

# Congress

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vices Committee. Currently, she co-chairs the Progressive Caucus, is whip for the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), assistant Democratic whip, chair of the CBC Task Force on Global HIV/AIDS, and co-chair of the CBC Haiti Task Force.

She also is a member of a variety of task forces, including the Democratic Health and Medicare Task Force, the Democratic Safe Neighborhoods Task Force, the Pro-Choice Caucus and the Global Climate Change Caucus.

"One of the issues that I addressed immediately when I went to Congress was the HIV/AIDS pandemic in my own district," Lee said. "We were the first county [Alameda] in the country to declare a state of emergency as it relates to the African-American community and HIV/AIDS... I was amazed and shocked that Vice President Cheney didn't know about this pandemic in the African-American community... I was appalled at his lack of knowledge."

During their visit to Las Vegas, Cordell Stokes, second vice president for the Caucus of African-American Nevadans (C.A.A.N.), invited Watson, Lee and community leaders to tour Rainbow Medical Centers, one of Southern Nevada's premier health care facilities.

The centers seven locations are owned and operated by an African-American couple, Dr. Anthony and Diane Pollard.

"We are the first independently-owned ambulatory care facility in the Las Vegas area to receive accreditation by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO)," said clinic administrator Debra Toney.

Hannah Brown, president of the Urban Chamber of Commerce commended the Pollards on their service to the community and their relentless efforts to give back to the citizens of Nevada.

"I am extremely inspired to know that legislators in other states are just as concerned as we Nevadans are

about the health care of Americans across the country. The Pollards have been leading the way in the area of health care service for years."

In addition to talking health care, Watson made it clear that she and Lee were in Las Vegas to push the Democrats' platform.

"Make no mistake about it, we are here because of John Kerry, and we want him to be the next president of the United States, to start moving this country in a different direction," she said.

Watson and Lee announced their support for the Kerry/Edwards ticket and Tom Gallagher, candidate for

Congress in District 3. If Gallagher wins, he would put Democrats one step closer to taking back control of the House of Representatives.

"If we can take back the House [of Representatives], then we can set policy. We have not been able to set policy under this administration. If this man [Bush] is able to get another four years in office, he will be given the opportunity to appoint four more people to the Supreme Court," Watson added.

Lee said a lot is at stake and pushed the need to educate voters about a pending bill that will benefit communities of color as it relates to

diabetes, prostate cancer, breast cancer, HIV/AIDS and other health care gaps in these communities.

"There is a bill pending introduction by our tri-caucus made up of the Congressional Black Caucus, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus and the Congressional Asian Pacific Islander Caucus. This legislation closes the health care disparity in communities of color. Under the current administration and current representation in Congress, we cannot even get a hearing on this legislation... So we encourage people to vote early, talk to your neighbors, and take them to the

polls. We must make sure that this election is not stolen from us. We want every vote cast and every vote counted. A lot is a stake this time around with the health and well-being of the African-American community."

On Friday, Illinois State Sen. Barack Obama (D-Chicago) will attend a fundraiser on his behalf at Nevada Partners, 710 W. Lake Mead Blvd., from 8 to 9 a.m. Donations are \$150. To RSVP call 702-632-3922.

Following the fundraiser there will be a free "Get Out The Vote" rally at the West Las Vegas Library, 951 West Lake Mead Blvd.

# AIDS

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Bush] can go to Congress and ask for tax relief and money to fight a war in Iraq, he has the ability to get money for HIV/AIDS treatment, and he should be held accountable," says A. Cornelius Baker, executive director of the Whitman-Walker clinic, a Washington, D.C. community health organization. "We have to get real about who people are. We can't fight HIV/AIDS in one group of people, unless we fight it in all groups of people."

And fighting AIDS among African-Americans is what the Black Aids Institute plans to do.

"This weekend we will be hosting the Mobilization Initiative Black Media Roundtable in Atlanta, which will be held to provide technical assistance to journalists covering HIV/AIDS and to continue the mobilization of the Black community," explains Wilson, head of the Black AIDS Institute. "Black people should definitely demand of all of our leaders that AIDS be a major priority. This is our people, our problem, our solutions."

# Working Poor

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the federal minimum wage to be raised from its current \$5.15 an hour to ensure those in such positions can support their families, researchers said.

Besides child care, the report also suggested expansion of the federal earned income tax credit, as well as more incentives for states to offer similar refundable tax credits for such families. The report also called on states to improve educational opportunities, such as adult education and literacy programs, for low-income workers who want to move on to higher-paying jobs.

Sheri Steisel, director of human services policy at the National Conference of State Legislatures, commended the study but said state lawmakers are hamstrung by tight budgets. "It's not a lack of interest in the topic, but it's a question of financing," she said. "States have had to struggle on where to put their limited dollars."

The study urged federal and state lawmakers to work more closely to evaluate government policies and make better use of limited funding.

"Obviously under the current (economic) circumstances, that's going to be a very contentious issue, but we would suggest that it's a high priority issue," Roberts said.

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