

Lewis: Washington needs change in political brass

By *Lés Pierres Streater*
Sentinel-Voice

A change in administrations and a change that would return Democrats to leadership in Congress are needed in Washington, according to John Lewis, the eight-term Democrat from the Fifth Congressional District in Georgia.

"I truly believe that we will have new leadership in Washington, new leadership in the Congress, new leadership in the White House," Lewis said following a recent luncheon at Sweet Georgia Browns.

The luncheon was hosted by the Caucus of African-American Nevadans, Congresswoman Shelley Berkley and the Nevada Host Committee.

"The needs of the American people, the basic human needs of the American people, will be put back on the agenda," Lewis said. "We will have an administration that will create jobs, economic growth, provide comprehensive healthcare for our citizens, protect the environment, provide more resources for education, and get us out of the mess that we're in in Iraq."

"This war was unnecessary and we didn't need to go to war," Lewis said. "There's no way to justify the military action. It makes me so mad, and so sad to see these young men and women that we're losing. Some of these young

people are fresh out of high school. They are 19, 20 and 21 years old. A lot of the young people that we're losing are minority; they're Black, they're Hispanic.

"Ex-offenders should have their rights restored. Laws now prevent ex-offenders from voting.

"At the state level, we need to pass a law changing that, making it possible for people who have paid the price and served their time to have that right to vote restored," Lewis said. "We need to pass state laws and federal laws to make that happen."

"We are debating and discussing that issue among the Congressional Black Caucus right now," Lewis said. "How do we come to grip with the fact that a whole segment of the population — and many of these individuals are African-American males, and in some places there's enough people to make up a congressional district — that we deny them the right to vote and have representation?"

Republicans, who hold the majority in the House of Representatives, are blocking proposed legislation that, if passed, would restore voting right to ex-offenders.

One in 50 adults are currently or permanently disenfranchised of voting as a result state felony voting laws, according to the web site of Rep. John Conyers Jr., D-Mich.

That means approxi-

mately 1.4 million voting-age African-Americans males are able to cast ballots but because of the state laws they are stripped of this right.

Conyers introduced legislation H.R. 906. The Civic Participation and Rehabilitation Act would guarantee "the right of an individual who is a citizen of the United States to vote in any election for federal office shall not be denied or abridged because that individual has been convicted of a criminal offense unless such individual is serving a felony sentence in a correctional institution or facility at the time of election. Ordinary offenders who have served their sentences should not be permanently barred from participation in the political system as voters."

Another issue taken up by the Congressional Black Caucus is reparations for the ancestors of slaves. Republicans are blocking that proposed legislation, too.

"We have a piece of legislation that has been introduced and there's never been a hearing on it and won't be until we come back in power with a majority," Lewis said. "John Conyers, ranking member of the House Judiciary Committee, will become the chair under new leadership."

If Conyers becomes chair, "I guarantee that we will have that debate. We need to have that hearing in the House of Representatives."

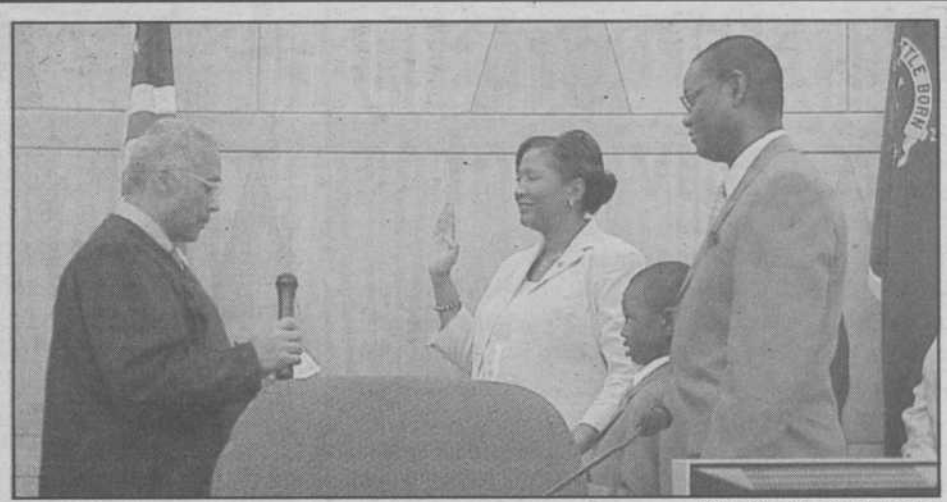


Photo Special to Sentinel-Voice

FROM COUNCIL TO COMMISSION

Joined by her husband and son, former Las Vegas City Councilwoman Lynette Boggs McDonald was sworn in Tuesday as county commissioner for District F. Performing the honor was newly appointed Nevada Supreme Court Justice Michael Douglas.

Downtown Reno shows its age

RENO, Nev. (AP) - A handful of buildings in downtown Reno have seen parts of three centuries and are starting to look like it.

Reno's Historical Resources Commission is concerned that they could go the way of the Mapes Hotel.

Commission member Neal Cobb is particularly worried about the 132-year-old former Masonic Temple, which is believed to be the oldest building in Reno. The structure at the southeast corner of Sierra Street and Commercial Row currently is a warehouse for Fitzgeralds Casino Hotel.

It's on Thursday's agenda for the commission, which advises the Reno City Council on historic preservation.

There are no plans to tear down the building, said Fitzgeralds marketing manager Roxanne de Carlo. But preservationists worry that Reno's history, including the downtown building, will continue to vanish.

"We are going to run out of anything that's part of our history," Cobb told the Reno Gazette-Journal. "We can screw around and become a city with no history."

The commission's concerns, which became a community uproar when the city demolished the 53-year-old Mapes in 2000, were heightened last month when fire gutted a 94-year-old building on Bell Street that had been Reno's first church for African-American

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Horsford

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"I am breaking a rule that I have of not getting involved in primaries," Berkley said. "Every now and then there is somebody that is so special in our community that they deserve the extra help in the beginning. Steve Horsford is one of those people."

At times, Horsford was overcome with emotion.

"Less than a mile away from here, my father was shot and killed over drugs and crime 12 years ago," he said, fighting back tears.

"Where I did not know my father well, and I did not grow up with him intimately, the idea of losing the person who helped to create me was a tragic event in my life. During the same time, I watched as my mother struggled with drug abuse and addiction, which almost resulted in losing the other person responsible for bringing



Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy

Nevada Partners Chief Executive Officer Steven Horsford told campaign supporters Friday that his Senate run is predicated on helping the area he lives and works in.

me into this world. Unfortunately, the struggle that I just explained is not unique to me or my family, but is something that plagues many Black families and the symptoms that contributed to this problem must be addressed if we're really going to really

effect change in this community."

Besides drug abuse, other issues mentioned by Horsford were crime, education, employment, restoring rights to ex-offenders, healthcare and the high cost of prescription drugs.

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