

Bush, Dems differ over how to stimulate America

By Hazel Trice Edney
Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA) — President Bush and some economists say the most recent figures collected by the Bureau of Labor Statistics showing the overall unemployment rate falling by one-tenth to 6.0 percent in October is further proof that the U.S. economy is on the rebound.

In his weekly radio address on Saturday, Bush observed, "Manufacturers reported that orders and shipments are both rising," Bush said. "America's economy is getting stronger every day."

While America's economy may be showing

some signs of growth, Bush did not refer to another part of the report that showed the Black unemployment rate rose by three-tenths, from 11.2 percent to 11.5 percent over that same period.

Officially, 8.8 million people are out of work in the U. S., including 1.9 million African-Americans. And while President Bush takes solace in the latest indicators, the nine Democrats eager to challenge Bush in next fall's elections have made job creation a top issue in their campaigns.

"This president is a miserable failure on foreign policy and on the economy and he's got to be replaced," Rep.

Dick Gephardt of Missouri repeated during one debate in Albuquerque, N.M.

On his Web site, DickGephardt2004.com, the former House Majority Leader says,

"America has lost 3.3 million jobs since Bush took office." He notes, "As president, [I] will work to provide economic opportunity for all Americans and support affirmative action programs."

Bush opponents frequently attack his latest round of tax breaks as they advance their proposals for improving the economy.

"Instead of giving tax breaks to companies that move their headquarters over-

seas, we should offer tax incentives for companies to manufacture here in America." Sen. John Edwards of North Carolina says on his site, JohnEdwards2004.com. "We should be exporting American products, not American jobs."

Retired Gen. Wesley Clark of Little Rock, Ark., gets more specific.

"Wes Clark proposes to provide \$20 billion over the next two years in business tax incentives to create American jobs, including in the manufacturing sector," he says on Clark04.com. He also wants to invest \$40 billion over two years in expanding

Homeland Security; thus increasing job growth in fire fighting, policing, medical services, rescue working, and information technology.

As has been the case under both Republican and Democratic presidents, the Black unemployment rate is more than double that of Whites. The average White unemployment rate for the year has been 5.2 percent while the average Black rate has been 10.9 percent.

And that particularly concerns another candidate, Al Sharpton.

"If we do not create jobs, we can have all of the recovery we want in production, we are not going to have consumers to buy it," the activist said in a September debate at Pace University in New York.

Sharpton, whose website is Al2004.org, proposes a \$250 billion plan to create jobs by investing in the redevelopment of America's infrastructure, including \$50 billion a year to rebuild highways, roadways, tunnels, schools and bridges.

Rep. Dennis J. Kucinich of Ohio is concerned about the ~~budget~~ ^{budget} that flows below "In a study completed by the Water Infrastructure Net-

work, it would take \$1.3 trillion over 20 years to build, operate and maintain drinking water and wastewater facilities," he says on his Web site, Kucinich.us. "What America needs is a way to put unemployed Americans to work rebuilding America's neglected infrastructure."

When Bush was elected in November 2000, the unemployment rate was 4 percent overall; 3.5 percent for Whites, and 7.3 percent for African-Americans. Though that rate for Blacks was still twice as high as that for Whites, it represented the lowest Black unemployment rate since the Department of Labor started compiling statistics for African-Americans in 1972.

Connecticut Sen. Joseph Lieberman says race-consciousness must become a key element in "expanding the winners circle."

His Joe2004.com touts that he has "voted against GOP efforts to end affirmative action, and ... helped draft the 1996 welfare reform law that moved millions of people from the dependency of welfare to the dignity of work." He also describes him-

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Some see race as factor in Miss. vote

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — They had all the ingredients to become Mississippi's first Black politicians elected to a statewide office since Reconstruction: strong resumes, party backing and money to lure voters.

But state Sen. Barbara Blackmon, a lieutenant governor candidate, and Gary Anderson, a candidate for state treasurer, both lost Tuesday, and some observers say their skin color factored into the outcome.

Rickey Cole, chairman of the Mississippi Democratic Party, said the GOP's tactics in this election season harked back to "Nixon's Southern Republican strategy to make subtle winks and nods to white racism in the South." Both Blackmon and Anderson are Democrats.

Blackmon got just 37 percent of the vote against Republican Lt. Gov. Amy Tuck, who got 61 percent.

Race wasn't the only factor at work. Beating an incumbent is always an uphill battle, and some analysts said



BARBARA BLACKMON

Blackmon lost votes when she asked Tuck to join her in signing an affidavit swearing she had not had an abortion.

Blackmon's misstep - she was widely criticized in newspaper editorials for the abortion dare - may have hurt her ability to take advantage of criticism of Tuck for getting a millionaire attorney to back \$510,000 in loans for her in 1999. Tuck repaid the loans, plus interest.

Still, some observers say race played a large role in the result. Leslie B. McLemore, a political science professor at Jackson State University, cited Tuck's declaration of support for Mississippi's state

flag and its Confederate battle emblem.

"I think that sent all kind of signals across the state," he said. "She was clearly appealing to that right wing conservative vote across the state."

Anderson, the state's former fiscal officer, lost to a political newcomer, Republican Tate Reeves. Reeves won 52 percent of the vote, while Anderson had 46 percent. They were competing for an office left open by the retirement of the four-term Democratic incumbent, Marshall Bennett.

Blackmon and Anderson lost despite the fact that Mississippi has a Black population of nearly 37 percent and nearly 900 Black elected officials on the county and local levels. It is also not uncommon for Blacks to be elected to statewide office in the South.

Nearly 100,000 more votes were cast in Tuesday's election than in the governor's race four years ago, the most ever in a race

for the state's top elected post. The previous record was set in 1995.

The turnout - and visits by high-profile Republicans like President Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney - appears to have helped lift former Republican National Committee chairman Haley Barbour to victory over Democratic Gov. Ronnie Musgrove. Barbour, who had

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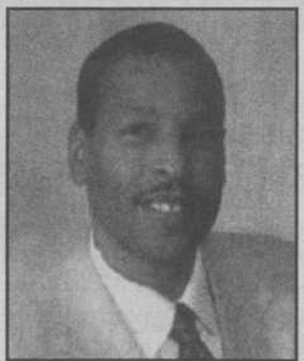
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Circus

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