

N.C. slavery bill garners vigorous support

By Cash Michaels
Special to Sentinel-Voice
WILMINGTON, N.C. (NNPA) — To Rep. Larry Womble, if a company or corporation wants to do business with state government, it should open its books first to see if it ever made its money from the slave trade, in the interest of full disclosure.

But to conservatives, all the Black lawmaker really wants are reparations for the enslavement of Africans and their descendants, and they're determined to stop him. Womble denies the charge.

The controversy is about state House Bill 1006, which has the short title "State Contracts/Slavery Profits."

Rep. Womble is the primary sponsor.

The measure requires companies "... entering into

contracts with state departments to examine their records for evidence of participation in or profiting from slavery."

"The bill, which has already cleared the House Government Committee by unanimous vote, defines slavery as "the practice of owning enslaved persons"; slaveholder as Holders of enslaved persons, owners of business enterprises using enslaved persons, owners of vessels carrying enslaved persons or other means of transporting enslaved persons, and merchants or financiers dealing in the purchase, sale, or financing of the business of enslaved persons"; and profits as "any economic advantage or financial benefit derived from the use of enslaved persons."

If passed, all vendors seeking to contract with

North Carolina state government would be required to submit an affidavit certifying that they have searched their companies, and any predecessor company records, for evidence of "... participation or investment in or profits derived from slavery, including slaveholder insurance policies issued during the slavery era."

If there is evidence, the vendor would be required to "disclose any and all records of participation in or profits derived from slavery by the vendor, or any predecessor vendor, including issuance of slaveholder insurance policies during the slavery era, and the vendor has identified the names of any enslaved persons or slaveholders described in the records."

"They can still do business with the state; it is not restrictive; it is not punitive," Womble told *The Wilmington Journal* last week.

"The value," he added, "is more information. Without

that information, a lot of our decisions will be flawed."

The state can "terminate a contract entered into with a vendor if the vendor fails to fully and accurately complete the affidavit required," Womble's bill adds.

In cases of emergencies, the requirements of the measure would not apply. Also, other state, county, city or federal government entities would be exempt from the requirements.

"It's not anything brand new," the Forsyth County Democrat said, noting that other states and local governments have implemented similar measures.

"We must make sure that history reflects the correct [information] as it involves North Carolina. Let's make sure that the history we're telling is the correct history."

But everyone doesn't see it that way.

In the May 16 edition of *Carolina Journal*, the online newsletter of the John Locke Foundation, a Raleigh-based

conservative think tank, an article titled "Reparations Bills Could Hurt Dems Most" charged that Rep. Womble is a "known reparations activist."

The article also quotes Peter Flaherty, president of the National Legal and Policy Center in Falls Church, Va., and co-author of a study, "The Case Against Slave Reparations," as saying, "... the bill in North Carolina is an attempt to legitimize a broader nationwide movement to shake down corporations.

The ultimate goal of the legislation ... is to provide a massive payday for 35 million Blacks across the nation."

The article went on, "Flaherty said the research provided in the 35-page NLPC study is an attempt to 'sound the alarm,' on the potential firestorm of events to come. He said history is being revised and heroes vilified through the many attempts already made by those

who are seeking a big payday for events that happened 140 years ago. "It's totally ridiculous to pay them," he said. "We are doing what we can to stop it."

"That's the farthest thing from the truth..." Womble replied. "If I wanted reparations, I would have put it in the bill. I did not want it, and I'm not seeking it, and I'm not asking for it. That point I want to make abundantly clear. The bill doesn't even mention it." The bill lets us know who we're doing business with," he adds.

Womble says the information disclosed would actually help to heal wounds left by the slavery era.

"It shines light on these companies or organizations, but it may also be used in positive way. 'Yes, we have participated,' a company might say, 'but we are moving forward to make sure that this does not happen again.'"

Cash Michaels writes for the Wilmington Journal.

Editor of Augusta Focus in Ga. dies

Special to Sentinel-Voice from the Augusta Focus

AUGUSTA, Ga. (NNPA) — Funeral services for Theresa Minor, editor-in-chief of the *August Focus*, were held Friday at Mt. Vernon Baptist Church in Augusta. Minor died May 30 from breast cancer.

Minor worked for the newspaper for three years, first as a staff writer, and she earned the title editor-in-chief. Prior to her arrival, she worked for *Augusta Metro Courier* and WTOG Channel 11 in Savannah, Ga.

She is most remembered for her many achievements as editor. Minor created what she called "the new look" of the *Augusta Focus* and also hosted the radio show "Off the Record." She worked well under pressure, maintained office decorum, required professionalism and attention to detail. She added "flava" to *Augusta Focus* and the Walker Group and she will be missed by all. The staff and her peers will miss her sense of humor and the hard work she has contributed over the years.

Minor is survived by two children, a son, Kenyon Jones, 27, and daughter, Lauren "Nikki" Minor, 14.

Juneteenth

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celebration traveled across the U.S., and many other cities began celebrating this date. Juneteenth is often referred to as African-American Independence Day. This June 19 will be the 140th anniversary celebration of Juneteenth tradition.

For the past 25 years, Juneteenth has been a celebrated holiday in the state of Texas. There have been efforts around the nation to make it a national holiday. Juneteenth is one of America's fastest growing celebrations, as the number

of cities recognizing it grows each year.

"We have always had 2,500 to 3,000 people come out to the festival. We think with the over 200 commercials we [are broadcasting on television] will push the attendance at the event even higher. We are expecting anywhere from 3,000 to 5,000 people this year," said Hughes.

"With all of the [radio spots and public service announcements] we have gotten a very good community involvement. We feel this year is even better than last

year," Hughes added.

The Las Vegas Juneteenth festival is sponsored by Rainbow Medical Centers in conjunction with other major local corporations. Funds raised at the event help to fund the programs supported by the Anthony L. Pollard Foundation, including the building fund for the Rainbow Dreams Academy.

The Anthony L. Pollard Foundation was established by Diane Pollard, a director of the foundation, and Anthony Pollard, director and founder of the medical centers, with the goal of provid-

ing scholarships to high school seniors.

This year, the Foundation held a Juneteenth scholarship essay contest. The contest winner was Jeremy R. Washington, age 17, who wrote on the topic of what Juneteenth means to him. Washington, who will be presenting his essay at the festival, won a \$1,000 college scholarship.

For more information about the foundation's programs and this year's Juneteenth Festival, visit www.alpfoundation.com or ask for Kathy at (702) 255-6659.

Filibuster

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needs except in extraordinary circumstances. At the same time, they agreed to oppose attempts by GOP leaders to change filibuster procedures.

The third prong in the agreement was to end the filibusters of Owen, Brown and Pryor, virtually guaranteeing their confirmation in the Republican-controlled Senate.

It takes 60 votes to bypass a filibuster. In July 2003, Republicans were able to get only 53 votes for the state attorney general. In November 2003, they were able to get 51 votes for Pryor and 53 votes for Brown. The two have been stuck since then.

The Senate is anxious to move on to considering energy legislation and spending bills instead of taking up Bush's other appellate nominees including Henry Saad, William Myers, William Haynes and Brett Kavanaugh.

Those nominees were not guaranteed confirmation votes in the centrist agreement, and

Democrats are expected to try and block all of them.

Frist said Tuesday he wasn't shirking a fight over those nominations. "As they come out of committee, we're going to bring them to the floor," he said.

But Myers' nomination already is pending in the full Senate, and the others have yet to get a vote in the Senate Judiciary Committee. North Carolina judge Terrence Boyle is the only name expected to be voted on by the committee on Thursday.

Overshadowing everything is a potential vacancy on the Supreme Court. The most likely for retirement this summer is 80-year-old Chief Justice William Rehnquist, who has cancer. The Senate then would have to debate Bush's choice for that court, pushing other nominees even further back in the queue.

Democrats have been arguing that the Republican-controlled Senate has spent too much time on Bush's judicial picks and not

enough on the country's other priorities. "We've spent endless hours, endless days, too many weeks debating radical judges and Republican attempts to abuse power," said Senate Democratic leader Harry Reid of Nevada.

But Brown's supporters said her confirmation to the D.C. circuit was long overdue.

"She does possess outstanding qualifications to have first earned the nomination from our distinguished president and secondly, to have earned the support of this body in the advise and consent role," said Sen. John Warner, R-Va., one of the centrists who forged the filibuster compromise.

Brown's supporters said critics were concerned about a conservative Black woman getting a seat of power inside the federal judiciary. Brown becomes the second Black woman on the D.C. court, which decides important government cases involving separation of powers and the authority of federal agencies.

Democrats have been blocking Brown

because they see her as a conservative judicial activist who ignores the law in favor of her own political views. They are critical of her record as a jurist who supported limits on abortion rights and corporate liability and opposed affirmative action.

Pryor was given a temporary appointment to the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals by Bush after being blocked by Democrats. That appointment should be allowed to expire at the end of the year, instead of confirming him for a lifetime position, said Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass.

A confirmation vote is expected for Pryor on Thursday, but Kennedy said Democrats would have plenty to say before that vote.

"We are going to be spending days to make sure the American people understand and know what Mr. Pryor said about the Americans with Disabilities Act, let alone what you said about voting rights, let alone what he said about family and medical leave," Kennedy said.