

## NEWS CLIPS

### CBC OUTRAGED AT REJECTION OF WHITE'S NOMINATION

The Congressional Black Caucus recently held a press conference to voice its outrage over the 54-45 vote by the Senate to reject Missouri Supreme Court Judge Ronnie White's nomination. "We are here today to urge that the Senate stop playing politics with judicial appointments — stop holding minority and female candidates hostage — and stop denying qualified candidates their day in court," said Rep. James Clyburn, D-S.C., caucus chair. "It's just not fair for the Senate to hold a nomination in limbo for so long. It undermines the confirmation process. "I call upon President Clinton and the administration to continue to nominate more qualified minorities and women to the federal bench and not be deterred by the Senate's action or lack of action." The President, in a statement, said, "I will continue to fulfill my obligation to nominate and press for the confirmation of the most qualified candidates possible for the federal bench. "By voting down the first African-American judge, who was already serving — the first African-American judge to serve on the Missouri State Supreme Court, the Republican-controlled Senate is adding credence to the perceptions that they treat minority and women judicial nominees unfairly and unequally." Judge White's is just one of the many nominations the Senate had not acted upon until the Oct. 6 rejection vote. Judge Marsha Berzon, who has been waiting 20 months, and Judge Richard Paez, who has been waiting 44 months, still have not had their nominations taken before the Senate for a vote.

### SHALALA URGES OLDER AMERICANS TO GET FLU SHOTS

Each winter an influenza epidemic sweeps the country, killing an average of 20,000 people, most of them over 65 years of age, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. While 65 percent of senior citizens receive their flu shots, millions more remain unprotected. "The flu poses a serious potential hazard to older Americans, but it's a hazard we can all protect against," Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala said. "Every senior citizen needs to know that flu and pneumonia shots are convenient, free under Medicare and sometimes life-saving." The flu shot must be given every year, and it is recommended for those at-risk of developing serious complications as a result of the infection: those 65 and older; those in nursing homes; and those with chronic diseases of the heart, lungs or kidneys, diabetes, immunosuppression or severe forms of anemia. For information about receiving a shot covered by Medicare, call 1(800) 638-6833 or visit [medicare.gov](http://medicare.gov). For information about influenza, call the Center for Disease Control at 1(800) 232-2522 or visit [cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/flu/weekly.htm](http://cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/flu/weekly.htm).

### NAACP NAMES DIRECTOR OF REGION III & IV

Jerome Reide, an attorney and an associate professor, was just named the director of regions three and four of the NAACP Midwestern states. He succeeds Rev. Julius Caesar Hope who returned to his original post as Religious Affairs Director. "The NAACP is blessed to have the services of both Reide and Rev. Hope," NAACP President Kweisi Mfume said. "I am happy that Reide is moving into the position as regional director," Rev. Julius Caesar Hope said. "He will be a very capable and competent director. At the same time, I am happy that once again I can devote my full attention to the duties of Religious Affairs Director." Dr. Reide is a professor of Interdisciplinary Studies Program and an associate member of the graduate faculty of Wayne State University. He has a law degree from Hofstra University Law School and holds a master's degree in Journalism from Columbia University. Region III of the NAACP includes states such as Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Kentucky, and West Virginia. Region IV includes Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota, North Dakota, Colorado, Wyoming and Montana.

## Census might revise poverty formula

WASHINGTON (AP) — A panel of government agencies is studying how the nation measures poverty and whether that definition needs updating.

Currently, the Census Bureau issues annual poverty reports, calculating the number of families that fall below an income formula established decades ago.

Changing the formula — and the things counted as income — could greatly

increase or reduce the number of people listed in poverty, a decision sure to draw political fire.

Possible new poverty definitions are under study by an interagency panel, headed by the Office of Management and Budget, the Census Bureau's Kathleen Short said. OMB established the current poverty measures.

Included on the panel are representatives from Census, the Bureau of Labor Statistics,

Housing and Urban Development, Department of Agriculture and other agencies, she said.

Their effort was prompted by a report by the National Academy of Sciences, said Edward Welniak, chief of income and poverty statistics at the Census Bureau. Welniak said the goal is to improve the measure of poverty.

In addition to redefining the poverty threshold itself,

which could increase the number of people considered poor, the Census Bureau has also studied for several years whether to include all or part of non-cash benefits as income for the poor, a change that could reduce the number in poverty. Among the non-cash benefits studied were housing assistance, food stamps and energy subsidies.

The National Academy of Sciences recommended that

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## Crime down for seventh consecutive year

WASHINGTON (AP) — Murder and robbery rates dropped to the lowest levels in three decades in 1998 as serious reported crimes declined for the seventh straight year, but officials and experts warn against complacency.

The overall violent crime rate — 566 murders, rapes, robberies and assaults per 100,000 residents — dropped to its lowest level since 556 in 1985, just before an epidemic of crack cocaine emerged to send it soaring.

The report also showed the use of guns in homicides and robberies is decreasing, and one of the most terrifying crimes that rose with the crack epidemic — murder by a stranger — dropped below half of all slayings for only the second time during the 1990s.

President Clinton and others warned against complacency, however.

"This is good news for America's families, and it shows we can indeed turn the tide on crime," Clinton said in a statement. But, he added, "even as crime falls, we must not let down our guard. That is why we must redouble our efforts to build on what works..."

Attorney General Janet Reno said as a Florida prosecutor, she saw constituents lose interest in crime issues after rates fell for several years. "If we continue our efforts, we can have a substantial impact on

violence and make it permanent," she said.

Reno attributed gains so far to "more police officers on the street, greater partnerships between law enforcement agencies, continued efforts to keep guns away from criminals and a balanced approach that includes prevention, intervention, punishment and supervision."

Reno also expressed surprise at the decline in crime among those in the 15-24 age group. "The number of young people is increasing in America, and we thought that there would be a higher crime rate some time ago because of that," she said.

"We are watching the crime rate go down, although the adolescent population has increased," she said on ABC's "Good Morning America."

Republicans credited their legislation encouraging longer prison sentences for the drop in crimes. Criminologists also cited the aging of baby boomers past crime-prone years and the decline of crack markets.

During 1998, the violent crimes of murder, rape, robbery and aggravated assault and the far more numerous property crimes — burglary, auto theft and larceny-theft — all dropped in number and rate.

The violent crime rate was down 7.3 percent, led by an 11.3 percent drop for robbery and a 7.4 decline for murder.

The aggravated assault rate was down 5.7 percent to the lowest level in a decade. The rape rate declined 4.2 percent to the lowest in 15 years.

The property crime rate fell 6.2 percent — down 9.3 percent for auto theft, 6.2 percent for burglary and 5.7 percent for larceny-theft.

The murder rate of 6.3 per 100,000 residents was the lowest in 31 years. As in 1997, it was the lowest since 6.2 in 1967. The robbery rate of 165.2 was the lowest in 29 years, since 148.4 in 1969.

Firearms were used in 64.9 percent of murders, down from 67.8 percent in 1997, with the drop accounting for the overall murder decline. The percentage of robberies with guns dipped from 39.7 to 38.2.

Professor Alfred Blumstein of Carnegie-Mellon University in Pittsburgh credited big-city police departments with stepping up searches for guns, tracing guns to illegal sellers and even paying bounties to turn in guns — as well as

background checks to prevent sales to felons.

Criminologists said the national figures obscure a lingering problem: Although teen-age killings have been cut in half since their 1993 peak, they remain nearly twice as high as in 1984 — before crack gangs began arming some youths, and their schoolmates got guns to copy them or for protection.

"The crack epidemic has subsided, but we haven't taken all the guns out of the hands of youths," said James Alan Fox, professor of criminal justice at Boston's Northeastern University. "Youth crime is down but not out."

"Police have adopted smarter strategies, focusing on guns and high-risk juveniles, taking a preventive approach rather than waiting in squad cars for 911 to ring," Fox continued. "Communities are involved as never before; corporations have made jobs available; clergy have taken their ministry to the streets."

## Students

(Continued from Page 1)

resemble those of less affluent whites and Asian Americans," the report said.

The report found some signs of progress. For example, the gap in average math scores for 17-year-old minorities versus white students decreased by 30 percent between the early 1970s and the mid-1990s.

And 87 percent of all black students graduate from high school or pass equivalency tests — about the same rate as white students.

In seeking answers about why some minorities might not perform as well academically as their white and Asian peers, the report noted that some experts cited racism, and peer pressure that disparages intellectual achievement.

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