phony construction bonds.

"I did wrong, and I hope I have a chance to make it right," said Shepherd.

According to U.S. Attorney Jim Letten, the remaining counts of mail fraud and mail fraud conspiracy were dismissed against Shepherd as part of his plea agreement. Letten also said during his press conference that Shepherd's plea addressed Shepherd's misconduct sufficiently because the conspiracy to commit money laundering was predicated on mail fraud.

"That offense carries a maximum possible statutory penalty of up to 20 years in prison, although, as you know, the sentencing guidelines will be considered by the judge at the appropriate time when sentencing occurs," said Letten.

Shepherd, 39, is the first African-American to have represented Jefferson Parish in the State Senate. Prior to his tenure as state senator, Shepherd served as a state representative. As recent as 2006, Shepherd finished third in a race for U.S. Congress for the 2nd Congressional District.

Groundbreaking for New High School in Gentilly Signals Continued Revitalization

New Orleans, LA – Marking another milestone in the revitalization of the public schools in New Orleans, school officials, local leaders and Gentilly residents held a groundbreaking ceremony for a new, technology-focused high school at the former site of Lake Area Middle School at 6026 Paris Ave. last week.

This event was the third groundbreaking in the Quick Start initiative launched in the summer of 2007 to put five schools, one in each New Orleans City Council District on the fast track for construction in advance of the final school facilities Master Plan. The draft of the Master Plan, described as a blueprint to guide future public school renovation and construction in New Orleans,

was released in August 2008. The public comment period continues through 5 p.m. on Friday, Oct. 17.

The Quick Start schools are Langston Hughes Elementary, 3519 Trafalgar Street, Andrew H. Wilson Elementary School, 3617 General Pershing Street; L.B. Landry High School, 1912 L.B. Landry Avenue, and Fannie C. Williams Elementary School, 11755 Dwyer Boulevard. Work is underway at the Hughes and Wilson sites.

At the event were Recovery School District Superintendent Paul Vallas; Orleans Parish School Superintendent Darryl Kilbert; New Orleans City Councilwoman Cynthia Hedge Morrell; Director of FEMA's Louisiana Transitional Office, Jim Stark; and the U.S.

Deputy Superintendent of Education's regional representative, Tracy Young.

Individual citizens and community organizations played a crucial role in the Quick Start selection process by submitting proposals for new schools which were evaluated by Superintendent Pastorek, his own team and RSD staff. Among the successful proposals was one submitted by the Gentilly Civic Improvement Association (GCIA), an organization that represents 20 neighborhood associations in Gentilly.

"My neighbors and I knew that we had to do something to help rebuild our devastated neighborhood after Katrina," said Karran Harper Royal, chairperson of GCIA's education committee. "When we

to welcoming new families into Gentilly with the knowledge that there is a high quality, open admissions high school within walking distance or a short bike ride from their home."

RSD Superintendent Paul Vallas said the new high school is an exciting project that emerged from the community. "Using the New Tech Foundation model, which offers an innovative approach to education using technology as a tool, and with the exciting possibility of partnering with one or more technology giants, this truly will be a high school of the future," Superintendent Vallas said.

Designed for about 800 students, the three-story, 165,000-square-foot high school at the Lake Area site will have several innovative features. They include a flexible floor plan with retractable walls in several classrooms to allow for team teaching, electrical and cooling systems that can accommodate a one-to-one computer ratio, and an outdoor classroom. It also will have energy-saving features like a system to collect rainwater that will be run through a filtration system, then to chillers to keep the school cool. As with all of the city's new public school construction, the new school will be built with the goal of reducing energy consumption by 30 percent.

She added, "I look forward

education Paul Pastorek has pointed out, this and other Quick Start projects could only be undertaken with FEMA's providing the majority of the funding. The funding formulas were complex, and after several discussions, FEMA agreed on a process through which it would be able to provide the majority of the funding for Quick Start schools as well as make that funding available to the RSD immediately to allow the construction and renovations to move forward quickly.

Jim Stark, FEMA's director of the Louisiana Transitional Office, said: "The Recovery School District and the Orleans Parish School Board have made great strides in advancing New Orleans' education system. They have tackled the crucial task of rebuilding the New Orleans Public School System head-on with the Quick Start program, and FEMA is proud to help fund this initiative."

Major Gen. Doug O'Dell, federal coordinator for Gulf Coast Rebuilding, said: "I'd like to congratulate State School Superintendent Paul Pastorek, Recovery School District Superintendent Paul Vallas, and all those involved in this significant achievement and wish them well as they continue the push to improve New Orleans public schools."

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Data News Weekly Editor-in-Chief Edwin Buggage, Data News Weekly Publisher Terry Jones, Ray's Over the River Owner Lee Bates, Kurte Pellerin owner of Le Roux.

Early Voting for Nov. 4 Elections Begins Oct. 21

Registered voters who need to cast their ballots early for the Nov. 4 elections can do so Oct. 21 through Oct. 28.

When going to polls, voters should remember the following:

- Bring driver's license or other photo identification
- If voters do not have a photo ID and only bring documents that include name and address (utility bill, payroll check, etc.), they will have to sign an affidavit provided by the Louisiana Elections Division before they can vote.
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Department of Social Services Sets Record in Child Support Collections During 2008

BATON ROUGE – The Louisiana Department of Social Services set a new record by collecting more than \$346 million in child support payments during the Federal Fiscal Year that ended Sept. 30.

The \$346,144,924 collected by the Support Enforcement Services (SES) division in the DSS Office of Family Support represents a 7 percent increase from the \$323

million collected in FFY 2007.

A significant portion of the increase can be attributed to the \$14,319,242 collected from Economic Stimulus Payments, thanks to an agreement with the federal government. Yet even without those dollars, SES still increased collections by nearly \$9 million. DSS Interim Secretary Kristy Nichols pointed to the coopera-

tion of employers as another factor in boosting collections.

“Louisiana’s non-custodial parents owe approximately \$1 billion in back child support,” Nichols said. “We appreciate the assistance of local business owners and our federal partners in getting non-custodial parents to pay their obligations.”

Nichols said SES provides an

extremely important public service by helping ensure that parents assume responsibility for their children’s basic needs. During FFY 2008, SES collected on 134,406 court-ordered child support cases under its jurisdiction. Of the collected cases, 104,662 were for arrearages, or back child support.

“Collection of child-support

payments helps keep Louisiana families off the public assistance rolls, which in turn impacts a broad range of social services,” Nichols said. “I commend SES’ staff for their dedicated work on behalf of our state, our children and our families.”

St. Claude Avenue To Play Host To Thousands Of Art Lovers In November

The emergence of St. Claude Avenue as an “Art”ery, pulsing with the energy of an ever-expanding array of both visual and performing arts venues and events in the surrounding neighborhoods, will be particularly apparent this November when a coalition of organizations coordinates a month-long celebration of artistic endeavor.

In a first for the city, the Prospect.1 Biennial will showcase both the work of local artists and that of over 80 artists from across the US and abroad. As part of that exhibition, a major exhibit will be staged at The New Orleans Healing Center, now being developed in the former Universal Furniture Center on St. Claude Avenue. That building is currently undergoing rehabilitation, during which its historic façade from 1923 will be uncovered and restored. The center will ultimately include facilities for yoga, various practitioners of the healing arts along with a “street university”-offering offering array of non-traditional learning opportunities.

Another historic building on St. Claude will also be boldly re-

purposed. In a pilot program, the Creative Alliance of New Orleans (CANO), an organization of creative professionals in the New Orleans metropolitan area, is transforming the Colton School into a venue offering studio, exhibition, and performance space for artists, performers and designers. There will be an opening celebration on November 1st, on All Saints Day. Applications for space at the Studio at Colton School are available at www.cano-la.org.

Another premier event will be the New Orleans Fringe Theater Festival, from Nov. 13 through Nov. 16, that will bring more than 120 performances to venues throughout Faubourg Marigny and the Bywater. Over 35 performing groups from New Orleans and around the country will be presenting drama, dance, comedy, performance art, aerial acts, musical theater, puppetry, spoken word and other creative works. Several venues will be on St. Claude proper. More information about performances and ticket sales is available at www.nofringe.org

One of those venues, designed

specifically for children, will be sponsored by the St. Claude Main Street Program, and will be located just behind the St. Roch Market, currently under redevelopment. On the sidewalks nearby, the Main Street program will also be holding its second annual “Chalk It Up to St. Claude” sidewalk chalk art contest. Last year’s competition yielded a remarkable array of ephemeral art that included work from a number of members of the YaYa arts organization.

On Saturday, Nov. 15, the Goodchildren Social Aid & Pleasure Club will kick off the day’s festivities with a Fringe Parade down St. Claude, from Poland Ave. all the way to Marigny St. This eclectic and creative parade will include various groups from the St. Claude neighborhoods, and will highlight performers from the Festival, such as circus, clown and aerial artists. The extremely popular Opposite Machine adds even more excitement to the parade. The parade is free and open to the public.

More Than 100,000 La. Residents Have Not Claimed Economic Stimulus Payments

Oct. 15 Deadline to File to Receive \$31.9 Million This Year

BATON ROUGE - Louisiana residents have until October 15 to file their federal tax returns in order to receive their economic stimulus payments this year from the federal government.

“This money could go a long way to help out with the increasing costs of everyday expenses,” said State Treasurer John Kennedy. “Louisiana families who haven’t received their economic stimulus payments could also use these funds to help with their continued recovery from the recent hurricanes.”

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities reports that an estimated 106,000 Louisiana residents have yet to claim \$31.9 million in economic stimulus payments. According to the IRS, around 5.6 million Americans nationwide have not filed for \$1.7 billion in payments.

Those most at risk for missing out on a stimulus check of \$300 for individuals and \$600 for married couples are low-income seniors, disabled veterans and individuals with disabilities who are not required to file tax returns.

“Even if you are normally not required to file a tax return, you must do so in order to receive your economic stimulus payment,” said Treasurer Kennedy. “There’s still time to file in order to collect your check this year.”

For more information, visit www.irs.gov.

Rep. Jefferson Secures Support from Local Ministers in Congressional Seat Runoff



Jefferson

Ministers from Orleans and Jefferson Parishes have endorsed incumbent Rep. William Jefferson in the Nov. 4 runoff for the 2nd Congressional District seat. Jefferson will face former television news reporter and political newcomer Helena Moreno.

Rep. Jefferson has served in Congress for nine terms. He finished in first place in the primary election for the seat held Oct. 4.



Moreno

www.ladatanews.com



Gentilly Community Hosts "Back from the Breach"



Actor and New Orleans native Wendell Pierce enjoys Gentilly Fest.

Local residents had an opportunity to celebrate the recovery efforts in the Gentilly community at the 2008 Gentilly Fest "Back from the Breach" held last weekend.

The event, which was free to the public, included live music, food from local restaurants and caterers, arts and crafts, and children's activities. Eighty percent of the proceeds from the

festival will benefit the New Orleans Police and Fire Departments. The funds will be allocated for facility and equipment improvements at police and fire stations in the Gentilly area.

The Gentilly Improvement Civic Association organized the event.



The Gentilly Fest featured lots of entertainment and activities for festival-goers.

Capitelli Receives Endorsement from Jason Williams for DA Runoff

Jason Williams, the only African-American candidate in the recent Orleans Parish District Attorney race, announced his support on Oct. 11 of Attorney Ralph Capitelli in the seat's runoff election.

Capitelli and former Judge Leon Cannizzaro beat out Williams and Linda Bizzarro, a longtime federal prosecutor, to make the runoff scheduled for Nov. 4. Williams, a defense attorney, finished in third place with 24 percent of the vote.

At a press conference in front of the Orleans Parish District Attorney's office, Williams vowed his commitment to Capitelli while expressing his dedication to change and reform. Williams was not only the sole African-American candidate in the DA's race, but also the youngest at age 35.



Attorney Ralph Capitelli will face former Judge Leon Cannizzaro in runoff on Nov. 4.

FEMA Extends Temporary Sheltering Assistance for Ike Evacuees

BATON ROUGE – Governor Jindal announced that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has extended transitional sheltering for evacuees of Hurricane Ike until Tuesday, Oct. 28.

The sheltering initiative, which provides housing to evacuees with homes that are severely damaged or without power, was originally slated to end on Oct. 14, 2008. The state of Louisiana requested an extension so Louisiana families would have safe, reliable housing if their homes were damaged by the storms.

Governor Jindal said, "This is good news for those who are still dislocated from their homes due to Hurricane Ike. This continued assistance from FEMA will help the folks who need temporary housing have one less worry as they begin to rebuild."

"We still have more work to do. We are continuing to work with Congress and the Administration to have them grant us 100 percent federal cost share for Hurricane Gustav and provide critical assistance for our agriculture industry which sustained severe damage and tremendous losses from these two back to back storms."

Sheltering assistance is extended for those FEMA applicants who have been deemed eligible for housing assistance or who have not yet received a FEMA inspection of their home. FEMA will notify individual applicants if they are authorized for assistance past Oct. 28.

FEMA will notify those applicants who do not qualify for transitional sheltering assistance past Oct. 28. Applicants with questions should call FEMA's hotline at 1-800-621-FEMA (3362) or TTY 1-800-462-7585 or visit www.fema.gov.



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Voodoo Festival Gears Up for Tenth Anniversary

Brittany Odom
Data News Weekly
Contributor

R.E.M., Erykah Badu and New Orleans' own Lil' Wayne prepare to perform at the Voodoo Experience in New Orleans City Park this Halloween weekend for the festival's Tenth Ritual.

Founded in 1999 by Stephan Rehage, CEO of Rehage Entertainment and independent producer of Voodoo Experience, the festival began as a one-day festival at City Park's Tad Gormley Stadium. On Oct. 30, nearly 8,000 people turned out to see acts such as Wyclef Jean, Ben Folds, Dr. John and more.

"The first year we simply had no idea what we had gotten ourselves into – that combined with serious rains made for a very painful experience," Rehage said.

The debut festival was a success and Rehage and his crew prepared for the next year, making the decision to expand the make the festival two days instead of one. Hip-hop artist Eminem's appearance at the 2000 festival helped it to gain widespread attention.

"After we figured it out, we had a great four-year run with acts like Eminem, Tool, Green Day, The Beasties and too many others to mention. Then the city got slammed with Katrina," Rehage said.

Rehage describes the 2005 festival as the hardest project he and his staff have ever done. With much of New Orleans still in disarray from Hurricane Katrina, the crew of the Voodoo Experience moved forward with the concert just two months to the date after the levees broke. The day-long concert was the city's first live event since the storm and it was a free show aimed at entertaining volunteers, members of armed services and first responders who helped in recovery efforts.

In 2006, the festival split into separate areas: Le Ritual,

Le Flambeau and Le Carnival, which each area intending to showcase three different sides to New Orleans. 2007's event brought even more changes when the festival hit a record-setting 143,000 patrons and it returned to the three day format.

This year marks the festival's tenth year, and the Voodoo Experience's crew and volunteers expect over 140,000 festival goers, 164 bands and artists and 120 vendors. From Oct. 24-26, tens of thousands of festival goers can look forward to six stages of music from Stone Temple

Pilots, N*E*R*D, Panic at the Disco and many more. In addition to the multiple mainstream acts booked, Rehage said that they have remained commit-

stages and the crowds come through the gates. Though he considers himself a "newbie", Davis has watched the festival grow from being a two day



New Orleans native Lil' Wayne will return home to perform at the Tenth Ritual.



Erykah Badu is one of the featured celebrities who will perform at this year's Voodoo Fest.

ted to supporting New Orleans music. This year, New Orleans favorites the Hot 8 Brass Band, Irma Thomas, Cowboy Mouth will take the stage along with a host of other local acts.

"I think one of the biggest highlights for the people of New Orleans will be seeing Lil Wayne on that stage," said Jamil Davis, a production intern for the festival. "Mine [highlight] will definitely be Nine Inch Nails."

As an intern for the past two years, Davis said that there is plenty of hard work on the part of all of those involved in the production of the show and though stressful, it is always worth it when the bands hit the

event to three days and saw the growing success of the festival by the dramatic increase in the number of attendees.

Rehage describes the past ten years as an interesting ride and says that there is no way of knowing what the highlights of this year's festival will be.

"We've got three days jam packed full of incredible music," Rehage said. "There's something for everyone. It's hard to say where the magic will come from."

For a full lineup, complete schedule and more information, visit www.thetenthritual.com.



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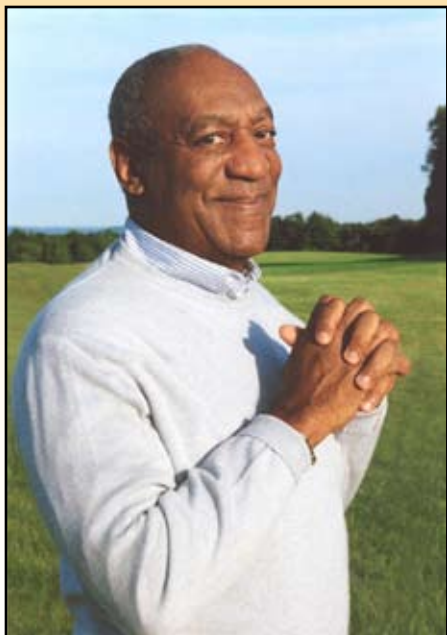
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Bill Cosby Joins Headliner Gladys Knight for Gala Concert Honoring Xavier President Norman C. Francis



Bill Cosby

(New Orleans, LA)- Xavier University is pleased to announce that legendary vocalist and seven-time Grammy Award winner Ms. Gladys Knight will be joined by world renowned

comedian, actor and philanthropist William "Bill" Cosby for the Nov. 21, 2008 "Legacy For a Legend" gala concert honoring America's longest serving college president, Norman C. Francis of Xavier University, and presented by Liberty Bank & Trust.

The Friday evening Gala, planned to celebrate Francis' 40th Anniversary as president of the nation's only Historically Black and Roman Catholic institution of higher education, and to recognize his service to his community and the nation, will feature a concert at the New

Orleans Theater at the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center (Hall B) featuring Ms. Knight with the opening performance by Mr. Cosby who has confirmed that



Gladys Knight

he will serve as the evening's Master of Ceremonies.

The gala will serve as a major fundraiser to estab-

lish a special Norman C. Francis Scholarship Fund, with special sponsor tables and individual tickets available through the Office of Institutional Advancement at 504.520.7575.

The university is also pleased to announce that Liberty Bank & Trust, a local New Orleans institution since 1972, is the Presenting Sponsor of the 40th Anniversary festivities. Says President & CEO Alden McDonald, "Liberty Bank is proud to be the Presenting Sponsor for this Gala, not simply because

of Norman C. Francis' role as our Founding Chairman of the Board, but also because of his amazing legacy of leading Xavier to tremendous heights all these years plus always being available to serve his fellow Louisiana citizens."

Dr. Francis is the founding Director of the Bank and has served ever since as its Chairman. Liberty is one of the five largest African-American-owned financial institutions with assets of more than \$370-million; a corporate partner of Fortune 500 companies, and a major supplier of financial services to government and government agencies throughout Louisiana and Mississippi.

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 Prairie Miller, WBAI RADIO

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trailblazer

Joe Johnson

Heart of a Saint

by: Edwin Buggage

October's Trailblazer is a man who is a standout both on and off the field. During his football career, former New Orleans Saints player Joe Johnson appeared in two NFL Pro Bowls and he is also a member of the Saints Hall of Fame. Johnson retired from life on the gridiron in 2003, but has continued to be part of the New Orleans community.

Today, as opposed to tackling opponents on the field, Johnson is tackling a new foe through his Built 2 Last Foundation with a mission to aid in the development of youth across the country.

"Today we face major challenges in our communities so I wanted to come up with something that could address some of those things," said Johnson.

He said he feels as though a hands-on approach is necessary to be effective in making an impact in communities.

"Some people just give money, but time and dedication are also resources to see things through until a task is completed. That's what I have done through my foundation," said Johnson.



Joe Johnson enjoys giving back to the community and helping area youth.

Johnson said the goal of his organization is to affect the lives of 10,000 young adults in the next three years. Although he is focused on young people, he wants to assist in helping adults as well. "I feel young people are important to building for the future, but we have to help everybody in the community so we are trying to deal with everything from job training and parenting skills to fiscal literacy."

As many people have returned to New Orleans they have witnessed a dearth of affordable housing. This is one thing Johnson wants to do something about.

"I have been blessed in my life, so I feel I want to give back. So, I have a goal to build 500 affordable homes in the next three years," said Johnson. "It is about giving opportunities for people to succeed in life and have their piece of the pie. So, I want to

help residents returning to the city to be able to purchase a home. Because I've been blessed, now I can bless others."

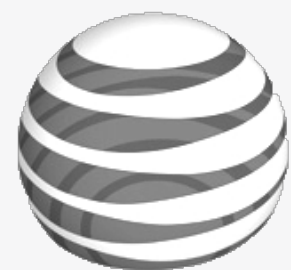
Over the years, Johnson has done a variety of things to help young people including working with NORD to help young kids and also hosting an annual youth football camp. He also sponsors benefit concerts and events that help various charities across the city. Johnson said he is committed to being part of a city he feels is on the verge of a renaissance.

"I love this city it is so rich in culture and the people are so resilient, and it will come back and I will be here continuing to support it in any way I can," said Johnson.

Joe Johnson is a big man with an even larger heart. He has given his time and resources to a city he loves. With the heart of a saint, Johnson is a shining example of the old saying, "it is better to give than to receive" and that is just what he has done—given back. For his service, Johnson is New Orleans Data News Weekly's Trailblazer for October 2008.

JMJ

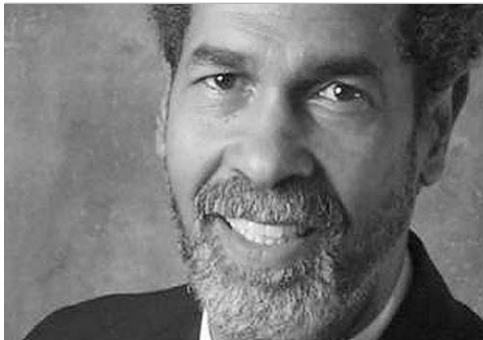
Joseph M. Jones
Continuing Education Fund



at&t

Opinion

We Must Vote Early



Lloyd Dennis
Data Columnist

Against the background of economic meltdown caused by deregulated greed, we watch Derrick march to his appointment with a sentencing judge as Pampy begins his sentence, and knowing that Oliver is still in the first year of his three year sentence. American culture has been subverted by a "fast buck" fantasy and the belief that the system is designed to be played for personal benefit and gratification, rather than stewarded into supporting sustainable peace and prosperity for the general public. So some black leaders will pay a price for getting caught up on chump change, while unfortunately, the public has just donated 700 billion dollars to the very same folk who refused to rein in the reckless hustles that were allowed in the finance and banking industries.

I remember, a few years ago when I saw the first bank offer to loan more than 100% of the equity we had in our home. I remember because I couldn't understand how that worked. That meant that I could liquidate my home without selling it, getting every dime and perhaps even pocketing those points over 100% as a profit. Man what a great way to retire overseas, and paying back a few notes, you could get yourself established in the new place before you let the loan foreclose.

In the scenario above the problem for my bank, and as we can see now, the problem for you and me is that my bank has no way to recover whatever the value of those percentage points represents in my loan. Say the property was valued at \$300,000, if they loaned ten percent over the value that bank is now on the hook for \$30,000. That is money that has to come out of the profits of that bank, the owners' pockets, and this is where it gets complicated, because some of us are also owners.

401K has become a disdainful cry from good hard working people who put their trust in our "system", now to discover that my abuse of a loan that shouldn't have been possible (wasn't possible before recent deregulation) means a bank you or your mutual fund has stock in can't pay its expected

dividends, so now the bank that already loss 30,000 on my and possibly many more loans people snuck out on or legitimately couldn't pay because they bit off more than they could chew or suffered loss of income or other calamity, that bank's stock loses value because its profits drop, loss of income and loss of value.

The problem would mushroom, if masses of bank employees are cut back, laid off or downsized out of a job. Some of them adding to that last category of foreclosures I described, additional loans and credit card debt going bad, not as a direct result of deregulation, but now also due to the loss of jobs and income in a slowing economy.

That brings me back to the point of this piece. I didn't and hope I wouldn't do the walk away from my loan thing because it is wrong. It is taking money I didn't earn or fairly win, and I know someone else would suffer harm, even if it were only a corporation. Right is right and wrong is wrong... no matter the color, religion or size of the victims, or another's transgressions. "Them" doing wrong "then" has never justified "us" doing the same "now". The additional downside for "us" is that as long as race is an issue in America, you will find "us" under peculiar scrutiny.

I have some influence with good people that I know and love, but I have never wielded "power". Sometimes I wonder if I could trust myself with power. I am in awe of powerful people who are conscientious and responsible in its exercise. One of the greatest burdens I ever experienced was having the power to hire and fire over 150 other people. The greatest chore was staying focused on doing what was best for the operation rather than what was convenient or felt good to me, like having to fire a young man you can see potential in, but who has used up his last chance by the rules I created for everyone else.

Okay, don't paint me "holy roller" yet. One main reason I did that job like that was because I wanted as few problems as possible, and I knew that since I was running an operation for three black owned businesses, that everything I did would have to be tight, every t crossed and every decimal point in the right place. In some cases, when I was offered "slack" I deflected to keeping it tight and right.

To all my young brothers and sister seeking to serve the public, please don't believe for one minute that the men and women of our community who got "caught up" were either dumb or intrinsically criminal. They simply fell to the temptation to use public power for other than public benefit, and got busted! They got confused and thought they were powerful, instead of understanding that they simply wielded ours, and that we can transfer it to someone else whenever one of you get convicted.

In The Spirit

Love & Relationships

"Where's the Passion in Your Relationship?"



Dr. Aaron E. Harold
Data Columnist

Hi folks, let's talk more about love in your relationship. Most relationships start off with a boom; in other words, the more you see that special someone, the more you want to be with that person. It's a wonderful and beautiful experience. Well, what makes us feel this way when words are sometimes hard to explain what we are feeling on the inside of us? It's called "Passion" people. The question is, what is Passion?

Passion is when you are emotionally excited about someone. It's when you are enthused about that person. It's when you have a strong desire or feelings for that person. Let me bring it closer to home; it's when you love that person very much. Passion is a key element in a relationship between a woman and a man. You have to have it to keep the relationship healthy and long lasting. Passionate love in a relationship will allow us to get to know the other person and be known by him or her even more.

Passionate love in a relationship will allow you to serve one another and maintain physical closeness to him or her. Test yourself and see if the relationship you may be in now has that passionate love in it. Alright, here we go, think of the person that you love most passionately right now. If you are not in love right now, think of the last person that you loved with a passion. Maybe, if you haven't been in love, think of the person you came closest to caring for in that way.

Come on, there's someone.

Now, let me ask those that are now still in relationships; is the passion still there? If you said yes to that question, then you are doing fine. Just keep doing what you have been doing so that it can get better and better. Now, on the other hand, if you said no to that question, then you are in big trouble. Listen people, your relationships and marriages can be saved if it's not too far gone. You may still care for that person, so don't walk away just yet. Look, think about what you once had and how beautiful it was between you and how you both were in love. Talk about allowing the love that you once had in that relationship to grow back again. Everyone needs somebody loving and compassionate in his or her life; even you. Some of you may have said, or heard others say "I don't need no one; I can just live in this world by myself." However, you know in your heart that you don't really mean that.

Folks, that's why in the Book of Genesis God made Adam. He said himself that it was not good for man to live alone, so he made Eve from the rib of Adam. Folks, get the love back in your relationships. You need it to encourage and enhance your marriages and those who are planning to get married in the future. Folks, let me ask you another question? Have you ever been passionate about anything in your life? Take your time and be honest with yourself. Sure you have that job that you love and you've hardly ever been late or that hobby you love with friends fishing, playing tennis, shooting basketball, going bowling, or singing.

You know that you enjoy and love it, because you have a passion for it. Folks, try using that same energy in your relationships that you're now in, and see the fulfillment and joy it will bring both of you. God bless, and keep the love in your relationships.

I am one who believes that truly powerful master criminals are getting away with billions in legalized fraud and market manipulation, and we less powerful will pay the price in taxes, retirement losses, job losses and lost homes. We must vote, but I believe we must vote early, because I also believe that the wealthy and powerful crooks which are running this country are doing their level best to make sure that November 4th is the most chaotic election in America's history. Can they afford to

have the books opened by Barack Obama, and what are they willing to do to make sure they don't go to jail when stuff doesn't add up?

As soon as it is legal, let us begin to stand in short lines and vote early. You can vote early from 10-21-08 through 10-28-08 at City Hall or the Algiers Courthouse. So, If I see you at the polls it will be that week. I prefer to watch the lines on TV.

'Race' for the White House: Anatomy of a 21st Century President

Part 1



Edwin Buggage
Editor-in-Chief

As we enter the final weeks to the upcoming U.S. Presidential election the tide has turned from one of civility to something where the thorny issues of racism, nativism, xenophobia and religious intolerance have reared its ugly head. But in 21st century we must ask ourselves, do these demeanors have any place in this election?

In an age where the economies and lives of people across the globe are connected, we are today a conglomeration of independent yet interdependent nations who rely on one another for each other's survival.

Today the lines of nationhood, religion, race, color and creed have been blurred as the world has become a global place. And in this new hour on the horizon the next

U.S. President must address and keep pace with a new and different world. The qualities needed in a 21st century Commander-in-Chief must be more of an international diplomat with a global outlook, more so than cold war posturing, US vs. them and John Wayne ideas of diplomacy. Also one who understands that today we cannot be the police of the world and act unilaterally, and when we put our troops in harms way, we must act responsibly and exercise restraint and use military might only as a last resort against foreign aggression.

The new president must work to unite a country and heal the wounds where the frail balance of managing the diversity of this nation by finding common threads that bring people together and not divide them. The next President must take the high road and be unwavering and vigilant in his opposition to turning the page back to an unfortunate time in this country where intolerance fanned the flames of resentment that locked so many people of talent out of experiencing the promise of America.

The recent allegations and an attempt to polarize the electorate is an insult to the sober-minded, intelligent people of this great nation. The tide and tone that this election has taken is a sad commentary on the state of American electoral politics, which has become a zero-sum game where you win at all cost. As evidenced by the recent spate

of negative campaign ads that suggest Sen. Barack Obama is somehow unsuited to sit in the Oval Office because he is this dark shadowy figure that pals around with a domestic terrorist, and is unpatriotic is a disturbing trend.

It is something that has stirred up racial resentment and at its worst, it has become the McCain's campaign Willie Horton moment, where they have tried to frighten the electorate that somehow Sen. Obama is outside of the mainstream. While this has worked with some level of success, recently Sen. John McCain himself tried to distance himself from this journey into the sewer of innuendo that suggests that Barack Obama is wrong and dangerous for America much to the chagrin of some of the most vocal opponents of Barack Obama.

On the web and at McCain rallies people are calling Obama a terrorist and some have said off with his head. While political campaigns are heated events arousing the passion of voters, these recent accusations are sowing the seeds for something that could be tragic for America as it tries to repair its credibility on the world stage. Since declaring its independence from Britain, the United States of America has grown from the original 13 colonies to a place that has become a global superpower whose influence is witnessed has impacted the world. Throughout its history people from

every continent has forsaken the nations of their birth—some even risking their lives to carve out a better life for themselves in this land of liberty.

But what we are seeing at some of these rallies are Americans at their worse, bigoted, ignorant, and intolerant. But today the challenge for Americans is not to succumb and subscribe the politics of division. Today Americans must show the best of what this country is; a nation of people who have come on different ships, but are now in the same boat working together to stay afloat. Today we must not fall into the trap of identity politics as we are at an historic moment in American history as the world watches. Today we can be the example of what a 21st century democracy can be. Today we can show the world what progress and change are all about.

And that cannot end after Election Day, it is up to citizens to stay abreast on what their leaders are doing and holding them accountable, for they work for you. It is time to make the most important special interest group the American People. That is what the next President must do. Regardless of who is elected, we must realize that the true victory is not in McCain or Obama, but in the American People being able to live and experience the American Dream.

Breast Cancer: Black Women Less Likely to Get It, More Likely to Die from It



Julianne Malveaux
NNPA Columnist

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Millions of women are sporting pink ribbon pins in support of a month when organizations like the Susan G. Komen Foundation fundraise and galvanize people around the quest for a cure for breast cancer. They are right to raise awareness – more than 184,000 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer in the United States in 2008, and more than 40,000 will die from breast cancer.

While African-American women are less likely than White women to get breast cancer, we are more likely to die from it. The morbidity rate for White women is 9.4 per

100,000, compared to 15.4 per 100,000 for African-American women.

Additionally, African-American women often are diagnosed with breast cancer when they are younger, and when African-American women under 55 are diagnosed with breast cancer; it is more likely to have deadlier effects. Researchers are studying the reasons why African-American women are so much more vulnerable than other women are to breast cancer. But the findings make it important for African-American women to get regular mammograms and to deal with other aspects of our health.

Whenever there are health awareness weeks or months, whether they are for breast cancer, muscular dystrophy, diabetes, or another cause, I crave attention to the broader issue of health care and health access. We can take a slice out of the health care challenge by focusing, in October, on breast cancer, but the fact is that part of African-American women's increased vulnerability to breast cancer is a result of differential access to health care and health services.

Too many African-Americans lack health insurance. Too many wear the stress of racism in poor eating and living habits, and it shows up with obesity, high blood pressure, and the higher incidence of other dis-

eases in our community.

African-American women are more likely than any other population, in 2008, to be diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. When another population was most likely to be diagnosed, HIV/AIDS awareness garnered headlines. Now, too many are silent about this disease, unless they are talking about the international incidence of HIV/AIDS.

It is not clear why our nation has not galvanized around the health care issue. To be sure, both presidential candidates have ideas about health insurance and health care; their plans are divergent. In my humble opinion, Hillary Rodham Clinton had one of the best health care plans we've seen in a long time, reflective of the work she has spent on health care since she worked on it as First Lady in the Clinton Administration.

Senators Obama and McCain would be advised to review her plan and incorporate aspects of it into their own work. Somehow, every American must have access to preventive health care, and protection from bankruptcy when they are diagnosed with expensive diseases.

And somehow, as we raise awareness about breast cancer, we must also raise awareness about the ways breast cancer incidence is intertwined with the status of our health care system.

Breast cancer awareness has an international dimension. Hala Modellmog, President of the Susan G. Komen for the Cure, indicates that 10 million people will die in the next 25 years absent intervention around breast cancer. Last year, the Komen organization held a global advocacy summit in Hungary, and announced pilot programs in Eastern Europe, Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East. This month, they sent delegations to Ghana and Tanzania.

It is important to note that for all the challenges women face with breast cancer in the United States, health care access is even more limited in developing countries. The Komen organization is to be commended for their work in taking breast cancer global.

Back at home, though, the health care disparities that riddle our system are as present in the realm of breast cancer and in other areas. Sisters must be among those sporting pink ribbons, but beyond the pink ribbons, we must all be passionate advocates for increased health care access, especially in the African-American community.

Julianne Malveaux is President of Bennett College for Women. She can be reached at presoffice@bennett.edu.

No Voter Meltdown on Election Day



Marc Morial
NNPA Columnist

The \$700 billion bail-out package that was signed into law last week will hopefully fix some of the damage caused by Wall Street greed and lax government oversight. That bill was better than the Administration's original plan, but it is far from perfect and still does not do enough in our view to protect homeowners who are facing foreclosure. With the presidential election of 2008 less than a month away, voters must ask themselves two important questions: First, which candidate has the best long-term solution for fixing our economy and helping American families and homeowners get back on their feet. And second, are we prepared as citizens on Nov. 4 to make our voices heard, stand up for our rights and make sure every vote is counted.

With foreclosures continuing to pile up and the loss of another 159,000 jobs in September, our country is facing the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression.

Wall Street may be breathing a sigh of relief because of the bailout package, but Main Street is still waiting to exhale. We will have our say on Nov. 4.

That's why the National Urban League is launching an unprecedented "Vote to Empower" campaign focusing on the urgent need for voter education, increased participation and the prevention of the kind of vote suppression that has occurred in the last two presidential elections.

We are demanding that all election officials uphold their duties and do what is necessary now and all the way to Election Day to prevent any infringements on voting rights.

We are calling on governors to verify that they have contingency plans for all foreseeable problems associated with the predicted massive turnout. And we are urging the President and both political campaigns to announce a zero-tolerance for voter suppression.

The National Urban League is ready to do its part. As a start, we are spotlighting areas of concern and issuing our first in a series of alerts and recommendations for citizen action. For example, in Michigan allegations have been made that foreclosure lists will be used to prevent citizens from

voting. If true, this means that victims of foreclosure will lose their voting rights. A lawsuit has been filed to prevent this from happening and we will continue to monitor the situation. Other potential suppression efforts across the nation are also being investigated.

Finally, it is important that you educate yourself about the voting rules in your state and report any potential problems such as lack of voting machines or voter intimidation.

Go to <http://www.votetoempower.com/> or ncbcp@ncbcp.org for details on how to report voting problems.

The swift action taken to address the growing panic in the financial markets reminds us of the government's fundamental responsibility to take action to avert national catastrophes. On Nov. 4, voters will have the last word. Preventing a voter meltdown in 2008 is just as important as preventing an economic meltdown.

"Bailouts, Debates and the R-Word"



Michael Shinn
NNPA Columnist

Your Money Really Matters

2008 will go down in the record books as a major inflection point in our country's economic history. There have been major financial institution failures such as Bear Stearns, Lehman Brothers, Merrill Lynch, AIG and the government takeover of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac.

These failures and the credit freeze precipitated the unprecedented and highly controversial \$700+ billion dollar government bailout of Wall Street. And finally we are the midst of a historic Presidential election filled with charges and countercharges; "must see" televised debates and a level of political drama that overshadows the most popular soap operas.

The current economic scorecard paints a rather dismal picture, with the Dow

Jones Industrial Average down 35% year to date and below 9,000 for the first time in five years. Nonfarm payroll employment declined by 159,000 in September. Auto sales were down 28 percent in September across the board. Energy prices, although down from their summer highs are still up significantly from last year. The consensus forecast for the next two quarters is for slow or negative growth for the domestic economy. We are either in or headed into an economic downturn.

The questions that you and your family have to answer are, in the short term, how will a downturn affect your employment, income and lifestyle? Looking at the long term, how will a downturn affect your funding for longer term goals such as housing, education and retirement planning?

The R-Word

An economic recession is defined as a decline in real Gross Domestic Product for two or more successive quarters. This is a period of significant decline in economic activity spread across the economy.

A recession is characterized by higher unemployment, declining personal income and lower industrial production. According to the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER), our last recession bottomed out in November, 2001 and the U.S. has been in an economic expansion ever since.

Downturn Survival Kit

There are several steps that you can take to minimize the impact an economic downturn may have on you and your family.

Employment - If you are employed by a company, the decision about whether you stay or go is going to be made by someone other than yourself. Outside of seniority rules, the individuals with the most diversified job skills may have an advantage in keeping their jobs. To make yourself more valuable, take advantage of opportunities to get additional training and broadening your skill set.

Keep your resume up to date and maintain a broad professional network outside of your current employer.

Emergency Fund - Build up a short term savings account, with a balance equivalent to 3-6 months of your expenses.

The purpose of an emergency fund is to carry the family through short term emergencies, such as job loss, physical disability or a natural disaster. An emergency fund will preclude the use of credit cards with interest rates of 18-26 percent or higher.

Reduce Your Debt - The impact of debt is magnified during an economic downturn. Individuals with heavy debt loads are stretched to the limit and beyond. Late payments are compounded by late fees and interest charged on interest. Do not create any additional debt in slowing economic times. If you have credit card debt, begin to work it down now!

Investments - During an economic downturn most investments are affected negatively, however the effects may be minimized by having a well diversified portfolio. If you work for a company, don't hold more than 5-10 percent of your net worth in company stock. If you have a 401K retirement plan, spread your investments among several funds. If you have investments outside your company plans, select a good mutual fund company and go for quality.

Talk to Your Family - Discuss your financial concerns with your family. Let them know that you are anticipating an economic downturn. Be open and honest and get their ideas for managing the situation.

Downturn Opportunities

Downturns can present some financial opportunities. Because of slower economic activity, retailers are generally more open to "make deals" on price and terms.

In a downturn, "cash is king" so those individuals with financial liquidity may be able to acquire assets at significant discounts. Finally, since interest rates are generally lower, it may be easier to refinance mortgage loans at lower interest rates.

Just like major storms, economic downturns are a regular part of life. You and your family can better weather a downturn if you are prepared with your downturn survival kit.

Report: Sarah Palin Guilty of Abuse of Power

Van Wilson

(NNPA) - A long awaited report from an investigation into Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin's firing of the State's Public Safety Commissioner has concluded that the Republican Party vice presidential nominee and Sen. John McCain's running mate has, "abused her power."

The investigation was initiated on a bi-partisan vote of the Alaska Legislative Council to investigate claims that Palin fired Walt Monegan because he refused to fire a state trooper, Michael Wootan, who was involved in messy divorce proceedings with her younger sister.

The report concludes that while



Republican Vice Presidential Candidate Governor Sarah Palin (R) Alaska.

Palin's firing of Walt Monegan was a "proper and lawful exercise of her constitutional and statutory authority to hire and fire executive branch department heads,"

she violated ethics laws by pressuring Monegan to fire Wootan. The report also found she also allowed her husband, Todd Palin, to use the Governor's office and its resources to try to get Wootan fired.

"Governor Palin knowingly permitted a situation to continue where impermissible pressure was placed on several subordinates in order to advance a personal agenda," the report said, "to wit; to get Trooper Michael Wootan fired."

The report continued, "She had the authority and power to require Mr. Palin to cease contacting subordinates, but she failed to act."

Although the report concludes that other issues also played a role

in Monegan's dismissal, the issue with Wootan was a factor.

Obviously feeling the report would be damaging to her bid as Sen. John McCain's running mate, the campaign issued a statement Oct. 9 saying that Palin violated no laws in firing Monegan and that the report was an effort by supporters of Democratic Presidential Nominee Barack Obama, to discredit her.

But the Alaska Legislative Council voted to initiate the investigation July 28 and contracted Stephen Branchflower to begin his investigation Aug. 11, well before McCain chose her as his running mate. Media reports say McCain knew about the investigation before making his choice.

In the wake of the report, it is unclear whether the Republican led Alaskan legislature will take any disciplinary action against Palin. Under Alaska's ethics laws, sanctions could range from censure to a highly unlikely impeachment.

At this time, it is difficult to tell how and if the report will affect the Republicans' bid for the White House. The McCain-Palin campaign has made her reputation as a reformer a centerpiece of the reasoning for choosing her as his running mate.

This report appears to call her character into question.

Leave Obama T-Shirts at Home Nov. 4, Voting Rights Experts Advise

Pharoh Martin

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - Don't wear campaign paraphernalia to voting polls on election day Nov. 4 or bring a sweater to cover it up, experts say.

"Whether or not they have a constitutional right to wear [campaign memorabilia] we tell them to leave it at home and avoid the hassle," says Laughlin McDonald, Director of ACLU Voting Right Project. "There is a Supreme Court decision that prohibited campaigning within 100 feet of a polling place so we advise that if they do wear a campaign button that they follow that state's law, unless they are trying to challenge it."

Barbara Arnwine, executive director for Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under the Law, a non-profit legal organization that specializes in election law, agrees. She says that there should be no open endorsement of a candidate because it helps voting sites remain neutral.

But, she says, "There needs to be more uniformity of the law under local and state legislation."

Thousands of voters have received emails and text messages informing them that they may have problems if they show up to the voting booths wearing but-

tons, stickers and tee shirts with the names of political candidates. In many states, that could be true.

Maryland voter Alpatrick Golphin, 39, thought the email he received was just another unsubstantiated rumor.

"I thought it was a joke like Ashton [Kutcher] was trying to punk me," he said. Golphin has voted in other elections, but this was the first time he's heard anything about this. He may not have heard about not being allowed to wear his candidate's tee shirt to the voting polls because Maryland does not have a dress code per se. But, it still has laws against "electioneering" or campaigning inside a voting poll.

It is a state's decision how to regulate elections so long as the elections are conducted fairly, says Federal Elections Commission spokesperson Bob Biersack. Because there's no federal provision, elections are administered by the states.

Therefore, depending on what voting jurisdiction a citizen resides in, casting a ballot while displaying any campaign affiliations - including names or images on a hat, t-shirt or button - could be classified as passive electioneering, a misdemeanor in some states, depending on how the at-

tire is interpreted by authorities.

The laws are meant to protect elections against voter intimidation and swaying decisions. But the written definition of electioneering is murky in some states. Virginia is a critical swing state in this year's presidential election but its voters aren't the only ones confused about the issue of what constitutes electioneering.

The state's board of elections are even having a hard time interpreting the law in a way that they could definitively inform their voting public.

"Section 24.2-604 of the Code of Virginia creates a 40 foot neutral zone in which campaign material is prohibited but there has been some confusion among the voting population in recent weeks as far as the definition of excessive campaigning at the polling place," the Virginia State Board of Elections said in a statement. "As a result, the State Board of Elections will meet on October 14th to make a ruling on the draft policy."

Such states as Ohio, Tennessee and Texas emphatically ban the display of political buttons, caps, stickers and other like items within 100 feet of polls while they are open.

Kevin Kidder, spokesman for the Ohio Secretary of State's Office, says that while there are re-

strictions against wearing political paraphernalia, the right to vote comes first.

"Voters are not allowed to wear campaign paraphernalia," Kidder said. "We'll ask them to turn it inside out. Put a jacket over it. The right to vote is absolute so you'll be allowed to vote but you can be charged later."

Other states like Georgia and Florida have laws that are more lax. According to Florida Department of State spokeswoman Jennifer Davis, her state's definition of electioneering is reserved for more obvious campaigning.

"There's no overt soliciting such as handing out campaign material," Davis states. But when asked if there are any restrictions on the wearing of campaign paraphernalia she says, "Absolutely not. You can wear whatever you want. The only restriction is for the people working at the elections all day."

She added, "I can't imagine any restriction on that sort of thing because of free speech concerns."

Some courts don't see it that way.

A 2001 Washington, DC Circuit Court ruled against voter David Marlin, who had taken the DC Board of Elections and Ethics to court for denying his ballot be-

cause he wore a sticker supporting a specific mayoral candidate. The court sided with the board citing a Supreme Court ruling that stated that polling places are not a forum to engage in public discourse and such "view-point neutral" laws are a constitutional and necessary means of ensuring orderly election process.

Such laws have sparked widespread debate, even among students.

American University law student Kimberly Tucker published a legal paper entitled "You Can't Wear That to Vote: The Constitutionality of State Laws Prohibiting the Wearing of Political Message Buttons" in 2006 that argued against the restrictions.

"States cannot demonstrate a 'compelling state interest' in prohibiting the wearing of political message buttons in the polling place," she wrote. She also argued that the laws are far too broad and that the statutory language often permits "arbitrary enforcement."

Because of the wide latitude, says Arnwine, the best way is the safe way: "What is correct is that you may have to cover up and expose your Obama tee shirt once you go outside the designated voting zone."

Polls Rocketing for Obama, But, Could Racism Undermine Results on Nov. 4?

Hazel Trice Edney

WASHINGTON (NNPA) – U. S. Sen. Barack Obama has moved yet another step closer to becoming America's first Black president after an arguably bland second debate Oct. 6 that gave him strong leads over Sen. John McCain in several key polls. The final of three debates was set for Wednesday this week.

But, some political observers say the polls may not reflect a racial undercurrent among Whites that could hurt Obama's election chances on Nov. 4.

A National CNN poll at the conclusion of the second debate – which focused largely on the economy – had 54 percent of voters saying

Obama won the debate, versus McCain at 30 per cent. Likewise, a CBS poll favored Obama at 39 percent to 27 percent among uncommitted voters with 35 percent claiming the debate as a draw.

Moreover, Gallup, among the most credible polling agencies in the world, reports Obama actually leading McCain by more than 10 percentage points in a national poll asking voters who they favor.

"Barack Obama has opened up a nine-point lead over John McCain, 51% to 42%, in the latest Gallup Poll Daily tracking," states an explanation on Gallup.com. "That matches Obama's largest lead of the campaign to date."

University of Maryland Political Scientist Dr. Ron Walters

called the polls astounding, but says Blacks should shave off at least five points to account for the racial factor that can go undetected until after people vote.

"I'm saying to myself, 'Wait a minute, this is okay, but I don't think it's that high,'" Walters says. "You have to respect the polling. But, you have to discount it a little."

For example, Walters says although Gallup reports a more than 10 percent Obama lead, that should be thought of as more like five percent to account for racial and other prejudices that may factor in the voting booth.

The so-called "Bradley effect", recalls the 1982 gubernatorial race between an African-American Democrat, Tom Bradley, and a White Republican, George Deukmejian. Though major polls placed Bradley well ahead of Deukmejian only days and hours before the election, Bradley narrowly lost. This discrepancy between how Whites say they will vote and how they actually vote was also observed in the 1989 Virginia

governor's campaign between African-American candidate L. Douglas Wilder and White candidate Marshal Coleman. Wilder won, but by less than a percentage point – only a few days after polls gave him as much as an eight point lead.

Walters says because the Bradley race was more than 25 years ago and the Wilder race nearly 20 years ago, racial attitudes have changed. Newer and younger voters must now be factored in and it's no longer unique for an African-American to be running for public office.

Still, the Obama camp appears to not take polls for granted, working vigorously in so-called battleground – or unpredictable – states to now excite registered voters to go to the polls Nov. 4. The outreach appears to be working. In states considered especially hard for Democrats, such as Virginia, Obama is ahead 49.9 to 45.1. In Florida, he is up 48.3 to 45.3 and in Pennsylvania, he is up a whopping 51.2 to 39.2, according to RealClearpolitics.com.

The key is economic worries, political observers say.

"There are no issues. There's just the one issue. It's the economy," says David Bositis, senior researcher for the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies. "I'm not worried about the 'Bradley effect.'"

Even if attempts to deface Obama or undermine his reputation with veiled racial attacks in final days of the campaign become prevalent, Bositis predicts it won't matter.

"If your house is on fire and Frankenstein is outside, you don't worry about Frankenstein. You worry about you're going to die in the fire if you don't do something about it," Bositis says. "This election is about the way people feel about how things are going in the country right now. And the way they feel about how things are going in the country is that they stink. They stink bad."

Three Thousand Ex-Offenders Meet Voter Registration Deadline in Nation's Capital

Joseph Young

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - District of Columbia residents flooded the D.C. Board of Elections and Ethics in a last minute effort to register to vote in the upcoming presidential election, including people who had previously been incarcerated for felony convictions.

The deadline to register for all D.C. residents and in most states was Mon., Oct. 6.

Five hundred voter registration applications of ex-offenders were hand-carried into the office of the Board of Elections by Peaceholics founder Ronald "Mo" Moten, who spearheaded the drive to get ex-offenders registered to vote.

"Our voices will be heard from this day on," said Moten who is an ex-offender. "You can't stop crime if you don't help change the social ills that caused the criminal activity," Moten said. "A lot of these crimes are poverty crimes."

Moten announced at a press conference that the Peaceholics reached its goal of registering to vote more than 3,000 ex-offenders.

The ultimate goal of the Peaceholics is to register the more than 60,000 ex-offenders residing in the District registered to vote within the next two years.

"Once we do that nobody can stop our agenda, which is to make sure we are treated as citizens," Mo-

ten said. "We want to have an equal playing field like everyone else."

Many ex-offenders who live in the District are unaware that they can vote. According to Dan Murphy, spokesperson for the D.C. Board of Elections and Ethics, ex-offenders have a legal right to vote in the District, even if they have been previously incarcerated for a felony or under court supervision. A person awaiting trial while in jail also has a right to vote by absentee ballot as well as a person who was convicted on misdemeanor charges.

Forty-eight states, and the District, prohibit inmates from voting while incarcerated for a felony offense, according to the Sentencing Project, an advocacy group for reform in sentencing laws.

In 2007, the Maryland legislature repealed all provisions of the state's lifetime voting ban, including the three-year waiting period after completion of sentence for certain categories of offenses, and instituted an automatic restoration policy for all persons upon completion of sentence.

The Virginia legislature passed a law in 2000 enabling certain ex-offenders to apply to the circuit court for the restoration of their voting rights five years after the completion of their sentence. Those convicted of felony drug offenses must wait seven years after completion of sentence. The circuit court's decision is subject to the Governor's approval.

First-Time Registered Women Voters



Special to the NNPA from the Michigan Chronicle

Janice Winfrey (center), Detroit City Clerk, with seniors Grace Enlow (left), 92, and Ruth Singleton, 89, who informed photographer Matty Dread that they are of Cherokee Indian descent. As first-time registered older voters, the two said they had not been voting all along because their parents claimed that their Cherokee Indian culture forbade women to vote. Now the two say they are determined to break that tradition on Nov. 4 that prevented women from having a say in the political process. They believe it is time for a change in the country and have committed their vote to Democratic presidential nominee Barack Obama.



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