

NATIONAL BRIEFS

FEDERAL PROBE INTO MINORITY CONTRACTING AT DETROIT AIRPORT

DETROIT (NNPA) - After the *Michigan Chronicle* published a front page investigative story, "Takeoff Denied: Major Contractor Johnson Controls Under Fire," which exposed how minority contractors were denied contract opportunities at the Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport, a federal investigation has been launched in collaboration with the Wayne County Airport Authority. The article featured Charles Dotson, a 39-year-old African-American, who was reportedly one of many minority contractors feeling the pinch at DMWCA doing business with major contractor Johnson Controls Inc. Dotson's waste management company, REDOT, secured a six-year solid waste contract amounting to \$645,000 per year (three years with three year option) but was almost forced out of business and eventually lost his contract after a series of "unreasonable" demands he claimed JCI placed on his company, the article reports. Wayne County Commissioner Bernard Parker was conducting its own disparity study as it relates to minority businesses doing business with the Wayne County Airport Authority. The WCCA sent out a release saying it has launched a wide-ranging investigation of prime contractors and Disadvantaged Business Enterprise contractors in the airport's construction projects and concession program.

EAST ST. LOUIS, ILL., COULD LOSE ONLY HOSPITAL

EAST ST. LOUIS, Ill. (NNPA) - The decision on whether predominately Black East St. Louis, Ill., will lose Kenneth Hall Regional, the only area hospital, is approaching. Kimberly Parker, a spokeswoman for the Illinois Dept. of Public Health, said the Health Facilities Planning Board tabled the item at its year-end meeting in Chicago due to a need for more information. The Southern Illinois Healthcare Foundation proposal to the planning board would move medical services to Touchette Regional Hospital in Centerville and turn Kenneth Hall into a 39-bed inpatient mental facility with an emergency room. Organizers say the ultimate goal of SIHF is to use East St. Louis (with a population of 30,542) to justify building a new hospital in Sauget, a village of 249. Rev. Kelvin McNeil said planners should look at putting a smaller regional hospital in Sauget without stripping East St. Louis of its hospital. "It leaves East St. Louis on the outside," McNeil said. More than 30,000 signatures have been collected by East St. Louis city leaders, clergy and other organizers against the merger.

BLACK PUBLISHER REMEMBERED FOR "COURAGEOUS TRUTH"

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - *Louisiana Weekly* Publisher Henry Baxter Dejoie Sr. was remembered by Black Press of America Chairman John Smith this week as a newspaper man who brought "courageous truth in telling the stories of its adverse topics of corruption, graft and, most recently, the trials and tribulations of Hurricane Katrina." Dejoie, a member of the National Newspaper Publishers Association, the Black Press of America, died of a massive heart attack in a Chambersburg, Pa., nursing home where he and his wife had lived since their evacuation in anticipation of Hurricane Katrina in August 2005. He was 82. Despite the hardships of Katrina, his newspaper — under daughter Renette Dejoie Hall's leadership — did not miss publishing either the print or online issue of the newspaper during the flood. Dejoie was the son of Constant Charles Dejoie Sr., co-founder and publisher of the then-*New Orleans Herald* in 1925, who was inducted into NNPA's Black Press Hall of Fame last year. The paper became the *Louisiana Weekly* shortly after its founding in September that year, the same month of Dejoie's birth. In a personal message notifying NNPA Foundation Chairwoman Dorothy Leavell of Dejoie's death, Dejoie Hall says she believes the painful red tape in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina led to her father's death. He died on Dec. 31. A memorial service has been set for Jan. 12 in the Lawless Chapel at Dillard University where he earned a political science degree in 1948. According to the Dejoie family, he requested to be cremated.

Farrakhan scheduled to testify

By Ernest Alexander
Special to Sentinel-Voice
WASHINGTON (NNPA)

- Nation of Islam leader Minister Louis Farrakhan is being hauled into court over his son's hit-and-run accident. A federal judge has ordered Farrakhan to appear in court next month to explain why payments made to his son are not considered income, but charity. The importance of the distinction comes in light of his 48-year-old son Nasir Farrakhan's failure to pay Charles and Gladys Peterson, an Indiana couple, punitive damages of \$325,000 after he slammed his father's Hummer into their car and fled the scene in 2003.

"They were traveling in [the] same lane, in the same

direction, and Nasir was behind them and he hit them," said the Peterson's lawyer, Michael Back.

"And then when he tried to flee the scene as they were pulling off the road, he hit them again," According to Back, the jury determined that he was under the influence of some substance and that testimony identified it as likely being an overdose of Vicatin.

A crack pipe was found in the car by the Illinois State Police when they finally chased Nasir Farrakhan down, Back said.

Earlier this month, U.S. District Magistrate Andrew Rodovich ordered Louis Farrakhan and a financial representative of the Nation

of Islam to appear in court in Hammond on Jan. 24 for a preceding supplemental hearing to answer questions from the Peterson's lawyer as to why the younger Farrakhan had failed to make any payments to his clients despite the fact that he receives \$1,400 a month from his father, said a spokesperson from Rodovich's office. The younger Farrakhan said in court that he couldn't pay because he has no income, has never been employed, has no checking account or savings and has never filed income taxes in his entire life, Back said.

Farrakhan added that the \$1,400 in cash he receives from his father each month is legally considered charity,

even though he has acted as head of the minister's 24-man security force for many years, Back said.

A substantial amount of money exceeding \$464,000 has already been collected by the Petersons, but that the money came from Farrakhan's insurance, Back said.

Farrakhan has made no attempts to pay the couple out of his own pocket, Back said.

Neither The Nation of Islam's headquarters in Chicago nor representatives from the *Final Call* responded to repeated calls regarding the incident.

Ernest Alexander writes for the *Afro-American Newspapers*.

Black lawyers to evaluate judges

By Gordon Jackson
Special to Sentinel-Voice
DALLAS (NNPA)

- Longtime prominent attorney L.A. Bedford told a large group of lawyers and judges that when he became aware there existed racial disparities in the criminal court system it involved the oxymoron "misdemeanor murder."

Bedford said, "I didn't know what a 'misdemeanor murder' was until I found out that the district attorney's office had very little [to do] with murders when it was Black on Black. ...But it was a completely different category when it was Black on White."

Bedford thus gave a primary reason, during his keynote address, why he supported the formation of the Dallas Black Criminal Bar Association.

The new organization was formally introduced during a reception recently at St. Martin's Place in South Dallas.

"The system in the past has not given a great deal of attention to Black-on-Black crime," Bedford said. "This organization can expose the disparities of Blacks and Whites in the criminal justice system and resolve them, as well."

DBCBA plans to act as a watchdog, monitoring how the judges administer justice, particularly when Black citizens are involved, to help ensure a fair and balanced court system.

"One of our intentions is to look at and grade the judges through a criteria we have set up," said founder James Belt Jr., serving as par-

liamentarian and chair of the Political Action Committee.

"We will saturate the African-American community in terms of the high-voting precincts with our recommendations as to who we feel is a good judge."

The coalition of Black lawyers feel the most qualified to evaluate judges because of their daily interactions with them.

Although the organization is founded primarily by independent defense attorneys, Assistant District Attorney Shawnkeedra Houston is confident DBCBA will also help serve the other side of the law, as well.

"As a prosecutor, I would like to see justice done in Dallas, and I'm supporting my fellow Black attorneys," Houston said.

"Whether on the prosecution or defense side, we as attorneys have to work together. It's about making sure that people who have the same values and ideas are together."

The impetus to form the group came during the Nov. 2006 elections, when 43 Democratic judges replaced Republicans in Dallas County, causing a paradigm shift in power. The founders of the organization reasoned that these newly elected judges had a major stake in the Black vote, as most Blacks are democrats. Therein rests their ability to influence fair treatment for minorities, especially Blacks in the court system.

Several other judge positions will be decided during both the primary and general 2008 elections, and DBCBA

wants to help inform citizens on the best judges to vote for.

"That's a major focus," said Julia Clark Hayes, the organization's secretary.

"One of the first steps will be getting acquainted with those running in the primaries. We'll be interviewing and getting to know them a bit. We want to get a broad understanding of where they want to go, so that we can, in an informed way, let the public know who might be best for what benches."

Bedford sees DBCBA developing a strong camaraderie of fellow Black attorneys who will open doors for future Black lawyers and

judges.

"You didn't get here because you're smart; you got here because there were others before you who paid the price," he said, giving an extensive history of Black lawyers in Dallas, starting from Sam Scott in 1881, on through the years to Fred Finch and others. He hopes the organization will build its foundation on the legacy of Black attorneys in Dallas' history.

"We have a rich history you need to know about," Bedford said.

Belt, who took over Attorney Finch's practice after his

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TOWN HALL MEETING

Thursday, January 17, 2008
6 pm - 8 pm

Nevada Partners
701 W. Lake Mead Blvd.
North Las Vegas, NV 89030

Hosted by
Mayor Pro Tempore
William Robinson



For more information regarding this meeting contact
Michelle Bailey-Hedgepeth at 633-1178 or
Donna Gamble at 633-1007.

