

Serious U.S. crime decline continues

WASHINGTON (AP) — With serious crime down seven percent last year, the nation is eight years into its longest-running crime decline on record, but experts see signs that a bottoming-out is coming.

Preliminary figures for crimes reported to police in 1999 extended a trend begun in 1992, the FBI said Sunday. That eight-year crime decline is now nearly three times longer than the second-longest decline — the three years from 1982 through 1984.

But a slowing in 1999 of the crime decline in the nation's largest cities was seen by Professor Alfred Blumstein of Carnegie-Mellon University in Pittsburgh and other academic specialists as a reminder that crime cannot decline forever. "They (major cities) are the leaders both on the way up and on the way down," Blumstein said.

The FBI report said all

seven major types of crime were down not only nationwide but also in each region of the nation, and in suburbs, rural areas and in cities of all sizes.

The violent crimes of murder, rape, robbery and aggravated assault were down a combined 7 percent, led by murder and robbery, both down 8 percent. Rape and assault were down 7 percent each.

The property crimes of burglary, auto theft and larceny-theft also were down a combined 7 percent, led by an 11 percent decline in burglary. Auto theft was down 8 percent, larceny-theft 6 percent.

Blumstein said the record eight-year decline "may be finally undoing the great rise in crime of the late 1960s."

The nation's longest and steepest crime rise — increases of 10.2 to 13.8 percent from 1965 through 1969 — came as baby boomers

reached the crime-prone ages of 15 to 25 and "civil rights and Vietnam War protests increased distrust of government," Blumstein said.

But there are signs that crime trends may soon flatten out.

In 1999, murder, the most fully reported crime, was down 2 percent in cities over 500,000 population, but fell by between 7 percent and 14 percent in smaller cities, 12 percent in suburbs and 17 percent in rural areas.

Like Blumstein, Professor James Alan Fox of Northeastern University in Boston noted smaller crime declines in the largest cities.

"They will be the first to reach the bottom," Fox said, pointing out that murders in New York actually rose a bit in 1999, from 633 to 671.

"The challenge is to be sure the numbers don't go back up to any great degree," Fox said.

The nation's record prison

population provides only "temporary relief," he added, "because those people will come out of prison and many will still have inadequate skills and bad attitudes."

Attorney General Janet Reno said, "Now is not the time to become complacent. ... Let's try harder. We must redouble our efforts by providing alternatives to crime as well as tough enforcement."

Democrats and Republicans pointed proudly to anti-crime measures they had championed.

President Clinton said the report "confirms that our anti-crime strategy — more police officers on the beat, fewer illegal guns and violent criminals on the street — is having a powerful impact."

Rep. Bill McCollum, R-Fla., chairman of the House crime subcommittee, gave credit to strategies developed by local governments in (See Crime, Page 7)

Event to celebrate black graduates

John T. Stephens III
Sentinel-Voice

The University of Nevada Las Vegas Alliance of Professionals of African Heritage is hosting its first African-American Graduation Celebration for the class of 2000 7 p.m. Saturday in the Moyer Student Union Ballroom. Graduate and undergraduate students are invited.

"For us to come together and celebrate the advancements and achievements of African-American students," said event coordinator Janice Henry, adding that the ceremony isn't meant to detract from the Mother's Day commencement. "It's not a graduation — (It's) an intimate atmosphere — a celebration."

Approximately 200 students are scheduled to participate.

"When I first heard about it, I was excited," said 22 year-old graduating senior Shawna McNair, who's receiving a bachelor's degree in hotel administration. She co-chaired the committee handling the event. "Hopefully, it will start a new tradition at the university. UNLV is a young university and hopefully they'll adopt one for every year."

Henry said similar celebrations are common at other campuses, such as the University of Southern California at Los Angeles.

"Our (UNLV-APAH) goal is to host this event every year," Henry said. "To bring forth unity and celebrate the accomplishments of our students at UNLV."

(See Graduates, Page 7)

Wesley remembered as dedicated church man

Sentinel-Voice

Long-time Las Vegas the Rev. William Henry Wesley was laid to rest April 27. Henry was born Oct. 23, 1903 in Buckner, Ark.

He married his wife Sueanna Halley in 1924 and came to Las Vegas in 1957, where he became a member of New Bethel Baptist Church.

Henry is survived by four daughters; Doris Harris, Dorothy Jones, Betty Sue Ridley, and Betty Louise Porter, six sons; James H. Wesley, the Rev. Jesse L. Wesley, Sr., Wilton Weseley, David Wesley, Lee Burl Wesley, and Saul Wesley, two daughter-in-laws, three son-in-laws, sixty-five grandchildren, fifty-five great grandchildren, twenty great great grandchildren and a host of other family.



WILLIAM WESLEY

Flag debate shows generation gap

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — The dispute over the Confederate flag flying over the Statehouse has exposed a generation gap in the ranks of South Carolina's civil rights leaders.

Some veterans of the struggles of the 1960s support a deal under which the flag would be moved to a less conspicuous spot on the Statehouse grounds. But a younger generation of blacks wants the flag removed altogether

and says the older leaders are too willing to compromise.

"The flag has become a very emotional, symbolic issue," particularly for younger blacks, said Joseph Lowery, president emeritus of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the civil rights group once headed by the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. "It has taken the place of the back of the bus."

The state Senate agreed April 13 to lower the flag as

long as it is raised again above a monument to Confederate war dead on the Statehouse grounds.

The House voted today to (See Flag flap, Page 7)

Rhodes

(Continued from Page 1) valued at \$1,760.

Rhodes dropped the claim last March, citing frustration with the spend time by State Farm's handling of the matter. He said State Farm officials also harassed his friends.

"The grand jury process is a one-sided process," Rhodes said. "You have no rights, no lawyers, no witnesses. It almost violates your civil rights."

Rhodes had planned to challenge Clark County Commissioner Yvonne Atkinson-Gates for her District D seat.

NAACP

(Continued from Page 1)

Owners of black-owned janitorial services said they were promised opportunities to bid on the contract.

"We (NAACP) intend to show we are discriminated against with our own tax dollars," Collins said, adding that no one could explain why the contract was not put out for public bid.

"Now that affirmative action has been done away with we need affirmative action to secure fair bids," Collins said. "We tried to resolve this without protest — obviously our concerns have fallen on deaf ears."

"We have no choice but to forward ahead and bring on a demonstration," said the Rev. Ted Cuveston, national president of Keeping the Dream Alive, a group committed to assisting the NAACP in this matter.

Approximately 10 protesters participated.

"We'll be protesting on this systematically — this is just the beginning," Collins said. "Our plans are to publicly address these violations, seeking immediate response."

The contractor, J.A. Jones, was unavailable for comment.

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