

**Voting Rights Act Reauthorized:****Even Today, the Right to Vote Requires Vigilance**

In the end everybody came together last July to reaffirm the right of persons of color and other minorities to vote. But right up to the final votes in Congress, there were efforts to impose barriers.

On Thursday, July 27, 2006 at a White House ceremony attended by NAACP leadership, members of the Board of Directors, staff and Civil Rights coalition partners, President Bush signed H.R. 9, the Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks and Coretta Scott King Voting Rights Act Reauthorization and Amendments Act of 2006 into law.

The NAACP strongly supported this legislation, as extensive hearings in the US Senate and House of Representatives demonstrated conclusively that barriers to equal minority voter protection remain in the United States today, and we feel that this legislation will provide the United States Department of Justice the tools it needs to help combat these blatantly illegal, unconstitutional and immoral activities.

Most provisions in the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and specifically the portions that guarantee that no one may be denied the right to vote because of his or her race or color, are permanent.

**Why Action Was Needed**

There are, however, three enforcement-related provisions of the Voting Rights Act that would have expired in August 2007 unless reauthorized. Originally, in 1965, legislators hoped that within five years the problems would be resolved and there would be no further need for these enforcement-related provisions: however, it proved necessary to extend these in 1970, and again in 1975 and 1982. They were set to expire in August 2007, although the legislation signed July 27, 2006 will extend them another 25 years.

The hearings held in 2005 and 2006 in the House and Senate found a new generation of tactics, including at-large elections, annexations, last minute poll place changes and redistricting which have had a discriminatory impact on voters, especially racial and ethnic minority American voters. Thus H.R. 9 was introduced with strong bipartisan support in the House and the Senate to reauthorize the expiring portions of the VRA and allow the federal government to address these new challenges.

**NAACP Urges Members to Press Bush Admin., Congress to Act on Darfur Genocide**

The NAACP is calling on its membership to urge the Bush Administration to "use all available means - diplomatic and financial - to ensure the rapid deployment of peacekeepers in Darfur."

Meanwhile, the armed militia known as Janjaweed continues its campaign of murder, rape, arson and plunder that has driven more than two million villagers into squalid camps in Darfur and in neighboring Chad. The Sudanese government has resisted efforts by other countries and the UN to intervene.

Here are the alarming facts, as gleaned from the NAACP website:

- As many as 400,000 people have died in Sudan's western Darfur region die to conflicts that erupted in 2003.
- Instead of protecting its people, the Sudanese government has unleashed the Arab militias against the non-Arab population. Because of attacks on ambulances and medical compounds, mobile clinics no longer travel to villages in Darfur.
- In August, the UN Security Council voted to send a peacekeeping force of more than 20,000 to Sudan - a force that the Sudanese government continues to reject.
- What is happening in Sudan and Chad clearly falls within the definition of "genocide," as set forth in Article II of the 1948 UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

If you want to get involved in the Save Darfur Campaign, check its website at [www.savedarfur.org](http://www.savedarfur.org) or call 1-202-478-6311.

**Urge State to Rename Rte 291 in Honor of Willie Mae Leake**

President Darrell Jones, speaking on behalf of the Chester Branch of NAACP, has lauded State Representative Thaddeus Kirkland for his initiative in seeking to have the Chester portion of Route 291 named as the Willie Mae James Leake Memorial Highway. Rep. Kirkland is sponsor of House Bill 1350, which calls for that designation of the roadway. In his letter of support, Mr. Jones said, in part,

"The late Mayor Leake... had the proud distinction of being the first African-American and first woman Mayor of the City. Mayor Leake never forgot her roots as a resident of the City. She consistently worked to promote more African Americans in positions of leadership and was committed to the City's youth by instilling in them the importance of education. She ... showed that with hard work and dedication, it was possible to become mayor. What a wonderful example to our youth that they too could achieve this accomplishment. The Chester Branch NAACP was so impressed by Mayor Leake's commitment to the education of youth that an annual youth award is named in her honor and is given to a student who demonstrates exemplary academic achievement." [This year's Leake award recipient was Larif Hamm. See "Awards Dinner Has Surprise Visitor," page 2.]

**A "Thank you" from Bruce**

Thank you for making me part of the NAACP Family; you made my treasurer position in the past two years a rewarding and blessed experience. The Chester Branch is our grass root brothers/sisters volunteering, while maintaining jobs and families, giving of their time for the betterment of the Chester community. You taught me a lot. With the New Year approaching we need to network individually and collectively. I will continue to partnership with the Chester branch, through my business computer consultant resources web address:  
<http://home.Comcast.net/~bru6n>

Thank you, peace be unto you.

Bruce Neal, Computer Consultant Resources