

Changes in Missouri law could hurt Black businesses

By Alvin A. Reid
Special to Sentinel-Voice

ST. LOUIS (NNPA) Two months from now – May 23, 2005 – might go down as the worst day for Missouri minority business owners since the Civil Rights Act passed 50 years ago.

A hearing is scheduled on that date in a Kansas City federal courtroom where a preliminary injunction requiring Missouri to drop a requirement that certain percentages of each state contract go to women- or minority-owned businesses could be made permanent.

The result of such a ruling would be “devastating,” according to Ivan James, founder of Ivan James and Associates, a products distribution firm.

“We fought real hard to get this (executive order), and there is a possible setback.”

James was among a number of minority business owners and operators who attended a recent forum on the Harris-Stowe State College campus hosted by state Reps. Amber Boykins (D-St. Louis) and Ted Hoskins (D-North St. Louis County) and the Missouri

Minority Business Advocacy Commission. On January 28, U.S. District Court Judge Gary Fenner of Kansas City issued a preliminary injunction in response to a lawsuit from a Colorado company.

The late Gov. Mel Carnahan signed an executive order into law seven years ago that generally sets goals of 20 percent minority and 10 percent female participation in contracts for services, materials and construction. Behavioral Interventions Inc. of Colorado sued, contending that the state denied it a contract because it did not meet a requirement that 30 percent of the total dollar value of the contract go to women- and minority-owned businesses.

Behavioral Interventions sought a \$4.5 million contract with the Office of Administration to supply and service electronic monitoring devices for the state prison system. The company testified it reached 19.6 percent women and minority participation, but the state insisted on 30 percent and gave the contract to another firm, the lawsuit said.

“As of January 28, we have been unable to

place the goals in contracts,” said Marvin Eason, director of the state Office of Administration’s Office of Equal Opportunity. “Where we go from here, we’re not sure.”

Kathy Conley Jones, president of the Conley Financial Group, wondered, “What truly are the abilities to get a change in the (injunction) How successful can we be? What can we do?”

Joan Gummels, assistant attorney general, said that the office “is vigorously defending” the goals established by Executive Order 9821.

“The constitutionality of the order is what was challenged by Behavioral Interventions. The state must prove that it had a compelling interest to enact the order and that it is narrowly tailored to meet those ends. The state certainly had compelling interest to remedy past and current discrimination. Yes, the order is narrowly tailored because there is a flexible waiver procedure. The court made no specific finding about what it finds problematic. That, we don’t know.”

Gov. Matt Blunt is reportedly in support of the executive order, although he has not taken an active role in its defense.

“It has been indicated to me that (the governor) supports it,” Hoskins said.

However, no one in attendance said they had spoken directly with the governor on the subject.

Eric E. Vickers, activist and attorney, said governors of other states that faced similar lawsuits suspended the letting of all contracts until the matter was settled. “Right now, minority-owned companies are out and contracts are still being awarded,” he said.

James said it would be hypocritical if Blunt does not wholeheartedly back Executive Order 9821.

“The governor was just in St. Louis celebrating Anetta Vickers and her company, T.A.B. It would be terrible to applaud on one hand and then take away the opportunity that could be applied to others who have not had the chance that T.A.B. had.”

Alvin A. Reid writes for the St. Louis American.

Record number of female soldiers dying in Iraq war

By Molly M. Ginty
Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (WOMEN’S E-NEWS) It struck Lori Piestewa of Tuba City, Ariz. when her Humvee crashed and she was captured in Nasiriyah, Iraq.

It hit Pamela Osbourne of Fort Hood, Texas, when a bomb targeted her camp in southern Baghdad.

It struck Kimberly Voelz of Carlisle, Pa., when she was defusing explosives in the town of al-Iskandariyah.

Death has claimed a record number of female soldiers serving in the U.S. military in the current conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Despite rules that have prohibited women from fighting on the front lines, female soldiers in these conflicts are facing virtually the same risks as men because of the nature of these missions and because of overall troop shortages in Iraq, some military analysts say. In light of this — and in response to charges that the military has failed to adequately protect its female soldiers — the House Armed Services Committee is preparing a report on the feasibility of assigning women to combat-related positions.

The forthcoming report — due this spring — has stirred debate on how female soldiers should serve alongside men and whether the military can and should uphold rules meant to minimize women’s risks.

“These rules no longer make sense because no place is safe in Iraq,” said former Congressional Rep. Pat

Schroeder, D-Colo., who served on the House Armed Services Committee from 1973 to 1996. “The whole place is literally a front line.”

According to U.S. military records, 33 female soldiers — three in Afghanistan and 30 in Iraq — have been killed since operations started in Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003.

In addition, 240 women have sustained combat-related wounds in Iraq and Afghanistan. Left with permanent injuries that have sometimes required amputation, most of these women — like those killed — were struck by bombs that hit transport units or camps with no warning.

“We don’t track the number of women soldiers wounded by U.S. forces in friendly fire,” said Army spokesperson Lt. Colonel Bryan Hilferty. “But these accidents don’t happen often.”

The death and injury toll for female soldiers in the current conflicts shatters previous records for women serving in positions that are also shared by men. In the Gulf War — the — first major conflict where women soldiers served alongside male soldiers — 216,000 women were enlisted and 16 were killed. In Iraq and Afghanistan, only 17,000 female soldiers are enlisted. But their deaths account for 33 of the 1,000 estimated fatalities among servicewomen in U.S. history. To date, nearly all of these fatalities have been among female nurses and

support staff.

“Having this many female casualties in uniform is certainly new,” said Michael O’Hanlon, a military analyst for The Brookings Institution in Washington. “It has made this policy debate more visible and more visceral.”

Historians estimate that only 20,000 American women have fought in battle since Margaret Corbin hoisted her petticoats and took charge of a canon after her husband fell in the Revolutionary War.

Since the creation of the Army Nurse Corps in 1901, women have been employed

directly by the military. But until recent decades, most have served as nurses and support staff. That started to change in the Korean War during the early 1950s, when the military began accepting women for active duty.

In 1992 the Air Force began allowing female pilots to fly in some combat missions. In 1993 the Navy started allowing women to serve on combat ships. In 1994 the Army dropped a rule prohibiting women from filling positions with a “substantial risk of capture.” These changes opened up 90 percent of military jobs to women for the

first time.

“From this point onward, women were not only trained to use arms, but could also fire them on the job,” said retired Air Force Capt. Barbara Wilson, founder of Military Women Veterans in St. Augustine, Fla.

Today, female soldiers take infantry training alongside their male companions, learning how to fire assault weapons and move under direct and indirect fire.

Accounting for 15 percent of all service people and 10 percent of soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan, women work as engineers, truck drivers, pi-

lots and weapons experts.

Two prohibitions hold female troops back from full parity. They are barred from positions that involve direct combat (such as serving on submarines, in the Special Forces and in infantry, armor and artillery positions). They are also barred from “collocated units that support combat troops.

A woman can serve as a medic, for instance, but not as a medic in a unit that “collocates” or supports a unit on the front line.

The Army is covertly violating its collocation rule and (See Soldiers, Page 15)

Progressive Community Church of God in Christ

A Message From our Pastor, William O. McCurdy



Elder William and Billie McCurdy

1311 West Owens Ave.
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The community is
cordially invited to attend
our Easter Worship
Service at
5:00 am and our morning
service at 11:30 am

Sunday Morning Service 11:30am • Sunday Evening 7pm to 9pm
Sunday School 10am to 11am Bible Study Tues. 7pm to 9pm
Prayer/Pastoral Teaching Thurs. 7pm to 9pm