

C O M M E N T A R Y

Black America, it's time to prepare for 2008 elections

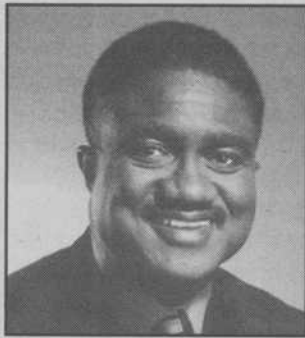
By George E. Curry
Special to Sentinel-Voice

If this election proved nothing else, it demonstrated that when presented with a clear choice between presidential candidates and people are educated about what is at stake, African-Americans will vote in record numbers. Across the nation, we showed up and showed out.

However, in the justified euphoria over Black voter turnout, we must remember that there's still plenty of work remaining. And rather than wait another four years to awaken from political slumber, we should start planning now for the 2006 off-year Congressional elections. That could be a test-run for making sure the tenant that occupies the White House in 2008 has our best interests at heart.

Let's start by examining the numbers. There are more than 100 districts in the United States where African-Americans make up at least 20 percent of the electorate. With at least one-fifth of the vote — often enough to determine the outcome of an election — we should make sure these lawmakers are more responsive to our interests.

Within the next couple of weeks, the National Newspaper Publishers Association News Service (NNPA) will not only



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identify those Congresspersons, but disclose the grades they received on the latest NAACP Civil Rights Report Card. And once we disclose that information, we trust that you will know how to approach people in your district and state. If those lawmakers are not already supporting our issues, make

them an offer they can't refuse — demand that they immediately modify their behavior or we'll permanently modify their political career.

Given our population, we should also be able to demand more loyalty from our Senators.

Blacks are more than 25 percent of the population in five states: Mississippi (36 percent), Louisiana (33 percent), South Carolina (30 percent), Georgia (29 percent) and Alabama (26 percent). African-Americans represent 21 percent of the population in North Carolina, 20 percent in Virginia, 19 percent in Delaware, 16 percent in both Tennessee and Arkansas, and 14 percent in Michigan.

Even with those numbers, Senators in most of those states felt emboldened enough to support the confirmation of George W. Bush's Right-wing judges to the federal bench while ignoring our concerns about

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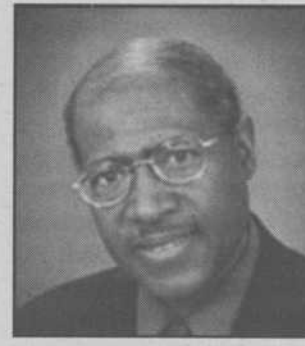
Bush's power of ideology signature of his longevity

By Ron Walters
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Did you see those last-minute polls that had Bush leading in states that gave him 172 to 295 electoral votes. Many people that I talked to scratched their head, not knowing what to make of it.

Here is a man that has invaded another country illegally, wasted the lives of over 1,000 brave young soldiers, wasted untold financial resources, lied about the reason for going to war, run up trillions of the national debt, given corporations billions of dollars in no-bid contracts in broad daylight, soured the relationship of America with most of its major allies, and can barely rub two sentences together to get out a mediocre thought — and he has been leading the most powerful nation in the world.

I understand the utter disbelief of most people because his supporters are the people who have preached at Blacks and the poor for years. They have made us believe that America stood for democratic values, that they wanted an international system that was civil and free from the domination of tyrannical violence, that they stood for excellence in leadership, and we believed them. We also believed them when they said that they had no resources for social programs: "Where will the money come



RON WALTERS

from?" has been the question.

Well, I don't every want to hear that question again because I know that it is not an issue of the availability of resources, it is the presence of the values and priorities held by the ruling class. And I also don't want anyone to tell me that Black people can't run this coun-

try or anything else, when the gang running it headed by a former drunk who was also a failed businessman and whose father was responsible for making him governor of Texas — and everything else.

So how did Bush get there? I wrote a book about it. He is there because the facts don't really matter, his background really doesn't matter, his actions really don't matter. In fact, he is there because he gets some of the highest scores on public opinion polls on "likeability." In other words, he got there because he is liked and trusted by the majority to do what they want. He shares the ideology and world view of the majority.

I can remember some of the most authoritative voices in the media and politics talking about Marion Barry, the former mayor of Washington, DC, who was busted on a drug charge, saying, "What will the children think" Won't his drug and alco-

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Beware of insurance policies designed to hurt Blacks

By James Clingman
Special to Sentinel-Voice

No doubt you have heard about the various insurance companies being sued because they misled and cheated Black consumers. I remember my great-grandmother religiously paying her few cents on her debit policy in the 1950's; every Saturday when the agent came to the door she handed him the payment and he wrote it in a little book she kept. Of course, when she died there was no money at the end of that policy. What was it that made our elders care so much about paying those premiums? You may not have noticed, but we do the same thing today.

Why are some of our people still paying for "policies" while not receiving anything in return for their money except a promise? To what kind of policies am I referring? Well, there's the one that signs us up for, say, \$25 per month, and then promise to be there when we need a legal service. There is also the kind that promises good health if we would just pay a small amount every month, or the one that offers us millions of dollars in return for a mere \$29.95 per month. Of course, you can pay it in a lump sum if you choose.

These are the modern-day insurance policies that are sold to Black people and others, of course, that for the most part are never used or redeemed. These policies never pay off, not even when you die. We pay the premiums into a pool of reserves that create and maintain wealth for other people but never trans-

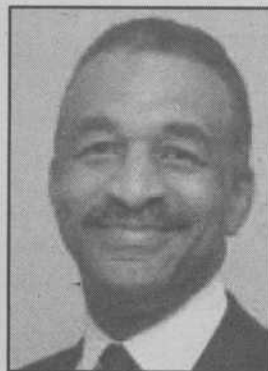
late into wealth for our people. Sure, there are the "success stories" they always parade out for potential policyholders, but the chances are slim to none that a cancelled check, such as the one they always let you see, will ever be in your bank account. Yet, we sign up to pay for a policy we trust will pay-off one day and carry us to that promise-land of riches we dream about.

Black consumers pay into an array of "policies" owned and controlled by non-Black companies or individuals. Some may be good and some may pay-off, but the point is that we do it and promote them as if they belong to us and as if they actually will help our people. They may help you as an individual, but as for the Black collective, I don't think so.

I remember Brother Ken Bridges telling me that after reaching the highest level in a nationally-known multi-level organization he walked away from it.

"Why would you do that?" Ken and his wife were asked by friends and associates. Ken told me that after he discussed with top management the possibility of adding some component that would help empower Black folks, and being turned down, he left the organization.

He left because the policies they were selling had no positive, long term, collective



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economic effect on his brothers and sisters. Sure, Ken and his family were earning a tremendously good living, but he was concerned that there was no way the masses of Black consumers could truly benefit from what he was involved with. He knew that ownership of income-producing assets such as distribution channels, manufacturing concerns, and other businesses were necessary for Black people

to move forward collectively. Ken also knew, as Martin Delaney told us, that our economic prosperity had to come from the work of our own hands.

Ken Bridges was a rare brother, a Marcus Garvey-type brother, who put the welfare of his people before his own. I am not suggesting that every Black person will or even should do the same as he did. What I am suggesting is that we consider the ways we are spending our money by taking a look at the "policies" we pay for very month, and start putting more of our money into policies that Black folks write. Let's pay some premiums to ourselves for a change.

Just as we pay for our life insurance policies to pass something on to our families, especially our children, when we die, we should also be willing to pay on a collective policy that will strengthen and sustain our children and their children long after we are

gone. Our conspicuous consumption of everyone else's products and services are essentially economic insurance policies for those who own the businesses we support. If we would support our own businesses and pay more of our premiums to them — to ourselves — we could build an economic future for our beneficiaries.

Beware of so-called Black leaders who stand up and promote Black support of companies that require us to pay premiums on "insurance policies" sold by everyone else. Beware of them, especially if they do not also promote Black-owned companies that have the same kinds of "policies," "memberships," "monthly purchasing plans," etc. You should at least question why they are advocating for non-Black businesses and not advocating for businesses owned by their brothers and sisters.

Black people must not repeat the mistakes of the past by paying monthly "insurance premiums" to everybody except ourselves. Monthly payments to Black businesses, through purchasing and memberships, and monthly payments to Black organizations via local investment and loan funds for OUR businesses will lead us to collective economic prosperity. Let's leave some paid-up "collectible insurance policies" for our children.

James E. Clingman is an adjunct professor at the University of Cincinnati's African-American Studies department.