

GOP-led Senate dissing minority court appointees

John T. Stephens III
Sentinel-Voice

During the 1997-98 Congressional term there were 92 Whites and 31 minorities vying for vacancies in the federal courts.

Fourteen percent of the White nominees failed to be confirmed, either via Senate inaction or they withdrew. All minority candidates failed to get approved. The latest victim is Judge Ronnie White from Missouri.

"Defeat of Ronnie White's nomination for the federal district court judgeship in Missouri was a disgraceful act of partisan politics," said President Bill Clinton, who nominated White to serve on the federal court. "By voting down the first African-American judge to serve on the Missouri Supreme Court, the Republicans have deprived both the judiciary and the people of Missouri of an excellent, fair and impartial federal judge."

Republican Sen. John Ashcroft of Missouri derailed White's confirmation. Many in the GOP had supported White.

Ashcroft, who has a tough re-election campaign next year, persuaded GOP senators to halt their nod due to questions about White's death penalty record.

"Judge White is a highly qualified lawyer and judge

and the (death penalty) figures were manipulated by Sen. Ashcroft to undermine him," Democratic Gov. Mel Carnahan said. "Ashcroft's own appointees to the state Supreme Court voted more times to reverse death penalty cases. His figures just do not hold water."

Republican Sens., Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, Strom Thurmond, R-S.C., and Christopher Bond, R-Mo., pulled their support for White after confirming him in the Judiciary Committee.

Political pressure from Ashcroft got the senators to vote along party lines.

"The fact that Ronnie White is an African-American judge and for this to happen under such frivolous excuses borders on racism and is certainly partisan politics," said Rev. B.T. Rice, president of the St. Louis Clergy Coalition, which represents 113 churches in St. Louis. "We met with (Christopher) Bond when he was running for re-election and asked, 'Are you going to support Judge White?' and Bond responded 'Absolutely I am.'"

Hispanics and female judges have also been denied federal court appointments because of Senate inaction. Some minority candidates have been waiting as little as 20 months and as long as 44 months for confirmations.

Dr. Jackson directs LV leisure services

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Barbara Jackson was recently promoted director of the city's Leisure Services Department after serving six years as deputy director. "I feel a real challenge. Right now we (Leisure Services) are at a time when our services are high and the availability of land is not so high," she said. "The key is to meet the demands among the restraints."

The City of Las Vegas Parks and Leisure Activities Department split last year, with parks falling under the of the Department of Public Works. Park maintenance employees, designers and construction personnel said the public works department could maintain park grounds better.

Leisure Services took control over recreational and cultural programs, including four community centers, four senior centers and eight community schools. Services under the department's auspices include latch key programs, tutoring, dance class, recreation, senior activities, swimming and more.

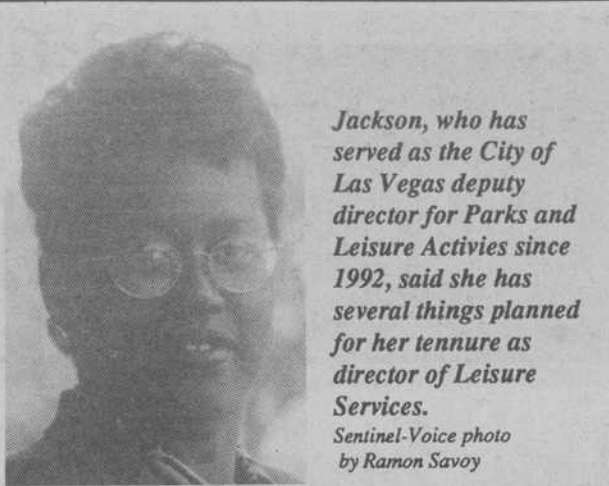
Jackson was born in Inglewood, N.J. but reared in Virginia. She earned a doctoral degree in public administration from the University of Laverne in California, a masters in business administration from UNLV and a Bachelor's degree in administration from Ohio's Antioch College.

In 1991, she was recognized as a Distinguished Woman of Southern Nevada and has since received accommodations from the National League of Cities based in Washington D.C.



Jackson came to Las Vegas in 1975, beginning her public service career as a management analyst with Clark County's Regional Flood Control District and Sanitation District. She served as a senior management analyst and in 1992 became deputy director for Parks and Leisure Activities.

"My primary goal is to get the department more customer service orientated," Jackson said. "(We're going to) look at ourselves internally and decide how we're going to better serve the public."



Jackson, who has served as the City of Las Vegas deputy director for Parks and Leisure Activities since 1992, said she has several things planned for her tennure as director of Leisure Services.
Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy

Doolittle Community Center, 1940 N "J" St. and Lubertha Johnson Park, Balzar Avenue and Concord Street, are slated for improvements.

Doolittle will be expanded, its grounds landscape and its gymnasium and pool facilities upgraded. New landscaping and playground upgrades await the Johnson park.

"I care about areas where there are no new homes being constructed," said Jackson, adding that she's worked with the City of Las Vegas Neighborhood Services

Department to find sponsorships and partners to provide recreation to older communities void of recreational opportunities.

The Leisure Services Department holds 400 to 500 events each quarter, including adaptive recreation programs for mentally and physically challenged residents. Jackson supervises more than 250 full-time employees and in the summer she sees that number rise to 500 with the hiring of part-time summer help.

Habitat

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Initiatives Support Corporation, a nationwide community development support organization, said his company's payoff for sponsoring the Habitat Homes is "the pleasure of knowing we're helping the community."

"The biggest anchor a community can have to take pride in what goes on in the streets is to own a home in the neighborhood," he said. "The thing that's important is to replace absentee landlords. They don't keep up the property usually. Renters don't want and shouldn't have to spend money to fix things up because they don't own it."

Those interested in information on Habitat for Humanity Las Vegas can call 638-6477.

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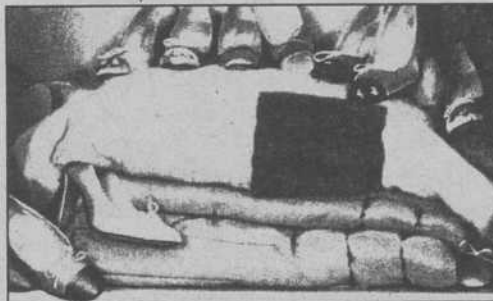
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