

NEWS BRIEFS

CALIF. REGENTS VOTE TO RAISE REQUIRED GPA

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) - University of California regents voted Thursday to raise the required grade-point average for incoming students, drawing an angry response from students that the move would hurt enrollment of Blacks and Hispanics. The decision raises the minimum required GPA from 2.8 to 3.0. The vote infuriated about three dozen students at the meeting, and they greeted the decision with shouts of "Education is a right. Not just for the rich and White." The change, which takes effect for students entering in fall 2007, stems from a recent report that found only 14.4 percent of California high school students are meeting UC requirements. Under state educational policy, UC is supposed to draw students from the top 12.5 percent of graduates, designing its admission standards to capture that group. UC officials calculated that raising the GPA requirement would lower eligibility rates for all students. However, most of the debate focused on the effect on Black and Hispanic students, since those groups already are underrepresented at UC.

LAW SUIT ALLEGES RACIAL BIAS AT WAL-MART

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (AP) - Wal-Mart has been sued in federal court by a man who claims the world's largest retailer discriminates against Blacks in 12 Southern states from seeking truck-driving jobs. The plaintiff, Daryl T. Nelson, of Coldwater, Miss., alleges that Wal-Mart rejects and discourages Black applicants for truck-driving jobs at the chain's distribution centers in Arkansas, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. An Equal Employment Opportunity Commission document attached to the complaint found "reasonable cause" to believe Nelson, a 22-year veteran of driving trucks, was discriminated against. The EEOC said Wal-Mart hired some White drivers with more serious driving violations and less experience than Black applicants. Gus Whitcomb, a spokesman for Wal-Mart, said Wednesday that he couldn't comment on the lawsuit because he hadn't seen it. However, he said, "We do not discriminate in our hiring practices." The suit seeks class-action status.

COSBY PLEDGES \$1 MILLION FOR SLAVERY MUSEUM

FREDERICKSBURG, Va. (AP) - Comedian and actor Bill Cosby pledged at least \$1 million for a planned U.S. National Slavery Museum. Cosby announced Friday he would donate proceeds from 10 concerts to the museum effort, or between \$1 million and \$1.5 million, museum officials estimate. Cosby sits on the museum's board. "We need history," Cosby told an audience in Fredericksburg, where the museum is planned to open in 2007. "We need proof for our children... to see the strength of their ancestors." The museum plans fundraising activities in conjunction with each concert and hopes to raise \$20 million, said Ed Wegel, chairman of the museum's capital campaign committee. Former Gov. L. Douglas Wilder, the nation's first Black elected governor, has estimated the museum project will cost \$200 million. Construction on the five-story, 250,000-square-foot building is scheduled to begin later this year.

ANTHRAX OUTBREAK HITS ANIMAL PRESERVES

HARARE, Zimbabwe (AP) - An outbreak of anthrax has killed at least 1,500 wild game animals in nature preserves in southeastern Zimbabwe, a state-run newspaper reported Monday. The Herald newspaper reported that Dr. Stuart Hargreaves, head of livestock and veterinary services in the Agriculture Ministry, said most of the deaths occurred in the past three weeks in the remote Malangwe and Save preserves, about 480 kilometers (300 miles) south of Harare. Hargreaves said about 700 big game animals including rhinoceros and buffalo were vaccinated against the hemorrhagic disease. The carcasses of at least 1,400 smaller plains animals, including common antelope-like species, were burned, he said. He said the outbreak, one of the largest reported in a wildlife area, was waning. There were no immediate reports of human deaths in the outbreak.

Black voters sought by White liberals

By Hazel Trice Edney

Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - Money that normally goes to African-American grassroots groups with a proven track record of successfully turning out the Black vote is being diverted this year to White-managed 527 groups that feel they have a better knowledge of how to turn out the African-American vote than experienced Blacks, a miscalculation that some experts feel could cause Democratic nominee John Kerry a victory on Nov. 2.

"The thing that is criminal about it is that we could lose the election because we're not putting the resources into the hands of those who can mobilize the Black vote," says University of Maryland political scientist Ronald Walters. "They're making some serious errors with these resources by not connecting up to the people who can move this full apparatus. This is another form of colonialism — colonialism is about control."

Among the primary groups being crippled is the

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National Coalition for Black Civic Participation, of which Walters is a board member.

Four years ago, NCBCP, which includes 84 member organizations, was able to raise \$3 million for its Unity 2000 campaign for voter registration, says Melanie Campbell, the group's president and chief executive officer. This year, with a matching number of ad hoc groups, Unity 2004 has struggled to meet its financial goals for registering and turning out the Black vote.

"We're way off from that," says Campbell, who declined to give an exact figure. "Normally, we would have had all kinds of town hall meetings. We haven't had any."

The 527 organizations, named for the Internal Revenue Service code that covers their status, are private groups that are allowed to raise unlimited money from unions, corporations, individuals, and even other 527s for the purpose of influencing political elections. They were set up to counter the large contributions donors had been making to the Republican Party. The top 527s includes: the Media Fund (\$28 million); America Coming Together (\$27 million); Service Employees International Union (\$16 million); American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees, (\$13 million); and MoveOn.org (\$9 million),

according to OpenSecrets.org., a site that helps monitor campaign spending.

Black groups are baffled that 527s, which are mostly Democratic-leaning, hire independent consultants to go into the Black community and determine how to get out the vote.

Campbell says this insults groups that have been doing this for years.

"We organized ourselves to get more Black people elected, we organized ourselves to impact the electoral process, we closed the gap in registration between Blacks and Whites, we closed the gap when it comes to turnout," says Campbell. "Then, all of a sudden, these groups pop up. To me, this is about are we going to lose control of trying to empower ourselves? Part of that has to do with having the resources to do what we need to do for our community."

ACT spokesman Patrick Gaspard says neither ACT nor the Media Fund, one of its partners, set out to slight (See *Manage*, Page 6)

U.S. funds drying up for community cops

BILLINGS, Mont. (AP) - Federal funding for the grant program that has helped hire thousands of community police officers across the country may be drying up. After several years of declining financial support, the Bush administration proposed no funding for that hiring program and others like it for the next fiscal year.

Detective Sgt. Mark Mulcahy hit the streets one recent Saturday, checking on convicted sex offenders in Kalispell. It's a duty he believes makes the northwest Montana community safer, but it probably would not exist if a federal program hadn't helped put another cop on the street to free up Mulcahy.

"In the past, we didn't have the opportunity to do this," Mulcahy said in a telephone interview. "It's such a large job, it kind of requires at least one person designated to it."

Administration officials say the Clinton-era effort met its goal of helping put more than 100,000 officers on the streets and in schools across the country, and that there were no guarantees for long-term funding levels.

Many in law enforcement see the timing as unfortunate. Departments across the country, even small ones, are being asked to take on more

responsibility in the wake of the 2001 terrorist attacks. At the same time many departments — especially those in rural areas, where even one extra officer is a big benefit — are seeing their own local funding tighten. Many say the potential loss of federal hiring dollars removes one of the best tools they've had in recent years.

"When you find something that works, you hate to see it go away, particularly I would think now, when safety has to be a top priority," said Frank Garner, president of the Montana Association of Chiefs of Police.

"We clearly have more police officers in uniform than we would have otherwise," said Garner, who also is the police chief in Kalispell, a town of about 14,000 people in the Flathead Valley, not far from Glacier National Park.

"For the last two years, we've seen police agencies do all they can to meet demands put on them," said Gene Voegtlin, legislative counsel at the Virginia-based International Association of Chiefs of Police.

"The only way you're going to have an effective anti-crime or anti-terror effort is to have people out working with communities," Voegtlin

said recently.

That was the idea behind the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, or COPS. Since 1995, it has provided nearly \$10 billion in grants to state and local law enforcement, including funds for hiring, equipping and training officers, said Gilbert Moore, a spokesman with the office. Montana alone has received about \$60 million, which has been used in part by departments to hire about 395 officers, he said.

Hiring funds have been declining since fiscal year 1999, when about \$1.2 billion was available for COPS-administered hiring programs, Moore said.

In fiscal year 2004, only about \$114 million was avail-

able, Moore said.

John Nowacki, a Justice Department spokesman, said hiring programs administered through COPS have met the goal of funding the hiring of 100,000 officers.

"The mission for funding is completed," he said.

Under the Universal Hiring Program under COPS, the government picked up as much as 75 percent of entry-level salaries and benefits for new hires over three years; the maximum contribution over that period is \$75,000 per officer. Those hired were expected to be in addition to any officers that would have been hired using local dollars, and departments had to keep officers on at least one

(See *Cops*, Page 5)