

# Jobs, unemployment rise in November

WASHINGTON (AP) - Gearing up for the holidays, employers boosted hiring in November, and hundreds of thousands of jobseekers streamed into the market, nudging the unemployment rate up to 4.5 percent.

The Labor Department's mostly positive report, just released, showed a national job climate that remains quite sturdy despite the troubled housing and automotive industries.

That cheered Wall Street, easing investors' fears that the economy was in danger of losing too much momentum. The Dow Jones industrial average gained 29.08 points to close at 12,307.49.

Employers added 132,000 jobs to their payrolls, an improvement from the 79,000 generated in October.

Sharing in the gains were retailers, bars and restaurants, hotels and motels, health-care providers, finan-

cial firms, computer-design outfits and architectural and engineering companies. Their increases eclipsed job losses, mostly in construction and manufacturing.

"The job market is not booming, but it is holding up relatively well despite strains from the housing and auto sectors," said Lynn Reaser, chief economist at Bank of America's Investment Strategies Group.

The unemployment rate

crept up to 4.5 percent, which is still relatively low by historical standards. Feeling better about job prospects, people poured into the labor market looking for work last month, a factor that played a key role in pushing up the rate.

"The unemployment rate is low enough that it is enticing workers who had stepped out of the market to step back in," said Mark Zandi, chief economist at Moody's Economy.com.

The rate had declined to

4.4 percent in October, the best showing in five years.

Workers, many of whom have seen their paychecks whittled by inflation, saw wages pick up last month. Average hourly earnings rose to \$16.94, a modest 0.2 percent increase from October. Over the past 12 months, wages have grown by 4.1 percent.

Increases in wages should support consumer spending, which in turn helps keep the economy afloat. But a rapid and sustained advance — if

not blunted by other economic forces — can raise inflation concerns. That's not good for the economy or workers' pocketbooks because inflation can eat into everybody's buying power.

Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke has said the central bank is keeping a close watch on wages for any signs of inflation.

On the political front, the new employment figures stirred fresh debate between Republicans and Democrats (See Employment, Page 6)

## Racism controversy at John Hopkins turns ugly

By Sean Yoes

Special to Sentinel-Voice

BALTIMORE (NNPA) - Last month Johns Hopkins University student Justin H. Park was suspended from the school until January 2008. He is the author and distributor of the "Halloween in the Hood" party invitation characterized as racist by many in the community. A group of Hopkins students protested Park's punishment, which they claim impacts free speech on the campus, and they demonstrated in a manner similar to that of the school's Black Student Union, which originally protested the "Halloween in the Hood" incident.

The party hosted by Park's fraternity Sigma Chi, encouraged revelers to wear "regional clothing from our locale... fur coats, bling bling ice ice grills, hoochie hoops, white tees" and characterized Baltimore as, "the HIV pit" and "the mother f\*ng ghetto."

Just beneath the surface of the discourse on campus race relations and the free speech protest lies a litany of racially charged threats and accusations being hurled through cyberspace at Hopkins' Black Student Union and BSU President Christina Chapman.

"You should be ashamed of yourself for being an attention-seeking whore who ruined a kid's education as well as the most racially diverse fraternity. By playing the race card you forced the university to violate our right to free speech. I hope you know that most of the university hates you," wrote Wayne Atwell, a White Hopkins student, in an email to Chapman.

Most of Chapman's detractors aren't as bold as Atwell, who attached a pic-

ture of himself wearing a cape, a crown and wielding a sword. (According to Chapman, Atwell was admonished for the email by Hopkins' administration and he later apologized to her by email.)

The vast majority of the verbal attacks leveled against the soon-to-be 21-year-old senior Chapman and the BSU have been transmitted anonymously and, in most cases, via Hopkins' Internet forum "The Daily Jolt."

"The gutless administration is going to cave to at least some of the demands of those idiot protesters. Apparently that b\* Christina Chapman won't shut her mouth either," someone anonymously wrote on Nov. 3 under the subject "Cowards" on the Internet forum. Yet, despite the vitriol aimed at her, Chapman, a biomedical engineering major, seems undaunted.

"A lot of the comments — they only bother me in the sense that I feel like people have such a great misunderstanding of issues of diversity," said Chapman. "The students on campus say that we Black students tarnished the school's reputation — like the Black students aren't also part of the school."

Chapman did find at least one "Daily Jolt" post that discusses Hopkins' decision to suspend Park, "particularly important to point out."

Another unidentified writer posts the following: "Well ...we could always put on masks and lynch 'em ... y'know ...for the sake of hiding our identities."

Perhaps, the person who wrote this was attempting to be irreverent or humorous; it's impossible to know, for much of the dialogue takes place anonymously in the vacuum of cyberspace.

Chapman believes it is indicative of systemic racism and ignorance at Hopkins. "A lot of people want to be ignorant. There were two open forums on campus and not one person who was against what the BSU did — they did not get up," she said.

"They just want to create forums for people who think like them. But, with issues like this, it's important for there to be an exchange of appropriate information ...I'm just convinced that they don't want to learn — they don't want anyone to tell them anything that they don't agree with."

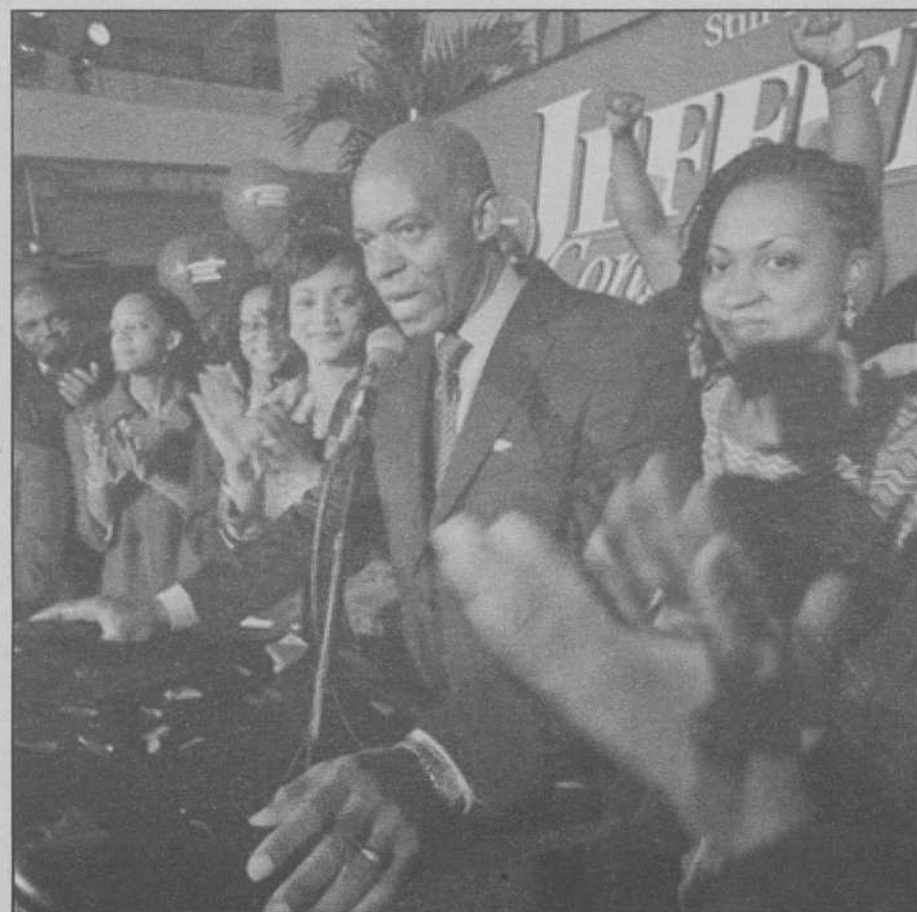
Chapman argues Park and his supporters free-speech protest is disingenuous — she claims they "don't take Black people seriously."

"He [Park wrote something in our school newsletter where he was justifying it saying, 'Baltimore does have a high rate of HIV; Baltimore is dangerous.' Those are things we know especially in the Black community ...but, that's not the point. It's not whether what he said is or isn't accurate, it's the fact that he thinks it's funny."

Despite the controversy swirling around her, Chapman plans to graduate next spring. However, she seems resigned to the belief that Hopkins will be grappling with race matters long after she's gone, just as the country's struggle with race could be indefinite.

"I just realize how much of a tremendous problem it is. We've been pushing for diversity training. But, I know that alone is not going to do it ...I just feel like this coming out of racism is going to be such a long process in this country."

Sean Yoes writes for Afro Newspapers.



Democratic Rep. William Jefferson speaks to his supporters in New Orleans on Saturday. The congressman was declared the victor in a bitterly contested campaign.

## Jefferson

(Continued from Page 3)

"Race is all too often a factor in campaigns in New Orleans," Ken Carter said. "Here we had a candidate that tried to paint this young African-American woman as a pawn of the White establishment."

One White voter, George Christen, a registered independent, cast his ballot in a predominantly White precinct in the Algiers neighborhood, just across the Mississippi River from the French Quarter.

"I just didn't want Jefferson in. Period," said Christen, 42. "Jefferson is an embarrassment. He needs to be out."

Jefferson did get a vote from Jene Allen, who is Black.

"He started the job. Let him finish it," said Allen, who wouldn't give her age. "I know Karen Carter would be the first Black woman, but I think she played it dirty, too dirty."

Jefferson, 59, drew widespread support among Blacks who are skeptical of the federal government's motives in its investigation of him. He repeatedly suggested the probe is groundless because he has yet to be indicted more than a year after the FBI raided his home in New Orleans.

Carter, 37, raised nearly five times as much money as Jefferson, but she was largely outflanked in the endorsement game.

Jefferson picked up the backing of Mayor Ray Nagin and other prominent Black politicians.

The endorsements spoke to Jefferson's solid footing in New Orleans politics. He arrived here in the 1970s as a Harvard-educated lawyer from rural north Louisiana, the sixth of 10 children brought up in a three-room country home. By 1980, he represented New Orleans in the state Senate. At 42, he became the first Black from Louisiana in the House since Reconstruction.

The law firm Jefferson founded became the largest Black-owned practice in the South. He created a political organization, the Progressive Democrats, which fielded candidates for the school board, assessors' races, state House seats and mayoral contests.

Before the bribery scandal erupted, Jefferson had climbed to the pinnacle of the Democratic Party. He was a confidant of former President Bill Clinton.