

Forum targets political empowerment

CAAN, Las Vegas NAACP, Sentinel-Voice aim to educate African-Americans on system

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Sentinel-Voice

The Caucus of African-American Nevadans and the Las Vegas Chapter of the NAACP, along with the *Las Vegas Sentinel-Voice*, will co-sponsor Political Patronage, a free public forum, Saturday at the Las Vegas Library, 833 N. Las Vegas Blvd. from 10:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m.

This will be the first in a series of forums designed to educate and enable African-Americans in Clark County to register to vote, to better understand the political party system, and to learn how to advocate effectively on issues affecting the Black community.

Cordell

Stokes, a spokesperson for CAAN stated the reason for sponsoring the forum: "Ramon [Savoy, Las Vegas Sentinel-Voice publisher and editor -in-chief] and

"We want the politicians to come to the forum and talk about their political platforms — regardless of their party. We also want to educate those individuals who may be considering running for a [political] office."

— Cordell Stokes
Spokesperson for CAAN



myself have been in discussion about putting together a collaborative effort to continue to push the envelope of educating the African-American voter on a variety of political subjects. This will allow them to get a better grasp of the various political cycles that are a part of the process."

At present, many in the African-American community are disillusioned with the two-party political system of Democrats and Republicans whose focus appears to be on wedge issues of immigration reform, gay rights marriage, flag burning, tax breaks for the wealthy, outsourcing jobs abroad and enhancing the profit margin for corporate America.

Absent from those discussions are issues important to African-Americans, including reparations, re-enactment of the Voting Rights Act, relief for Hurricane Katrina victims, educational reforms, affordable healthcare, employment with living wages, affordable housing and prison reform.

Whatever the perceptions and attitudes are, African-Americans must realize that in order to make an impact in the political process, they must not only be registered voters, but have the ability to mobilize and focus their strength on candidates and issues important to them and not just be seen as a token or throw-away vote by the present two-party political system, according to event organizers.

The total number of registered voters in Clark County is 806,500; only 606,364 are considered active voters.

African-Americans comprise 9 percent or approximately 72,585 of registered voters and 7 percent of active voters or approximately 42,500.

African-Americans represent 8.75 percent or approximately 158,350 of the county's total population of 1,815,700, according to the census demographics for Clark County in 2005.

Stokes explained that many voters never

get "the opportunity to sit down and converse with the politicians," adding that the prospective voters and constituents "have a very long work day to contend with, along with taking care of their family."

Stokes continued, "We want the politicians to come to the forum and talk about their political platforms — regardless of their party. We also want to educate those individuals who may be considering running for a [political] office."

Stokes emphasized the need for this training to encourage more people to run for office and help them know "what is required and what resources are available" to assist them in vying for an elected office.

W. Dean

Ishman, president of the local chapter of the NAACP, spoke about his group's participation in the forum. He said, "The NAACP is actively involved and engaged in voter educa-

tion. Right now, we are conducting interviews of prospective candidates in various races. Our organization's theme for this year is "Voting our Values and Valuing our Vote."

He added, "This particular forum that we are going to participate in is extremely important to helping us identify the issues that are important to us as a people"

Ishman said "voter education is a key part to promote responsible voting, and we're hoping that everyone will come out and learn about the parties..." Ishman strongly urges "sharing that information with others and finally making an informed decision as to how their vote will count in the upcoming elections."

A major component of the forum will allow participants to hear from the politicians why their respective party may be better to address and resolve the issues or interests of African-Americans. "We cannot allow ourselves to become complacent about one candidate or one particular party."

The public is encouraged to attend this forum and take part in an extensive question and answer period to learn from the politicians about their respective political parties — bar none, according to CAAN.

The non-partisan platform of CAAN means that they facilitate access for the public to all politicians — candidates for elected office, elected public servants and appointees to certain offices — without regard to party affiliation or any other criteria, according to its policy since the organization's inception three years ago.

CAAN evaluates candidates and makes its endorsements for elected or appointed offices and takes a public position on issues of concern to the African-American community.

The NAACP's focus is to educate voters and would-be participants about the process of voting; the importance of using each individual vote and advocating for fairness in voting without barriers, especially those based on racial bias and institutionalized rac-

ist practices that still exist in some places, according to organizers.

The editorial position of the *Sentinel-Voice* newspaper is a call to action: Vote, in every

election, on every issue, and get as much information as possible to make a better personal decision on what and whom to vote for and when to vote against anything.

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featuring Broadway Tony Award Winner
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A Black Tie Affair

Proceeds from the event will go towards the endowment to fund programs in the Clark County "Dr. William U. Pearson Community Center", operated by the Las Vegas-Clark County Urban League. We invite your support through the following options:

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