

Colorado protects affirmative action

DENVER (AP) — Colorado voters became the first in the nation to reject a ban on state affirmative action programs, narrowly defeating a measure that California businessman Ward Connerly has helped pass in four other states.

But with so many factors in play this historic election, it's not clear whether Colorado's vote is a turning point for such measures or an anomaly. "More than anything else, more than anything, it was the tendency to just vote no," Connerly said, blaming a complicated state ballot and the groundswell of support for Barack Obama, the nation's first Black president-elect.

By 51 percent to 49 percent, Coloradans rejected a proposed constitutional ban on considering race or gender in state hiring, contracting and college admissions. The election night tally showed voters about evenly divided, and The Associated Press didn't declare a winner until Friday, when more votes had been counted.

In neighboring Nebraska, 58 percent of voters approved an affirmative action ban this week. Despite a legal challenge by opponents there, Nebraska college and municipal officials are already examining their programs to see if they violate the new ban.

Initially, it looked as though Colorado would follow the lead of California, Michigan and Washington in banning affirmative action. Polls showed the measure had support among Republicans and Democrats and men and women.

It was one of 14 measures Colorado voters faced on the nation's longest ballot. Voters rejected most of them, including a proposal that could have led to shorter ballots.

Opponents said the affirmative action proposal — with language focused on ending discrimination and without a mention of affirmative action — was deceptive, and they launched a door-to-door campaign telling voters that it could end such programs as science camps for girls.

Criticizing Connerly as a "carpetbagger," they ran radio ads in English and Spanish against the amendment with contributions from software entrepreneur Tim Gill and from Jared Polis, an

Internet businessman who was elected a Democratic congressman.

Gov. Bill Ritter, Denver Mayor John Hickenlooper and three Division I basketball coaches also spoke out against it.

"We've done something everybody was telling us was impossible," said Melissa Hart, a University of Colorado law professor who led the opposition.

Connerly originally envisioned a "Super Tuesday for Equal Rights" this year featuring proposed bans in five states. In the future, he said, he'll try to back campaigns in just two states at a time, and he didn't rule out another try in Colorado.

Mark Long, an assistant professor of public affairs at the University of Washington who has tracked the state bans, thinks the big show of support for Barack Obama in Colorado helped tilt the state against the ban.

Long said other states could still pass bans, and he expects more lawsuits challenging the use of race as a factor in college admissions, which the U.S. Supreme Court has already limited.

Connerly points to Obama's election as proof it's time to end affirmative action.

"I applaud the American people that they made that judgment, apparently free and unencumbered by any biases based on his skin color, and the same thing ought to apply to ordinary people when they apply for a job, bid on a contract or seek college admissions," said Connerly, who is Black.

Anurima Bhargava, director of education practice at the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, disagreed. She said there won't be equal opportunity for minority students until their schools are improved and high school graduation rates are raised.

"Change is possible and change will hopefully come, but it hasn't arrived at the election of Barack Obama," Bhargava said.

The president-elect has criticized Connerly's ballot measures as divisive and has said that affirmative action addresses hardships minorities face. But he also has said such programs should be extended to low-income Whites and should exclude "privileged" minorities, like his two daughters.

Maryland underfunds HBIs

By Sean Yoes

Special to Sentinel-Voice

BALTIMORE (NNPA) — A new report says Maryland's Historically Black Institutions (HBI) have been historically underfunded by the state and more money has to be invested in Black schools if they are going to compete fully with Traditionally White Institutions, (TWI).

The 34-page report was compiled by The Panel on the Comparability and Competitiveness of Historically Black Institutions in Maryland, a group of six national educators chosen by the state to study the funding issues of Black institutions of higher education in Maryland.

"Indeed, one can reasonably assume that had the state consistently treated HBIs over their lifespan in a manner comparable to the treatment of TWIs, the HBIs would currently be competitive with other public institutions in these and other aspects of their operations both at the undergraduate and doctoral levels," the report observed.

Earl Richardson, president of Morgan State University, said he and the other presidents of Maryland HBIs feel "vindicated" by the report. "The report of the Historically Black Institution study group has the potential for changing the landscape of higher education in Maryland," said Richardson in a statement. "First, it candidly concedes that because of past discriminatory practices, there continues to be great disparities in resources of Black institutions when compared to our White institutions. More importantly, the report establishes a framework for addressing the disparities."

The report also indicates HBIs, unlike TWIs, bear the

added burden, "to provide strong programs in developmental education to ensure access and success to students, mostly from low-income families, who otherwise would not have an opportunity to pursue a bachelor's degree. The HBIs are not funded at appropriate levels to carry out both parts of this mission at once," the report states.

"Because of past discriminatory practices, there continues to be great disparities in resources of Black institutions."

The inequality has implications for the future.

"Given the rapidly changing demographics in the state and the great disparity that continues to exist between bachelor degree attainment levels of White compared with Black residents of the state, the HBIs are providing an invaluable service to the state in its commitment to helping underserved students, and in preparing African-Americans for the Maryland workforce," the report noted.

In 2006-07, Morgan produced more bachelor's degrees (821) than any other HBI in the state, followed by Bowie State University with 621 bachelor's degrees.

The report does not discuss how or when the state plans to more fully fund Maryland HBIs in order for them to fulfill their mission to educate students and become more comparable and competitive with their White counterparts.

"It's going to take us a while to beat on them based on the fiscal crisis that we're enduring, but I think ultimately... ultimately we will get it," said Sen. Joan Carter Conway, who represents the 43rd District of Baltimore. "We probably won't get it as fast as we would like it."

Sean Yoes writes for the Afro-American Newspapers.

Your Horoscope Says... Nov 13-19

ARIES

This week is a good week for remembering that without the help of your colleagues it would be impossible for you to expedite the tasks that need to be done. Thank them ahead of time. Thank them graciously and celebrate with them.

Soul Affirmation: Appreciation leads to recognition.

Lucky Numbers: 32, 35, 47

TAURUS

Little by little, you will come to realize that you are too good to be second choice. This week don't even think about why your recent romance failed. It wasn't meant to be. There are many more fish in the sea ready for you to hook them. Go for it!

Soul Affirmation: There are other fish in the sea waiting for me.

Lucky Numbers: 8, 19, 20

GEMINI

Offer a shoulder to cry on to someone you know that has been going through some difficulty. They need a friend right now, and you can be that person. Listen and don't speak. Your sensitivity and compassion will mean a lot right now.

Soul Affirmation: Newness of outlook helps me deal with the monotony of life.

Lucky Numbers: 7, 34, 36

CANCER

If you need some time to yourself this week, take it. You'll be doing yourself an act of kindness. Since you do so much for others, why not treat yourself as well as you treat them? Your world is the way you are living. Live with love.

Soul Affirmation: I let go of the

old in order to make room for the new.

Lucky Numbers: 16, 28, 29

LEO

When you are guided by spirit, you'll find that you are working, living, and breathing in tune with the universe. What a great feeling! You'll be a source of peace and blessings for all that you encounter this week.

Soul Affirmation: Time is the greatest peacemaker of them all.

Lucky Numbers: 12, 17, 22

VIRGO

Remember that you are an intensely physical sign, and you need to move your body in order to relax. Take a walk, go for a swim, play tennis, or scrub that kitchen floor. However you choose to move, you'll liberate your spirit and relax at the same time. Get going!

Soul Affirmation: A week of rejoicing is upon me. I celebrate.

Lucky Numbers: 2, 40, 45

LIBRA

It's a week tailor-made for your energies, so get out there and let every perfect moment flow toward you. You've got an abundance of pleasant feelings why not spread them around?

Soul Affirmation: I will ask joy to marry me.

Lucky Numbers: 1, 8, 14

SCORPIO

Success is a series of small steps. The baby steps you take each week toward your dream will move you closer and closer to your vision. Keep taking those little steps and expect to hear some good news about a big project.

Soul Affirmation: Communication is a skeleton key that fits many doors.

Lucky Numbers: 5, 7, 10

SAGITTARIUS

Expect some surprises this week. You'll be very happy about at least one of them. Stay flexible and you'll be in the right place at the right moment, every moment. You'll want to celebrate at home tonight.

Soul Affirmation: All that I need is within me.

Lucky Numbers: 20, 34, 45

CAPRICORN

A burst of enthusiasm will carry you through the early part of the work week, and with a positive outlook, you'll be very happy with what you've accomplished at the end of the week. Have a heap of fun!

Soul Affirmation: The grandeur of my presence reflects the sunshine of my soul.

Lucky Numbers: 4, 37, 53

AQUARIUS

An older female may extend something valuable to you, and you'll be very glad about what you receive. Possibilities seem endless this week, and you'll want to refresh your outlook about a particular project that suddenly looks lucrative again.

Soul Affirmation: The sunlight of my spirit shines in the land beyond the horizon.

Lucky Numbers: 13, 36, 52

PISCES

The possibility exists that you've temporarily overlooked a powerful way of increasing your income. Still your mind and let your spirit guide you toward a perfect solution to a vexing situation.

Soul Affirmation: I am willing to make changes in my life.

Lucky Numbers: 20, 21, 24