

League

(Continued from Page 1) has not been raised from organizations. And they stood up at the last minute to a small but determined group. The polite way to describe them is interveners. The street way to describe them is just plain old-fashioned obstructionists. And they stood up at the last minute and sought to hijack the Voting Rights Act with 40-year-old, worn out arguments."

He added, "But the story that I think is more important to tell tonight is the way this broad coalition came together, the business roundtable, and the AFL-CIO, the NAACP, the Urban League; conservatives, liberals, moderate Democrats and Republicans. When you get 98 votes in the U.S. Senate, you've got some kind of coalition for civil rights in America."

He hopes that coalition can be mobilized to increase the minimum wage, which

has not been raised from \$5.15 in 10 years.

"We have to send a message to people that work is valued," Morial explained. "If we want them to value work, work must compensate them in a fashion where they can afford to, at least, pay some bills."

Moving beyond the minimum wage issue, Morial pledged to launch a national effort aimed at ending poverty and building wealth.

"We are going to bring our message of jobs and housing, business development and financial literacy to communities across the nation; hold Town Hall meetings, have workshops, highlight the very important work the Urban League affiliates," Morial said.

"...But we want them to know we are only scratching the surface in terms of people who need our help and need our services. And we also want to bring a message to

"What will I, what will we, what will individual families and communities do for themselves?"

— Marc H. Morial
President, CEO of the
National Urban League

our community that closing the economic gap and the economic divide is not simply about what will someone else do for me. And it also embodies some self-determination. What will I, what will we, what will individual families and communities do for themselves?"

Looking to the next presidential election, Morial says he is inviting all presidential candidates to appear before delegates at next year's national convention in St. Louis.

"By asking early, we will



not tolerate any excuses of scheduling conflicts," Morial said. "So let the word go forth."

More important than the invitation, Morial said, is that the National Urban League will make a radical departure from how it interacted with political candidates in the past.

"We are going to work to change the conversation with those that are going to lead the country in this fashion," he stated. "Our Policy Institute is now in the process of developing the opportunity

compact agenda... We want to develop concrete public policy proposals that operationalize with specifics our thoughts about how to close the economic divide in America.

"And why are we doing this? Because we want to deliver these ideas to the candidates who want to be president. We want to change the conversation. For too long we sit back and people come, and we ask them: 'What are you going to do for our community? What is your idea about urban America? Where do you stand on the important issues facing our community?'"

Morial said, "We're going to change the conversation, and we're going to say here is where we stand. Here are what our ideas are, and we'd like you to come to St. Louis next year and respond."

He also hopes that African-Americans will respond to another call.

"Recently in New York, there was a man charged with a hate crime. He committed an act of violence while uttering an ugly racial epithet. His defense was that this racial epithet, the 'n' word, had now become so mainstream, so common in its usage that it was no longer a derogatory term."

But Morial strongly disagrees. "Now, I want you to join me in a personal and collective pledge. We've got to remove the 'n' word from our private conversations," he said. "It is ugly, and it is despicable. And if we don't want it to appear in music, then people who make music can't hear it in their homes. They can't hear it in the neighborhoods. We've got to remove this word from our vocabulary because it's not acceptable. And we can't expect others not to use it if we pretend [that] somehow it is a term of endearment. It isn't."

Abortions

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pected to sign whatever version of the bill emerges from conference committee. If he does, it would be the latest restriction in a campaign by anti-choice religious advocates to chip away at abortion rights via incremental laws rather than an overarching measure to ban the procedure altogether.

During this congressional term, in addition to the parental consent measure, House Republican leaders have pledged to consider a measure that would require women who seek abortions after 20 weeks to acknowledge in writing that the fetus has the capacity to feel pain.

In 2004, President Bush signed into law legislation that criminalized injuries to fetuses that arise from violent offenses. And in 2003, he signed a bill that banned a procedure its opponents call "partial birth" abortion, a law that has the potential to outlaw all abortions performed after the 12th week of pregnancy.

This fall, the Supreme Court is scheduled to consider the constitutionality of the federal Partial Birth Abortion Ban Act. At the same time, reproductive rights groups will be preparing their challenge to the teen consent bill if it is signed into law.

As in the suit over the so-called partial birth abortion law, lawyers will stake much of their challenge to the teen consent bill on its lack of a health exception for the woman, Sternberg said. That requirement was upheld in the 1992 Supreme Court case *Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania v. Casey*.

The legislation also violates principles of federalism and due process, Sternberg added. It requires a certain set of teens to abide by both the laws in states where they are traveling to and where they reside, she said, essentially treating some teens as "foreigners in other states." In addition, the bill could subject teens to harm imposed by the government because it would encourage them to take the potentially dangerous task of driving themselves to and from clinics to get an abortion, she said.

LaRue of Concerned Women for America disagreed. "It'll be upheld in a heartbeat," she said, noting that the Supreme Court has upheld state parental notification laws in the past. Even some pro-choice advocates concede that a legal challenge would be an uphill battle.

"The Supreme Court rulings on minors' access would be tough to overcome," said Gloria Feldt, the former president of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America. "I don't hold out much hope given the fact that the courts have been packed by George Bush with anti-choice judges."

Allison Stevens writes for Women's e-News.

Variety

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for all age groups [we serve]. We work with the Clark County School District and collaborate with them to offer the early child integration program."

Collins said she is particularly proud of one of the program's benefits: "We take children with special needs and we put them right into the program. It is very gratifying."

The program has evolved since its founding. In 1982, the center expanded its services to include children younger than two years old. Other benefits added include child-care scholarships for low-income families.

The growth of the program required support from other sources to maintain its services for client families.

"With the facility looking to get federal grants, 'Divine Providence' had to be dropped from the name in order to qualify for these grants," Collins explained.

In 1990, with the sixth expansion since the home's beginning, the name was changed to Variety Day Home. Earlier this year, the facility changed its name to Variety Early Learning Center to describe more clearly the mission of the program. "People now understand that we are a childcare center and not an old-folks' home, and our name reflects that," Collins said.

One of the most amazing things to her is that "some of the children who attended now send their children here," she said.

Collins enthusiastically added, "I am looking forward to seeing those [former students], who are now adults, at our 50th anniversary."

The event planning coordi-

ators want to hear from anyone who attended, worked at or had any past affiliation with the Variety Early Learning Center or Day Home or knows of

somebody who was associated with it.

Call 647-4907 or email rubbyexec@lvcoxmail.com for event participation or information.

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