

# Black legislators talk health in Las Vegas

By Kathi Overstreet  
Sentinel-Voice

Black Congressional leaders are making their mark in Nevada stomping the campaign trail for the Democratic Party while blasting the current administration's position on health care.

At the invitation of Congresswoman Shelley Berkeley, U.S. Representatives Diane Watson and Barbara Lee of California visited Las Vegas Monday along with other members of the California Congressional Delegation to discuss health care issues affecting Americans.

Watson became a state senator in 1978. She joined Congress to represent the 33rd District of California in 2001, following the legacy of the late Congressman Julian Dixon who had held



Reps. Barbara Lee (left) and Diane Watson, both D-Calif., toured Las Vegas talking about health care in Black America. The duo visited at the request of Rep. Shelley Berkley, D-Nev.

Sentinel-Voice photo by Kathi Overstreet

the post for 22 years. She has watched firsthand the changes regarding health care

in this country and how it has affected Californians and all Americans.

Regarding the current administration's view on emerging health care issues

and how they affect African-Americans, she said: "The three tax cuts by Bush have depleted our coffers and we don't have money to put into the states for health services that we need, in particular to fight HIV/AIDS... the emerging group of people being infected are African-American women."

Watson's background in dealing with health and social issues as an elected official is extensive. From 1981 to 1998, she chaired the Senate Health and Human Services Committee. During her tenure in the California State Senate, she became a statewide and national advocate for health care, consumer protection, women, and children. In 1993, she authored the California Birth Defects Monitoring Program Act that

led to pioneering research of causes of birth defects. The act also gave way to the Residential Care Facilities Act that ensures senior citizens receive quality care in nursing and assisted living communities. In 1997, she introduced legislation to toughen food health safety requirements for restaurants. She also played a key role in the enactment of legislation to promote breast cancer research.

Her colleague in the House, Lee, was elected to California's Ninth Congressional District in 1998 in a special election to replace retiring Congressman Ronald V. Dellums.

Lee has served on the International Relations Committee and the Financial Services Committee. (See *Congress*, Page 15)

## Children's Sabbath focuses on millions in poverty

By Marian Wright Edelman  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Hundreds of congregations of every faith across our nation will be celebrating the 13th annual Children's Sabbath this weekend to lift a faithful voice of concern and commitment to our nation's children. They believe God will judge us not by our words but by our deeds, and how we live our faith in action to nurture and protect the children God has entrusted to us. In three decades, there has never been a more urgent need to put our faith into action than right now.

This weekend, churches, synagogues, mosques and other houses of worship will participate in the Children's Defense Fund-sponsored National Observance of Children's Sabbaths. Each congregation, in its own way, will pray, speak out and act on behalf of the nearly 13 million children living in poverty, more than 9 million children without health insurance, the eight children and teens killed by gunfire every day, the 542,000 children in our foster care system, and the millions of children who are hungry, at risk of hunger, homeless, or living in terrible housing.

They will be responding to God's charge in every faith to protect the poor, care for the

young, speak out against injustice and end oppression. In the enduring words of the prophet Micah, God told us what is good: "And what does the Lord require of you but to do justice and love kindness and walk humbly with your God?"

Galilee United Methodist Church in Englewood, N.J., will be answering that charge on Sunday. Their children won't be fidgeting in the pews but will be leading prayers, reading scriptures about God's charge to protect children and the poor, providing the music, making the announcements and participating in a prayer of commitment to children — all issuing the call of faith to protect children and inspiring members to respond with hands-on service and work for justice.

Congregation members will study children's concerns and respond by gathering shoes and necessities for poor children.

The Children's Sabbath service is part of that faithful walk with God, but the commitment to children does not end with worship. After these services, churches, synagogues, and mosques will register new voters to vote for the young people who cannot vote, lobby or speak out for themselves. They will host

town hall meetings to talk about the issues at stake for children in the upcoming election and how to make justice for children and the poor a priority.

They will assemble backpacks of school supplies for children who need them, sign up as tutors and mentors, partner with social workers, volunteer with Head Start centers, and create after-school programs. St. Paul AME Church in Raleigh, N. C., builds on their Children's Sabbath commitment by offering an SAT preparatory course to help children do better.

They've tracked their accomplishments and have beaten the expensive Kaplan SAT prep program by 30 points. In their programs and efforts, they reach beyond the church to engage young people of the entire community. Cornerstone Missionary Baptist Church in Greenville, N. C., lives its faith in action by providing a model child care program.

In just a few weeks, our nation will determine the direction we will take and the leaders who will guide us. Will we choose those whose priority is children and the poor, or the privileged? Will we elect those whose concern is the children, or the political contributors? Will we pick leaders who merely talk

the talk of faith, or those who really walk the walk and act on the prophets' and Christ's priority for the poor and oppressed?

If there ever was a time to stand up, speak out and act courageously to defend our children from fear and want, this is it. The very future and soul of our nation are at stake.

Get your congregation to do something for each of the remaining Sundays in October that will focus attention on children and the poor. Distribute free materials from CDF's "Children Can't Vote. You Can" get-out-the-vote campaign.

Distribute bulletin inserts with key facts, preach prophetic sermons for justice, offer prayers for wise decisions by leaders and citizens, educate others about the importance of voting for justice and children. Pray that our nation will put justice for children and the poor first. And then get out and vote on November 2 to help make it so.

You can download easy-to-use Children's Sabbath resources at [www.childrensdefense.org](http://www.childrensdefense.org). Call 1-866-274-9654 to request voter education and turn-out materials.

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## Overstreet

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the number of police officers can be funded to increase a law enforcement presence in a neighborhood so much in need.

Since Sheriff Young is doing his part, let's do our part by voting to marginally increase

the sales tax in Clark County on November 2, 2004. Voting for this ballot initiative will allow the Sheriff to hire more police officers to work in a collaborative manner with the good citizens of West Las Vegas and other areas in the county as well.

## Waters

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Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and in the South and Republicans have a reason to be running scared.

This is the reason why access to the ballot box has been more politicized in this election cycle than ever before. Each side knows the stakes, the games of the other, and are prepared to fight. This is, also, a major reason why those who are the most savvy about elections are looking past the

polls to these factors that have improved Democrats' chances to increase turnout substantially.

Increasing the vote under these circumstances depends upon Black voters having the courage to resist intimidation and to meet it by doing as we have done in the past; by rising up to challenge and defeat it.

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## Curry

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wing judges, some of them White. It observes, "...Race and gender alone do not guarantee support for civil rights. Some of President Bush's non-minority nominees hold views that would limit the scope and strength of civil rights laws, as some of his minority and female nominees."

FAITH-BASED INITIATIVES—Upon entering office, Bush pushed for expansion of religious groups to receive federal funds. The study by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights observes, "Although the initiative constitutes a retreat from civil rights, President Bush has consistently presented it as an extension of civil rights to religious groups."

HISTORICALLY WHITE COLLEGES

— In 2002, Bush re-established the President's Board of Advisors initiative on Historically White Colleges and Universities. "The board recommended that 27 participating agencies designate 10 percent of all money spent on higher education to HBCUs; only the Department of Education has met the goal," the report states. "The board also is more than two years behind schedule in releasing annual performance reports, rendering a government-wide evaluation of HBCU programs difficult."

No amount of post-debate spinning can alter that record.

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