

GOP support costs Black Dem

By Bonnie V. Winston
Special to Sentinel-Voice
RICHMOND, Va.

(NNPA) - He had far less money and a lot less seniority than his opponent. But A. Donald McEachin had a message compelling enough to sweep him to victory in the Democratic primary election for the Virginia Senate June 5: "Vote for the True Democrat," his campaign slogan stated.

Voters complied, giving Del. McEachin 91,700 vote win over veteran Richmond Sen. Benjamin J. Lambert III, whose defeat ends a 29-year tenure in state political office.

It was a backlash.

A majority of voters apparently were angered at Lambert for turning his back on Democrat Party loyalty and endorsing conservative, pro-Confederate Republican George Allen in last year's U.S. Senate race. Allen drew public ire when he used racial slurs in the past and was caught on video at a recent

"Sen. Lambert is to be commended for his 30 years of service, and not just serving, but his willingness to serve."

— A. Donald McEachin



rally calling his opponent's campaign worker "macaca," a derogatory term that means monkey. Voters turned Sen. Allen out of office, electing Democrat Jim Webb by the slimmest of margins with the key support of African-Americans at the polls.

Lambert cut radio ads for Allen, rode to a Republican campaign rally with him and President George Bush in the presidential limousine and was photographed with the president in a pumpkin patch.

To voters and political observers alike, endorsing

Allen sealed Lambert's fate in the majority-Black 9th District, encompassing parts of Richmond and Henrico and all of Charles City County.

Lambert explained then — and during his own Democratic primary battle — that he endorsed Allen in exchange for his support for more federal dollars for Historically Black Colleges and Universities. The federal legislation ultimately failed.

McEachin used the endorsement to hammer away at Lambert, with ads urging

voters to elect the "True Democrat," emphasizing that "right-wing Republicans will never be the salvation of HBCUs."

McEachin came into the primary race with recognition for sponsoring a state apology for slavery.

He waged the primary with a \$125,000 war chest, about a third the size of the \$404,000 amassed by Lambert, 70, who has served in the Virginia legislature since 1978.

With the Democratic Party nomination in hand, the 46-year-old McEachin is a shoo-in to win the November general election and to take office in January.

No Republican candidate is vying for the seat, nor any well-funded independents.

"If it's over, it's over," Lambert said, surrounded by a somber group of about 50 supporters, including family members and friends. "I've always been able to handle (See *Democrats*, Page 5)

Blacks hold anti-war sentiment

By Shari Logan
Special to Sentinel-Voice
WASHINGTON (NNPA)

- More than 313 African-American soldiers have died in Iraq, while Black enlistment has declined by 50 percent. But still there is an absence of mass protests by outraged African-Americans who want the war to end.

Ron Daniels, founder of the Institute of the Black World, who spoke at mass peace rallies during the early days of the war, says there is not a lack of concern on behalf of African-Americans. But, he says there is no targeted funded effort to mobilize African-Americans.

"Our problem will always be our lack of wealth," he said. "The White community will always have a Leslie Cagan."

Cagan is co-chair of United for Peace and Justice, an anti-war coalition of 1,300 local and national groups.

Polls clearly reflect the Black community's opposition. According to the Pew Research Center, 69 percent of Black people believe that the U.S. made a wrong decision in going to war against Iraq.

In the early stages of the war, one organization represented the opposition of the Black community. Black Voices for Peace, founded by activist Damu Smith was entrenched in the anti-war marches, drawing thousands

of African-Americans from around the country to march in Washington.

However, Smith's death from cancer a year ago largely silenced the African-American voice on the national level. At press time, emailed interview requests to the group's new leader went unanswered.

Although there are no large protests by African-Americans, there are organizations that are dedicated, in part, to ending the Iraq War.

"Many Black organizations have to incorporate Iraq along with everything that is affecting us," said Daniels.

Lawrence Hamm, founder of the People's Organization for Progress in Newark, N.J., has voiced opposition to the war. But, the group also calls for an end to racial inequality and discrimination and for more jobs.

Hamm says that he has been against the war from the beginning because he knew it was based on false pretenses, including the alleged "weapons of mass destruction" that President Bush spoke of, which were never found. Hamm's group leads and participates in protests, marches and vigils and educates people on the facts of this war.

"There was no connection between Al Qaeda and weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, and most of the [Sept.

11] hijackers were from Saudi Arabia, not Iraq," Hamm said.

The Newark-based anti-war group held a protest against the war in April that drew a crowd of more than 400 people, according to Hamm.

"There is a stereotype that the anti-war movement is this White, hippie crowd," he said. "But this effort is a true representation of this population."

Hamm believes that mainstream media decides not to show the Black opposition because "they don't want to link the development of the Black Freedom Struggle and the Peace Movement."

He said, "This is what King died for. He was openly against the Vietnam War and was shot right after he said his famous 'I Have a Dream Speech' at the March for Jobs and Freedom. They want to keep our struggle and the need for peace separate so that [the opposition] could be weaker," he said.

That's why Hamm formed the Peace and Justice Coalition last June, an organization with 100 other community, religious, labor, social and educational groups in New Jersey. In January, around Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday, the coalition held a symposium at Essex Community College. It drew over 500 people, he reported.

One sponsor of the Coali-

tion is the Rev. William Howard of the Bethany Baptist Church, the oldest Black Baptist Church in Newark.

"Our financial support for this peace effort is based on the negative impact that this war has had on domestic needs," Howard said. "With the billions of dollars we spent on this war, we could've given over 257 million children health insurance for one year, or 20 million scholarships at a four-year university."

Howard was reading numbers from costofwar.com, a website by the National Priorities Project that educates citizens on how their tax dollars are spent. NPP analyzes data on the national, state, congressional district and local levels.

On August 25, POP and the Peace Coalition will hold another rally in Newark to voice opposition to the war and to petition the U.S. to redirect war funding in order to solve social problems at home. Hamm is confident that his protests, along with others across the country, will absolutely get the troops back home.

"Never has an opposition for a war developed so quickly. With Vietnam, it took until 1975 for troops to be pulled out," Hamm said. He predicts that "by 2009, U.S. troops will be back home."



Erwin "Brother" Wilburn (1925 - 2007)

Slot guru made mark in Valley

Erwin Wilburn, who was known as "Brother," is historically documented as the first African-American slot machine mechanic in Nevada. He died at age 82 recently. Wilburn relocated to Las Vegas in 1950 from his native Lexington, Miss., after serving in the U.S. Army during World War II.

He began working as a slot machine mechanic for Binion's Horseshoe Hotel and Casino in downtown Las Vegas shortly after his arrival. He was proud of his skills, which he said were self taught after he learned how to maneuver the so-called one arm bandits. He became so knowledgeable he volunteered his slot machine skills after hours to the historic Moulin Rouge Casino during its 1955 heyday. In 2001, after 36 years as a slot technician, he retired.

Services were held last week at Palm Mortuary followed by a flag ceremony and military gun salute. The ceremonial flag was presented to his sister, Hazel Geran, of Las Vegas.

NAACP executive: Open your wallet

By Hazel Trice Edney
Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - NAACP Chairman Julian Bond says the 98-year-old organization, which confirmed last week that it is cutting 40 percent of the staff at its Baltimore headquarters, is appealing for public help.

"We've asked our regular supporters to redouble their contributions and are asking anyone who has benefited from the work of the NAACP to 'show some love' by putting a check in the mail and becoming a member," Bond told the NNPA News Service this week.

But, that's not all. He says the organization has also "called upon our board members and SCF [Special Contributions Funds] Trustees to give or get \$15,000 each by the year's end. That will put more than \$1 million in our treasury," he said. "We have asked our units — local branches and state conferences — to hold fundraisers and set up membership drives."

NAACP leaders have not said exactly how many people will be laid off. However, the Baltimore staff will be reduced from 119 members to 70 members through both layoffs and attrition, Dennis Hayes, the NAACP's interim president and CEO, told the *Baltimore Sun*. Hayes also said that the organization has used \$10 million in reserve funds over the past three years in order to cover shortfalls. Because of the crisis in finances, the national headquarters is also temporarily closing at least seven regional offices.

The financial situation is yet another controversy for the nation's leading civil rights organization, only four months after former President and CEO Bruce Gordon suddenly resigned after only 19 months in office. He cited differences with the NAACP's 64-member board. Gordon could not be reached for comment by NNPA deadline.