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"THE TRUTH SHALL SET YOU FREE"

Complaint seeks to nix street closure

By Lés Pierres Streater
Sentinel-Voice

Gathered at the corner of "F" Street and West McWilliams Avenue on Tuesday, 75 West Las Vegas residents protested the permanent closure of "F" Street, a vital point of access to their neighborhood, they say.

Earlier in the day, the residents, along with members of the National Action Network and Stop the F Street Closure LLC, filed a complaint against the Nevada Department of Transportation and the City of Las Vegas seeking injunctive relief to prevent the closure.

NDOT approved the closure in 2006, backed by the Las Vegas City Council in



Attorney Matthew Callister joins West Las Vegas residents in a Tuesday rally to protest the permanent closure of "F" Street. In a District Court complaint, residents claim government officials failed to give them due notice of the project.

Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy

Black state legislators want bailouts for 'hood

By Hazel Trice Edney
Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA) — They clearly won't have it by Christmas, but the nation's Black state legislators are now looking for what they perceive as their fair share of economic bailouts for 'the neighborhood' while Congress is doling them out to corporations.

"While we support the bailout of Wall Street, the bailout of the financial institutions, and the automobile industry, we feel very strongly that Main Street and our streets need to be bailed out as well," said Georgia State Rep. Calvin Smyre, president of the National Black Caucus of State Legislators. "So, with that in mind, we need to finish a package whereas a check can get into the hands of the consumer... therefore, the consumer can go to the corner grocery store, the drug store, the supermarket, the various department stores... where the rubber meets the road is the consumer spending has to go up so, therefore, that stimulates the economy in

the neighborhood so to speak."

The U.S. Congress has approved a \$700 billion bailout for the financial industry; and a \$17.4 billion loan for troubled U.S. automakers. But, how can the nation help the average citizen who is out of work or living from paycheck to paycheck, one missed rent from homelessness? Smyre and state legislators have a remedy.

"The only way to do that is to create a stimulus program whereas the American consumer is involved. Those other bailouts are rightfully so. But, they don't help create jobs. They help save jobs. So, unemployment is a key factor."

Facing a gamut of dire needs on the state level, Smyre and his 125 fellow representatives from 42 states met in Washington earlier this month for the Caucus' 32nd Annual Legislative Conference. They met with members of the Obama transition team with hopes of bringing home federal dollars to offset serious short-

ages that are often used to deal with social programs and other crucial needs that are now exacerbated by the failing economy.

Obama has set a goal to create at least three million jobs in the first two years of his administration, which starts Jan. 20. Meanwhile, states are suffering, Smyre said.

"There are 43 out of 50 states with some sort of budget shortfall. With Georgia alone, we've got a \$2 billion shortfall. So, with that in mind, we just want to be partners with our federal government to be able to assist us in the downturn in our economy," Smyre says.

Smyre was on his way to a policy meeting dealing with the Second Chance Act to help lower the prison recidivism rate. There would also be discussions on the high school drop out rates.

"In Georgia alone there were 60,000 drop outs in '07," he said, connected the statistic to the economy. "If we could cut back on our drop out rate, if those 60,000

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September 2006. The street closed on Sept. 7.

The "F" Street closure has forced pedestrians and motorists to take alternate routes such as Martin Luther King Boulevard or "D" Street. Now it takes longer to reach places like the IRS building, the Clark County Government Center and University Medical Center.

During an October public forum on the proposed closure, residents accused NDOT and the City of Las Vegas of failing to properly inform them about their

plans.

"It is widely known that the history of West Las Vegas and the City of Las Vegas has been one of segregation, disrespect, deceit and racism," Gene Collins, chairman of the local chapter of the National Action Network, said at Tuesday's protest. "The attempted closing of 'F' Street, without having adequate notification and discussion with the residents of West Las Vegas, is just the latest in a long history of this type of arrogant misconduct."

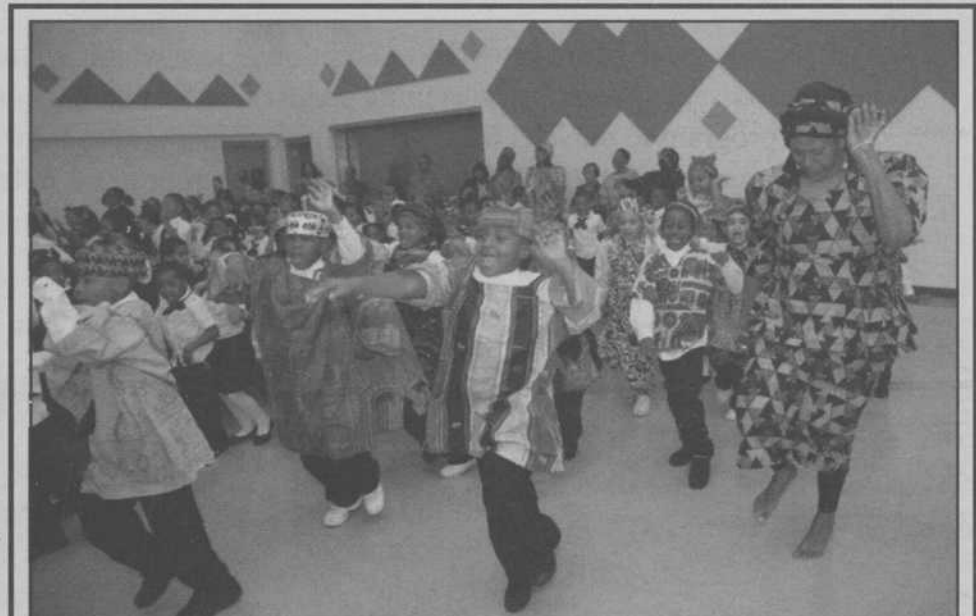
The coalition against the closure hopes the injunction will halt construction.

"What we hope to have in the next two weeks is to be in court requesting an injunction that would prohibit any further construction or permanent closure of 'F' Street until we can have a full trial on the matter," said Matthew Callister, the attorney who filed the complaint in the District Court. "If we can get that injunction, a trial would commence about six months later, where we will ask city officials to reconsider altering the NDOT decision to permanently close "F" Street and keep this historic access open to the residents of West Las Vegas."

The complaint uses history as a sticking point. Since 1939, it says, West Las Vegas residents have continuously subjected to actions meant to deny them "full and equal enjoyment of accommodation, advantages, and privileges of all city property."

"For decades, residents and the West Las Vegas community have relied on 'D' Street, 'F' Street, and 'H' Street for access to the Las Vegas Strip, downtown Las Vegas, University Medical

(See "F" Street, Page 4)



CULTURAL DANCE FEVER

Sentinel-Voice photos by Marty Frierson

Anika Cunningham, known as Las Vegas' Mother of Kwanzaa, leads students of the Rainbow Dreams Academy in celebration of the African cultural holiday. Kwanzaa is non-religious and is based on traditional African value systems and a harvest festival.