

National Policy Alliance sets Black political list

By Nisa Islam Muhammad
Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - The National Policy Alliance has brought its biennial NPA Conference to the nation's capital to discuss and create a Black agenda to put before the White House, Congress and the presidential candidates.

"We want to put together a plan or blueprint for Black America on policy issues. What we have gathered here are people setting policy issues. We are not self-proclaimed leaders. We are the elected leaders. We make policies in the cities, counties and states every day," Mayor Johnny Ford, of Tuskegee, Ala., said.

"We have a united voice that speaks for Black people to improve their quality of life. We've met with the presidential candidates and we're coming up with an agenda for Black America based on what these leaders gathered here recommend. It's our responsibility to step up to the plate and do this." For two days, the NPA heard from its members, Black public officials from federal, state and local levels of government as well as the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, on some of the most important issues facing Black America such as HIV/AIDS, the housing mortgage crisis and education. The conference was held in mid January.

"We come here in dire need of thoughts and solutions to solve the many challenges that face Black America. We continue to be over represented in the criminal justice system," said the Honorable John R. Gray, chair of the Judicial Council of the National Bar Association.

"One of the most important presidential powers is the power of appointment. Many predict the next president will have four opportunities to appoint to the Supreme Court in two terms. Thousands of cases don't reach the Supreme Court, but some do. We have to have systems that fairly reflect the communities they serve," he said.

A call to address AIDS pandemic

"It is time for us to have a plan about HIV," said Rep. Donna Christiansen, D-VI, chair of the Congressional Black Caucus Health Brain Trust.

Even though Blacks are only 13 percent of the U.S. population, they account for

about half — 49 percent — of the people who get HIV and AIDS. Black women are 64 percent of women living with HIV/AIDS. The disease is the leading killer of Black women between the ages of 25-44.

"AIDS is out of control in the African-American community," said Rep. Christiansen. "More than one million people are HIV positive and more than half of those people are Black. We have to understand the urgency of this." The NPA adopted a resolution to endorse and ask Congress to pass the National HIV/AIDS Elimination Act. This act declares AIDS as a "public health emergency" in the Black community. The goal of this legislation is to mobilize action across departments of the government and coordinate programs and funding across the various agencies within the Department of Health and Human Services.

The act includes measurable goals, timetables and specific objectives designed to eliminate the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The legislation would also establish an institute to document the historical treatment of Blacks with AIDS.

"We will not despair," said Mayor Ford. "We are going to do something about this in our community. We want Congress to declare this a national emergency. We don't want them to respond like they did in Katrina. We want them to respond like they did when those White folks' homes were on fire in California."

Mortgage loan crisis haunts Black America

"The sub prime mortgage problem is huge," said Preston Lee, director of corporate relations for Freddie Mac. "We've seen 1.2 million subprime foreclosures. We're likely to see that and more in the next year. Of that number 56 percent were Black and only 18 percent were to Whites." Lee continues, "Blacks and Latinos have a real problem. One solution is to freeze interest rates for the next five years. This is not going away. Many people were never going to be able to afford these homes; plus, there's evidence Blacks and Latinos were steered toward these loans even though they qualified for prime rates."

The subprime crisis struck as homeowners, initially able to afford mortgage loans, were overwhelmed by vari-

able interest rates and high mortgage payments forced homeowners into foreclosure.

"Twenty-years-ago the issue was could Blacks get access, now the issue was how much would it cost," said Lee.

Dr. Brian K. Perkins, of the National Black Caucus of School Board Members and the National School Board Association, spoke on the dropout crisis in Black America.

"From 1990-2000, high school completion declined in all but seven states. In 10 states, it declined by eight percent or more," Perkins explained.

"There are economic consequences of not having a high school diploma, such as sporadic employment throughout their lifetime," he added.

According to Mayor Ford, the organizations that participated collectively represent 10,000 Black elected offi-

cials and over three million employees of city, county, state and federal agencies. Issues that participants felt presidential candidates should deal with ranged from childhood obesity, economic development and housing to AIDS, criminal justice and education. NPA plans to meet with the candidates to present their national agenda and seek support for improving the lives of Blacks and their other constituents across America.

The NPA is comprised of Blacks in Government, the Congressional Black Caucus, Judicial Council of the National Bar Association, National Association of Black County Officials, National Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials, National Black Caucus of Black School Board Members, National Conference of Black Mayors, and the World Conference of Mayors.

Nisa Islam Muhammad writes for the Final Call.

2008 BLACK HISTORY MONTH THE EVOLUTION OF THE DREAM

CSN (College of Southern Nevada)

<p>Feb. 14 11:00am Henderson Campus CSN Conversations Invitation Only - If you are interested in attending, please call (702) 651-4051</p>	<p>Feb. 22 10:00am-12:00pm Telecom Building Cheyenne Campus Higher Education in Las Vegas The activity is an interactive two-hour discussion on public higher education in Las Vegas, aimed toward enhancing the transition of students from high school to college, especially African-American students</p>	<p>Feb. 26 4:30pm W. Charleston CSN President's Conference Room E327 Book Club Letters to a Young Brother by Hill Harper Facilitator: Karen Laing, English Professor Deandre Turner, CSN Student</p>	<p>Feb. 28 2:00pm Nicholas Horn Theater, Cheyenne Campus The Langston Hughes Project Ask Your Mama: Twelve Moods for Jazz, is a masterwork written in twelve-parts by Hughes in the early 1960s. This production is brought to life in a multimedia production, and is Langston Hughes at his best: insightful, wise, poignant, funny and soulful. On stage, the audience experiences the mood of the Harlem Renaissance in this 800-line suite of poems illustrated by the spoken word, accompanied by a live quartet and the large-as-life visual illustration on screen of Hughes' world through his collaborators and contemporaries</p>
<p>Feb. 15 11:00am Executive Meeting 12:00pm Senate Cheyenne Campus, Rm. TBD</p>	<p>Feb. 23 8:00am - 5:00pm Student Leadership Academy To register, please visit the Student Life and Leadership Development Office</p>	<p>Feb. 27 4:30pm Cheyenne Campus June Whitley Student Center MLK Diversity Awards Keynote Address: Dr. Byrd, Vice President of Student Affairs For nomination forms, please visit the Student Life and Leadership Development Office</p>	
<p>Feb. 20 4:00pm Cheyenne Campus June Whitley Student Center The Black History Month Poetry Slam & Fashion Show</p>	<p>Feb. 25 11:30am W. Charleston Campus, K-129 A Blueprint to Success Moderator: Larry Mosley, Director, Department of Employment, Training & Rehabilitation</p>		
<p>Feb. 22 11:00am-5:00pm Student Leadership Academy To register, please visit the Student Life and Leadership Development Office</p>			

NSC (Nevada State College)

<p>Feb. 14 3:30pm Dawson Bldg. Room 109 Black Church & Politics Roundtable Discussion by Local Black Clergy</p>	<p>Feb. 20 3:30pm Dawson Bldg. Room 109 Early Black Films Screening & Discussion Groundbreakers Oscar Micheaux Drama's</p>	<p>Herb Jeffries Early Westerns Film Discussion Speaker: Dr. Peter La Chapelle</p>	<p>Feb. 23 6:00pm Black Mountain Recreational Center Gospel Fest Local Churches perform new and traditional songs</p>
---	--	--	---

UNLV (University of Nevada Las Vegas)

<p>Feb. 16 4:00pm UNLV Tam Alumni Center Art Gallery Wine tasting Sponsored by the NAACP</p>	<p>Presented by Delta Sigma Theta Inc</p>	<p>Feb. 22 2:30-5:30pm Starts at UNLV Dining Commons Meals on Wheels</p>
<p>Feb. 20 8:00pm Student Union Theater Pay Attention to My Wisdom</p>	<p>Feb. 21 7-10pm UNLV Student Union Ballroom Jazzitudes Sponsored by Students Organizing Diversity Activities (S.O.D.A.)</p>	<p>Feb. 26 6:00pm UNLV Student Union, Rooms 208-B & C NAACP Knowledge Bowl</p>

For more information call: 651-7485 (CSN) | 992-2030 (NSC) | 895-4858 (UNLV) | 862-5408 (DRI)