

NEWS BRIEFS

FOURTH BIAS SUIT FILED AGAINST COCA-COLA

A nationally known Black lawyer has filed his fourth suit against Coca-Cola in two years, as another group of plaintiffs has walked away from the \$193 million racial discrimination settlement. The latest suit is for \$1.5 billion in damages. Attorney Willie Gary said the plaintiffs sought him out because they claimed they weren't being represented well. All four suits allege discrimination in promotions, hiring, evaluations, promotions and compensation. The original class-action suit was brought on behalf of 2,200 Coca-Cola employees. Last year's settlement was the largest of its kind.

REPORT: BLACKS ON HI-TECH BUYING BINGE

Blacks are using their new wealth to buy more electronic gadgets such as computers and audio and video equipment, according to an annual report of Black buying power. "The Buying Power of Black America," published by Ken Smikle, president of Target Market News, a Chicago-based national newsletter on Black marketing and media, reports Black households in 2000 bought more than \$5 billion on electronic items—an increase of 32 percent from 1999. "This is a pattern among Black households—in good times and bad—to acquire products that will enable them to access more entertainment and information options at home," Smikle told reporters. The report said the collective income of Black America grew to \$543 billion, a 10.8 percent growth.

BLACK POVERTY RATE AT RECORD LOW

The African-American poverty rate was at 22.1 percent last year, hitting a new all-time low, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. The report also said the 2000 median Black household income hit an all-time high at \$30,439. The White poverty rate was totaled at 7.5 percent, and the White median household income tied its all-time high at \$45,904, said the report. Overall, the U.S. poverty rate dipped from 11.8 percent in 1999 to 11.3 percent last year, its lowest point since 1973, it stated. The report was issued before the Sept. 11 attack on America.

'TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD' RACK ON SCHOOL'S READING LIST

MUSKOGEE, Okla. (AP) - "To Kill a Mockingbird" will once again be on the freshmen reading list at Muskogee High School. The school board voted Tuesday to reverse an August decision removing Harper Lee's 1960 novel from the list. Principal Terry Saul had removed "Mockingbird" from the reading list in light of complaints over the years from black students and parents about racial slurs in the text. Assistant principal Dan Hattaway said a review of the reading list found that "all the books use some language that shouldn't be used in school. But if you threw out everything that was objectionable to people, we'd be using a watered-down version or we'd all be reading Dr. Seuss." The Pulitzer Prize-winning novel centers on the wrongful conviction of a black man for raping a white woman. The story is told from the viewpoint of the young daughter of the man's attorney.

VIRGINIA CHOOSES SITE FOR SLAVERY MUSEUM

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) - A 22-acre site overlooking the Rappahannock River in Fredericksburg has been chosen for a planned slavery museum, former Gov. L. Douglas Wilder said Monday. Fredericksburg was selected in part because of the area's history and its proximity to Interstate 95, about 40 miles south of Washington, D.C. The homes of four slavery-era presidents - George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, James Monroe and James Madison - are within an hour's drive. Several key Civil War battles were fought in and around Fredericksburg. The museum's board of directors also considered sites in Richmond, Hampton and Petersburg. The project was proposed in 1993 by Wilder, a grandson of slaves and the nation's first black elected governor. Organizers have been searching for a suitable location for years. "We're talking about an edifice, a complex, geared toward education," Wilder said. "A place where the history and story of slavery ... is taught and learned." The museum would be built within Celebrate Virginia, a 2,100-acre development under construction that will include restaurants, hotels, golf courses and other attractions.

Commission to monitor agencies closely

WASHINGTON (AP) - The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights on Friday served notice on government agencies that they will be closely watched for violations of laws banning racial or ethnic discrimination.

The commission held a briefing to explore whether civil liberties are being trampled as the federal government seeks to find those responsible for the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks and protect

Americans from future tragedies.

Concerns centered around reports that pilots have removed some airplane passengers as security risks because they appeared to be Middle Eastern and that many of those detained in the government's investigation are being held without bail, some on minor immigration violations.

Commissioners said they plan to monitor whether gov-

ernment agencies are using racial profiling to try to identify terrorists entering the country or catch potential airplane hijackers.

The commission plans to collect data on how immigration cases are handled by the Immigration and Naturalization Service and how the U.S. Department of Transportation investigates discrimination complaints from travelers.

More than 600 people

have been detained or arrested in the government's investigation into the attacks, including about 150 who are being processed for immigration violations.

After hearing that some defense attorneys have been unable to find detained clients, the INS sent a formal reminder to its staff that all have a right to have representation, general counsel Owen Cooper said.

(See Commission, Page 5)

Census reconsiders adjusting numbers

WASHINGTON (AP) - The Census Bureau is nearing a decision on whether to use adjusted census figures to help dole out some \$185 billion in federal assistance to states and cities.

The federal government uses population-based formulas to distribute the money to Medicaid, foster care and other social service programs. Essentially, the more people a place has, the more money it is eligible for.

Bureau officials must determine whether statistical sampling produces more accurate population figures than the raw head count available now.

Most Democrats and civil rights groups say it does, specifically for minority groups and inner-city residents typically missed by the head count.

Generally, Republicans contend adjustment could create more mistakes in the 2000 census, which had a lower net national undercount than 1990's.

The bureau was originally to issue a recommendation next week to Commerce Secretary Don Evans, who would make the final decision. Commerce oversees the Census Bureau.

On Friday though, bureau officials said Evans delegated that decision to Acting Census Director William Barron. Evans is scheduled to be in Russia next week for his first foreign trade mission.

A committee of senior census staffers will now issue a recommendation Monday to Barron. Barron is scheduled to announce his decision Wednesday.

"The question is, can you use the (adjusted data) to help improve the count," Barron said.

The Bush administration faced the same question earlier this year before recommending against using adjusted data to redraw congressional, state and local po-



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litical districts.

The bureau then cited too many discrepancies between the sampled figures, the raw count and a third set of data used to measure accuracy,

and said it had too little time to study the issue.

Evans, who had the final say for the initial decision, agreed. It cleared the way for only the raw head count to be used for redistricting.

"Adjusted data is the only way to get a fair and accurate count," said New Orleans Mayor Marc Morial, president of the U.S. Conference of Mayors.

"The failure to adjust will just create another decade of suspicion about the accuracy of the numbers of people who live in these cities," Morial said. An undercount deprived New Orleans of up to \$60

million in funding over the 1990s, he added.

Bureau officials have said further research indicates they made the right decision earlier this year. Overall, the Census Bureau has estimated fewer Americans were missed this time than in 1990. Undercounts for most minority groups were also lower.

In most cases, however, there were still higher undercount percentages for minority groups than for non-Hispanic whites.

Earlier this week, the National Research Council said the 2000 count was "well

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