

# Bush's budget bashes African-Americans

By Ron Walters

Special to Sentinel-Voice

I don't know if you caught it, but when President George Bush was leaving the joint session of the Congress, following his State of the Union Speech the other night. He leaned over to Congressman Bobby Rush of Chicago on his way out and said: "I listened to you all at the meeting [I had with the CBC recently], and I included some of your thoughts in the speech." To this, the new Black Congressional Caucus Chairman, Mel Watt of North Carolina said, "There was nothing in that speech that even pretends to address the Congressional Black Caucus agenda."

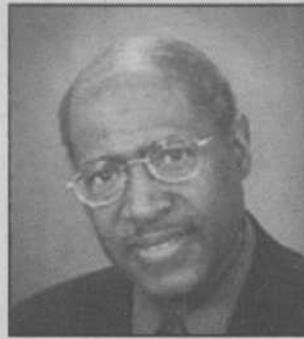
The feelings of the CBC Chair were confirmed by the release of Bush's new federal budget proposals last week that cut or eliminated 150 programs concentrated in the social side of the domestic budget where the CBC lives. The budget proposals of any president are important because, although they are proposals and are seldom passed into law as they are, they give us a serious look at what the top elected officials in the country intends to do with the national economic resources to satisfy pressing problems.

An analysis of this budget by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities suggests that its impact on programs involving the poor, veterans, child care, education and health could

be harsh. Child advocates, including the March of Dimes and the American Academy of Pediatrics, said that, "the budget frays the safety net for millions of children from low-income working families." If this was not enough, the U. S. Conference of Mayors blasted the administration's budget proposals as taking resources from those who need low-cost housing and from housing programs for poor neighborhoods and slashing aid to cities by one-third.

Things don't just happen this way, especially at the level of the presidency. The slow economy, on top of huge tax cuts enacted by the first Bush administration, together with the war in Iraq and Afghanistan have helped to create enormous pressure on the Federal treasury and Bush has chosen to take it out on the domestic budget. The pressure puts Bush and his colleagues in a position to appear innocent as to the causes and to go on a cutting binge that, if enacted into law by the Congress, could cripple those who need government most for some time to come.

The reasons for the cuts don't make sense as an accidental mistake of policy making. Why would the education president elimi-



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nate or consolidate funding for 48 education programs?: take \$1.9 billion from vocational education; take \$2.2 million from a program to educate youth about the Underground Railroad; propose cutting \$3.5 million from tribal colleges serving 77 tribes in 15 states; take \$312 million from Upward Bound; take \$437.4 million from Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities and cripple No Child Left Behind by taking \$94.5 million away in grants to create smaller learning environments within large schools.

Why would the health care president cut funding for the Centers for Disease Control by 9 percent, cut funds for the fight against obesity by 6.5 percent, cut training for health professionals by 64 percent, and cut doctors for children's hospitals by 33 percent, and totally eliminate the block grant of \$131 million for preventive health services to address urgent health problems? Many of these programs directly target health care priorities of concern to the Black community.

Otherwise, spending for HIV/AIDS was proposed to increase, as well as community health centers and Bush's pet program of sexual abstinence. Another increase would

bring the latter to \$192 million, an increase of 50 percent since 2005. (But it would also fund most of the cut in Upward Bound.)

George Bush says that the cuts in these programs or their outright elimination were justified by the evaluation of his cabinet officials that they were no longer needed since they were not being effective. Well, million of people who need education can testify to the contrary that programs such as vocational education and Upward Bound were effective. And million of those who need the health services proposed to be cut from federal budget can also bear witness that such things as preventive health care services are important to shielding them from more serious problems. On the other hand, it is profoundly true from the research available that abstinence programs, while morally justifiable, are also practically ineffective.

Often get questions from journalists about why it is that Black people don't vote for Republicans. They are often well-meaning questions, voiced with even painful expressions of confusion. Next time I get one, I think I'll just give them a copy of the cuts in the federal budget proposed by President George Bush.

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## Reform

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ern Christian Leadership Conference, who was visiting Los Angeles, showed support and pledged to organize marches and "do whatever is necessary" to bring justice. Supporting the economic boycott, Steele said the SCLC will not hold its annual convention in Los Angeles until justice is served.

"We are here to help you take care of business," he said during the empowerment summit at Bethel, pledging the SCLC's support in organizing marches and rallies in the coming weeks. "You can't expect a system that enslaves you to save you."

Ministers and members of the community were expected to meet yesterday to discuss the details of the economic boycotts.

Rev. James Lawson, director of the local branch of the SCLC, said murders like Brown's occur four times a week in this country, "proof that lynching is still going on. This can be stopped, and it is up to us to make Devin Brown's death the last. The city council needs to just tell the police department to kill no more children."

In an interview with the *Wave* newspaper,

Bratton urged people not to take matters into their own hands and called on community leaders to be careful in the words they use.

"I am asking community leaders, particularly those on the radio, to temper their remarks because... we have a potentially volatile situation," he said.

"Why would anyone who is interested in seeing justice done, who lives in the city and cares about the people, want to incite people needlessly? I've heard some of the rhetoric and while I can appreciate the emotion behind them, these are thoughts best kept to themselves rather than try to stir up others [to riot] because in that situation, everyone loses."

Bratton was referring to speeches such as the one given by Bo Taylor, a former gang member and founder of Unity One, a street ministry negotiating gang truces, who said during a meeting of the Police Commission that war is on the horizon if the LAPD does not change tactics and start respecting Black and Brown life.

"Many of these kids have nothing to live for and they aren't afraid to die," Taylor said. "You wanted a war on gangs, Chief Bratton?"

Well, you are going to get what you ask for. You're on your way out."

Assistant Chief Jim McDonnell said at that meeting there may already have been an attack on police.

Just hours before Brown was shot and killed, 77th Street Station may have been the target of a drive-by shooting. McDonnell said the incident is still being investigated and it is unclear who was involved, what the motive was, and who the target was.

No one was hurt. Shell casings were recovered near the station.

Minister Muhammad said the shooting of Brown could have been retaliation by officers for the shooting near 77th, a statement Bratton finds hard to believe.

"I just don't buy that," Bratton said. "The officers [involved in the Brown shooting] were from Newton [Division] not 77th. The issue is, what happened when the car [Brown was driving] finally stopped."

Bratton said under his watch, the department has made progress, including tightening the rules governing when officers can initiate a pursuit.

"We looked at how we conduct pursuits and since making those changes, we have seen a dramatic reduction in pursuits," he said.

"Secondly, we have totally revamped the use-of-force investigation, making them more transparent."

He said officers are being trained to follow the California Highway Patrol's car chase procedures, including the use of spike strips that puncture tires to immobilize fleeing vehicles as well as being taught how to use their patrol cars to make fleeing vehicles spin to a halt, often called a pit maneuver. Bratton has also set up a new LAPD unit to investigate shootings.

The chief said he is concerned about how the Brown shooting and Miller's arrest will affect his strained relationship with the Black community.

From the moment he was sworn in, Bratton has made it a priority to heal the relationship between African-Americans and the police department and has made some progress, according to Black leaders. However, that relationship is being tested.

If Bratton does not recommend the dismissal of at least one officer, Mack said Bratton will be taking a giant leap backward. "It will hurt. It will hurt a lot," Mack said.

"I think that our relationship is always going to be tested by these events, but I think there is a sense of honesty in trying to address these issues, and I think our relationship will help us move forward with solutions," Bratton said.

"My focus will continue to be informing the public on the process, in other words, [always being] transparent and willing to speak, whenever asked, on the issues. As you talk with John Mack, Minister Muhammad, Ms. [Geraldine] Washington of the NAACP, I hope you hear they have felt well informed. They may not be happy with what they are hearing, but I'm not going to sugar coat it. I tell it like it is."

Kevin Herrera writes for the *Wave*.

## Clingman

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Butler, author of the best-selling book, "Sorority Sisters," will be encouraging all of the "sister friends" to sign up when they come together on Butler's Sisterhood Cruise ([www.tjbutler.com](http://www.tjbutler.com)) in August 2005.

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