

NATIONAL BAR ASSOCIATION

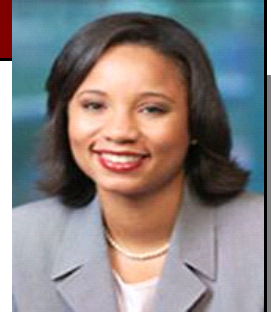
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LEGISLATIVE DIVISION

Newsletter



I am pleased to have been re-elected as Chair of the Division at our business meeting during the 81st Annual Convention. I am excited about what the Division has been able to accomplish the last ten months, and even more excited about our future projects. At the annual convention in Detroit, we sponsored or co-sponsored three CLE seminars. The highlight of the convention was our Awards Reception. We presented the John Conyers, Jr. Outstanding Federal Legislator Award to Congresswoman Barbara Lee of California and the Pinkie C. Wilkerson Outstanding State Legislator of the Year Award to Rep. Arthenia Joyner of Florida. Our recipients were not able to attend the program, but the awards were accepted on their behalf by Congressmen John Conyers and Bobby Scott and Willie Gary respectively. We were honored to have former Secretary of Transportation Rodney Slater in attendance, who pledged his support of the Division and our activities in the new bar year. Thanks to Marathon Oil, who was our main corporate sponsor, and to the Louisiana Legislative Black Caucus, who sponsored the Outstanding State Legislator of the Year award.

Inspired by President Linnes Finney's theme: Carrying the Torch - Leading by Example, the executive committee has developed an aggressive agenda for the bar year. In addition to newsletters, CLE seminars and our Awards Reception, we have undertaken to sponsor and organize the National Bar Association's first NBA Day on the Hill in March 2007. The executive committee believes this to be an important activity for the National Bar Association that supports the objectives of the founders. In addition, we have decided to present that Affiliate Advocacy Award to the affiliate member who best incorporates an advocacy role in their activities.

The success of any and all of these projects depends on you. It will take many hands and minds to complete the Division's agenda. Please contact me if you are interested in assisting in any of these projects.

2006-07 Executive Committee

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In This Issue

Announcements

NBA Affiliate Advocacy Award page 3

NBA Day on The Hill page 3

Feature Article

"Race Matters" by Juan R. Thomas pages 2-3

Membership Application page 4

Mission Statement: To promote legislation that will improve the economic condition of all American citizens, regardless of race, sex or creed in their efforts to secure a free and untrammled use of the franchise guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States, and to protect the civil and political rights of the citizens and residents of the United States.

RACE MATTERS

BY JUAN R. THOMAS

In 1994, Dr. Cornel West wrote a book titled *Race Matters* discussing the current state of race in American life considering the Rodney King incident and the aftermath that ensued in Los Angeles and around the country. In his book he states that, "any serious discussion of race in America must begin with "...a discussion surrounding the flaws rooted in historical inequalities and long-standing cultural stereotypes." During this 2006 midterm election cycle we saw again the impact race has in American life and politics as a result of these long-standing cultural stereotypes.

This year the Democratic Party won in every state where there was a competitive U.S. Senate race minus one: **Tennessee**. In Montana, the voters elected Democrat Jon Tester whose biography read seven years ago: *organic dry-land farmer, custom butcher, and music teacher*. In Missouri, the voters elected Democrat Claire McCaskill, who two years earlier alienated several members of her state party's political establishment when she ousted an incumbent Democratic governor in a bitter primary and then lost the general election to the Republican candidate. In Ohio, where President Bush won (although controversially) over John Kerry in 2004, voters elected one of its most liberal members of Congress in a landslide over the Republican incumbent senator. In Virginia, Democrat Jim Webb, who had written unflatteringly about the role women should play in the military, was able to defeat an incumbent Republican senator who was viewed six-months earlier as a serious Presidential candidate in 2008. In Pennsylvania, Bob Casey, who by all local accounts was a bland and unexciting candidate, easily defeated his incumbent opponent. Democrats also won in Maryland, Minnesota, New Jersey, and Rhode Island.

But in Tennessee a strange thing happened and the Republican candidate Bob Corker, a one-term mayor of Chatta-

nooga, is the only Republican Senator in the freshman class of new senators in January 2007. Does anyone wonder why? Here are some possible reasons:

Tennessee is a Red State and only Republicans win in Red States. Not true. Bush won Tennessee, Montana, Missouri, and Ohio in 2004. All considered "Red states" in 2004. In 2000, Bush carried these same states as well. Each of these "Red states" went "Blue" in the 2006 Senate races except for Tennessee.

The economy was not as bad in Tennessee as in other parts of the country. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, Tennessee had an unemployment rate of 4.5% in October of 2006. Five states had an unemployment rate lower than Tennessee (VA 2.9%;

MO 3.6%; MN 3.9%; PA 4.3%; NJ 4.4%) Each of these states elected a Democrat to the U.S. Senate in 2006.

Money is the key factor in why the candidate wins. Historically, Republicans have out raised Democrats in federal elections. According to the Center for Responsive

Politics, which tracks money in politics on their website www.Opensecrets.org, the 2006 election cycle was not any different. Republicans raised more money than Democrats in several of the key targeted states. Below is a summary of the money raised in the targeted Senate races by each of the two major party candidates:

As you can see the Republican out raised the Democrat in each of these states' Senate races. However, the Democratic candidate was able to overcome this reality and win in every state except one: **Tennessee**.

The war in Iraq did not have the same impact on Tennessee residents as it did on residents in other states. (Does anyone really even believe that?)

No, the major difference in Tennessee came from the fact that the Democratic candidate for the U.S. Senate was an African-American young man named Harold Ford, Jr. This young man who holds degrees from the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Michigan, had a 10 year record of public service in the U.S. House of Representatives, and by most post-election accounts ran the best and most effective campaign of the 2006 election cycle, was the victim of a race bating campaign ad. The following description

TENNESSEE		
	<u>Bob Corker (R)</u>	\$15,173,962
	Harold E. Ford, Jr. (D)	\$9,886,998
MISSOURI		
	James M. Talent (R)	\$22,070,958
	<u>Claire McCaskill (D)</u>	\$9,124,019
MONTANA		
	Conrad Burns (R)*	\$8,656,399
	<u>Jon Tester (D)</u>	\$4,302,249
OHIO		
	Mike DeWine (R)*	\$13,962,005
	<u>Sherrod Brown (D)</u>	\$7,697,946
VIRGINIA		
	George Allen (R)*	\$15,683,995
	<u>James Webb (D)</u>	\$5,987,052

ANNOUNCEMENTS

DIVISION WEBSITE AVAILABLE

The Division is pleased to announce that its website, www.nationalbar.org/legislativelaw.index.shtml, is now available. Feel free to access the website for information regarding the projects and activities of the Division. The Division has also posted information intended to assist members in their roles as advocates. The following information may be found on the site: Affiliate Advocacy Brochure, State Black Caucus List, Outstanding Federal and State Legislator of the Year Award Nomination Forms. Please check periodically for updates.

NBA DAY ON THE HILL

MARCH 6 & 7, 2007

We are looking to send at least 100 representatives to the Hill on Tuesday, March 6 and Wednesday, March 7. For more information, contact Juan Thomas at JuanRThomas@earthlink.net. A registration form and tentative agenda can be found on the website. If you have problems finding the forms on the site, please contact Cheryl Gray at cartiseg@aol.com.

AFFILIATE OF THE YEAR AWARD

The Legislative Division is now accepting nominations for **The Affiliate Advocate of the Year Award**. This award is given to an affiliate chapter which has made outstanding contributions to the nation and/or its community consistent with the principles of the National Bar Association. The Nomination form can be found on the website. Nominees will be judged on their advocacy projects and how any members attended and/or otherwise participated in those projects. Supporting documentation of newspaper clippings, letters of support and/or other materials pertinent to the nomination will be considered as well. The nomination packet and supporting evidence should not exceed ten (10) pages. Nominations must be postmarked no later than June 8, 2007, and sent to Karl Connor, Legislative Division Awards Committee, 365 Canal Street, Suite 2670, New Orleans, LA 70130, or via fax at 504.561.6631. All winners will be honored during the NBA Annual Meeting in Atlanta, GA, July 28 – August 4, 2007.

RACE MATTERS, CONTINUED

of the campaign ad is from an Oct. 26, 2006 New York Times article:

The controversy erupted over one of the people featured: an attractive white woman, bare-shouldered, who declares that she met Mr. Ford at a "Playboy party," and closes the commercial by

See "Race" p. 3 looking into the camera and saying, with a wink, "Harold, call me."

By running this campaign ad the producers lowered themselves to the lowest common denominator by playing into long-standing cultural stereotypes where whites (especially whites in the south so the

stereotype goes) do not take too kindly to a black man romantically (or even worst just sexually) involved with a white woman. What this ad had to do with the relevant issues of the campaign: the war in Iraq, better jobs, or access to quality health care is beyond me, but whoever produced it believed it would be effective. Why was this type of ad not seen in the campaigns in Ohio, Virginia, or Missouri? It's the same old thing: race matters. A candidate's race matters when a white candidate is running against an "acceptable" black candidate (meaning a black candidate who has racial crossover appeal to whites)-- the white candidate plays the race card to keep whites from voting for

the black candidate. This same type of ad was used in 1990 when Jesse Helms ran an ad against his African-American opponent, Harvey Gant, showing a black person's hand taking a job notice away from a white person's hand, suggesting that affirmative action programs were taking jobs away from deserving whites and awarding them to unqualified black people simply because they were black. Jesse Helms went on to serve two more terms in the U.S. Senate.

In *Race Matters*, Dr. Cornel West quotes W.E.B. DuBois's *The Soul of Black Folk* where he states, "*the problem of the 20th Century is the problem of the color line.*"

JOIN THE LEGISLATIVE DIVISION TODAY!

Name _____
Last First M.I.

Name of Organization or Firm _____

Business Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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NBA Chapter Affiliation _____ Member of National Bar _____

www.nationalbar.org

If not, use the membership application found at

I would like to join the following committee(s):

_____ Program _____ Publications _____ Membership _____
Finance

NATIONAL BAR ASSOCIATION

LEGISLATIVE LAWYERS DIVISION

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