

Super Tuesday Is Behind Us But, Exhausted Americans Face Eight More Months Of Presidential Campaigning

Now that Super Tuesday is over and the Democratic and Republican nominees are all but officially chosen, as everyone expected, voters can turn the page to the general election.

But they're not excited about it, and they haven't been for months.

A September 2023 Monmouth University poll showed no more than 40% of Americans said they were "enthusiastic" for either Biden or Trump to run again. That same month, the Pew Research Center found that 65% of Americans were exhausted with the current state of American politics. In February 2024, The New York Times said Democrats in particular were burned out by the seemingly endless avalanche of political crises.

It is not surprising that a rematch of the 2020 election is failing to inspire excitement in the American people. Yet, as a political scientist who studies citizen engagement and the public's feelings toward the candidates, I find these trends disturbing. It's not just polarization that's driving voters' malaise – it's something else, which carries a stark warning for the health of American democracy.

There is another divide in politics. Most discussions of the current state of the American electorate have understandably focused on political polarization. Democrats and Republicans often express disdain for each other, even when they don't actually disagree on specific policies for the nation to pursue.

Some of this disdain is rooted in identity. For example, people who hold unfavorable attitudes toward African Americans, feminists and other groups associated with the



Democratic Party tend to identify more strongly with the Republican Party. People with unfavorable attitudes toward stereotypically Republican groups such as evangelicals and gun owners tend to be stronger Democrats.

From this perspective, Democrats and Republicans are pack animals motivated to protect their group and their group's interests.

Often overlooked, however, is how the vitriol of modern American politics fuels what political scientists Yanna Krupnikov and John Barry Ryan call "The Other Divide." This is the divide between people who engage in politics and those who don't.

In short, a significant number of Americans don't talk about politics, whether because they are not inter-

ested in politics or are turned off by the negativity. It's a gradual trend dating back to the 1980s and 1990s that has continued for decades now. This weakens the fabric of democracy, because the only voices that are heard online and in the media are from those who are most willing to speak up. They tend to be the most dissonant and extreme views.

The public discussion about the country's past, present and future therefore leaves out a wide range of people's voices. What they might say is hard to know, specifically because they don't engage in political discussions.

Young voter disengagement. Especially troubling to me is the political disillusionment expressed by young people, who are the most

likely group in the country to avoid identifying themselves as members of one party or the other. People who identify themselves as independents – especially if they don't lean toward one party or the other – are also likely to lack interest in voting.

Having come of age during an era of high polarization, younger people are less likely to idealize politics and the right to vote. In prior research, my colleagues and I found that younger people worldwide were just as interested in politics as older citizens but were less likely to view voting as a civic duty. Protesting or joining an organization offers social benefits to young people – an opportunity to feel like they are part of something bigger. Voting, by contrast, is perceived as a more solitary

act. If younger American voters aren't excited about the choices on the ballot, they may be more likely not to vote at all.

In a recent survey I conducted in collaboration with IGNITE National, an organization seeking to bolster young women's engagement in the political process, we asked Gen Z Americans, adults born after 1996, what drove their disillusionment with American politics. Consistently, Gen Z respondents noted that the candidates appearing on the ballot did not look like them, contributing to their feeling of detachment from the political process.

Barack Obama's race made 2008 a historic election. Hillary Clinton's gender made 2016 a historic contest

as well. By contrast, 2024 features the two oldest white men to ever seek the presidency, vying for second terms in office.

Burnout's effects on democracy. Americans have many demands on their time. Between work, family and other activities, many struggle to watch or read the news, fact check what they see on social media or engage in productive political discussions. As a result, most of the American public is largely unaware of key aspects of important issues, and does not pay attention to the parties' stances on those issues.

This lack of engagement is dangerous for democracy. Voters who cannot evaluate the merits of contrasting policy positions, or who cannot accurately assign blame and give credit for the state of the American economy, will ultimately fall back on cheap cues such as partisanship to make their choices.

Or they may abstain from politics altogether.

The campaign season offers an opportunity for voters who may be open to persuasion to engage in the political process for a short period of time, become sufficiently informed and make their voices heard. Though there are flaws in the many processes of political campaigning, media coverage and community involvement, the bottom line is simple: Deliberative democracy requires an American public that is willing to deliberate.

If Americans are too burned out to engage enthusiastically and provide feedback to political leaders, then there is little hope that any government could truly reflect the will of the people.

Why Emmitt Smith's Voice Is Powerful In Wake Of DEI Ban

By Ken Makin

andscape

One minute, football legend Emmitt Smith is chucking beers with fellow Hall of Famer Peyton Manning. The next minute, he's a defender of diversity, equity and inclusion.

When the University of Florida eliminated its DEI office, largely due to a law signed in 2023 by Gov. Ron DeSantis that banned state universities from spending money on diversity, equity and inclusion programs, Smith responded with harsh criticism.

"I'm utterly disgusted by UF's decision and the precedent that it sets," Smith posted Sunday afternoon in a statement on X, formerly known as Twitter. "We cannot continue to believe and trust that a team of leaders all made up of the same background will make the right decision when it comes to equality and diversity. History has already proven that is not the case."

Someone might see Smith's Hall of Fame football career and his penchant for being a pitchman and think that he wouldn't have anything to say about pressing civil rights issues. Such a narrative couldn't be further from the truth. In the face of stern challenges against DEI programs at



his alma mater and with a profound sense of history stabilizing him, Smith offered a compelling rebuke of the policies inspired by politicians such as DeSantis.

Smith's stand might seem unfathomable in this day and age where athletes, current and former, care so much about public perception – and marketing dollars. And yet, such commentaries aren't just the words of a past era that included baseball pioneer Jackie Robinson and Curt Flood, whose lawsuit against the MLB led to free agency. Similar statements were prevalent just over three years ago,

when the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police galvanized the civil rights demands of a generation.

But why Smith? Why the NFL's all-time leading rusher? Smith's reasons are baked into his being.

Smith was born in 1969 in Pensacola, Florida – the same year that the town's all-white high school, Escambia, was desegregated at the order of the federal government. Escambia High School had a Confederate soldier as a mascot, flew the Rebel flag and had "Dixie" as the school song. Protests by Black students at a football game and concerned citizens led

to a federal ruling in 1973 that barred the use of the Confederate symbols and changed the mascot to the Raiders. The school board appealed the ruling in 1974 and in 1975, a federal appeals court overturned the injunction and put the school board in charge of the matter.

After students voted to keep the Raiders name for the mascot, a violent riot at the school on Feb. 5, 1976, resulted, which The New York Times described in March 1976:

"Years of racial animosity in this Florida panhandle city have erupted into violence in recent weeks on the issue of whether athletic teams at a local high school will be called the Rebels or the Raiders. The controversy over the name, simmering for several years in and out of court, caused a riot at Escambia County High School Feb. 5. This afternoon, 120 Ku Klux Klansmen in full regalia, but with faces uncovered in accordance with law, paraded through the streets of Milton, a small town about 20 miles east of here. They had come into town in an 80-vehicle caravan from outside Pensacola and called the march an "organizational effort." Three Klan leaders from Alabama, Georgia and Florida attended the rally, which drew 450 persons. Four students were hit by gunfire in

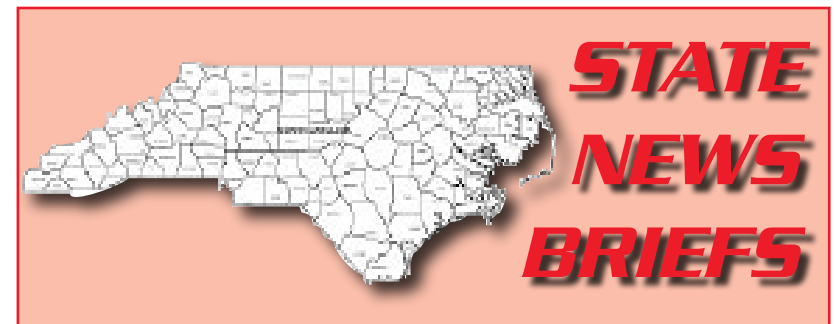
the school riot, 26 others were injured and \$5,000 damage was done to the school during four hours of fighting, rock-throwing and smashing of windows, trophy cases and other school property."

Smith graduated from Escambia just over a decade later, in 1987.

American history, however joyous or calamitous, is never too far away from the present. That's why Smith's criticism of his alma mater, the University of Florida, carries so much weight. It also helps, of course, that he's the NFL's all-time leading rusher.

"Instead of showing courage and leadership, we continue to fail based on systemic issues and with this decision, UF has conformed to the political pressures of today's time," Smith noted in his statement.

Birmingham, Alabama, mayor Randall Woodfin, in his criticism of a proposed anti-DEI bill in the state, recalled the sordid segregationist history of the University of Alabama. Further, he said if such legislation passed, he would encourage Black athletes and parents "to attend other institutions outside of the state where diversity and inclusion are prioritized."



BIDEN SIGNS ROSS PROJECTS INTO LAW DELIVERING MORE THAN \$12.6 MILLION FOR WAKE COUNTY

President Joe Biden signed a minibudget spending package for Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 into law, which includes \$12,627,287 in funding for community projects across Wake County secured by Congresswoman Deborah Ross (NC-02). This legislation includes critical investments in affordable housing, public safety projects, climate resilience, public transportation, and more.

"After months of political gridlock, I am excited that we finally passed legislation to keep the government open and deliver critical investments to Wake County," said Congresswoman Ross. "I fought for funding for these community-driven initiatives because they will address critical public safety, affordable housing, and transportation needs and make a real difference in the lives of Wake County residents. I am looking forward to seeing the progress and positive change that these projects will create and will continue to work with local leaders to bring transformational federal resources back to our community."

"While I'm relieved that Republicans finally decided to work with Democrats to fund the government, it should not have taken months to get here. This constant chaos and dysfunction is no way to govern. Although this bill is far from perfect, it represents the product of bipartisan compromise, and I thank President Biden for signing it into law."

Last Congress, Congresswoman Ross secured more than \$36 million in federal funding for community projects in the FY 2022 and FY 2023 government funding packages. The 15 projects and funding in the FY 2024 package are listed below.

Community Projects
Project Name: CASA Supportive Housing for Youth Transitioning out of Foster Care in Raleigh
Amount Secured: \$1,000,000
Description: CASA will use the funding to develop a safe, supportive, and affordable housing community for youth aging out of foster care who are experiencing homelessness. This new construction project will consist of an apartment building with 9 residential units, an office, small community space, and laundry facilities. CASA will partner with the Hope Center at Pullen (HCP), a nonprofit supportive services provider for youth transitioning out of foster care, to provide referrals for the units and onsite wraparound services for the residents. HCP will work with Wake Housing Authority to secure Foster Youth to Independence vouchers for each of the potential tenants. The units will be targeted for households making less than 30% of the area median income.

(See STATE BRIEFS P. 2)

Florida Is Set To Ban Homeless From Sleeping, Camping On Public Property

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) — Florida will ban thousands of homeless people from setting up camp or sleeping on public property under a bill lawmakers sent to Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis, who supports the idea.

Counties, with approval from the state Department of Children and Families, would be able to designate areas for the homeless to camp for up to a year under the bill the Senate passed 27-12 late Tuesday. Anyone using those encampments would be prohibited from using alcohol or illegal drugs.

Supporters say the bill will help eliminate the nuisance of homeless people living on public property and parks. They also argue it will be easier to provide local services to the homeless if they're in one location.

"It's our responsibility to deal with homelessness and that's why we can't wait any longer to bring this solution. The current model is



not working," said Republican Sen. Jonathan Martin, the bill's sponsor. "This bill is a compassionate response to the shortage of shelters."

Martin said about 30,000 Floridians don't have a home, and about

half of them don't have shelter.

But opponents said the bill is simply an effort to gather up the homeless and get them out of public view.

"This bill does not and it will not

address the more pressing and root cause of homelessness," said Democratic Sen. Shevrin Jones. "We are literally reshuffling the visibility of unhoused individuals with no exit strategy for people who are experiencing homelessness."

Opponents also said there's nothing in the bill that ensures sexual offenders and children won't be living in close proximity in the government-designated encampments, or that the encampments will be safe and sanitary.

The bill defines public camping as "residing overnight in a temporary outdoor habitation used as a dwelling or living space and evidenced by the erection of a tent or other temporary shelter, the presence of bedding or pillows, or the storage of personal belongings."

It wouldn't apply to people sleeping in legally parked vehicles.

It will take effect Oct. 1 if signed by DeSantis.

STATE BRIEFS

Continued from page 1

Project Name: CASA Grosvenor Gardens Apartments Rehabilitation
Amount Secured: \$1,500,000
Description: Grosvenor Gardens is an historic and affordable apartment community in downtown Raleigh. CASA acquired the property in November of 2022 to prevent the displacement of the 62 households that call the Grosvenor Gardens home. Built in 1939, the building needs rehabilitation, including the replacement of the original roof, outdated electrical systems, and aging plumbing. This funding will help ensure the long-term preservation of the building so that it can continue to serve as affordable housing in a highly walkable, transit-oriented area with great economic and educational opportunities.

Project Name: Alexander Jones Wright YMCA Youth Center Construction
Amount Secured: \$1,000,000
Description: The Alexander YMCA will use this funding for the construction of a 10,000 square foot youth center to include: multipurpose gym for youth sports; multipurpose space for academic assistance, afterschool, day camp and teen leadership programs; and outdoor areas for group and individual recreation, wellness activities, and outdoor play. The center will provide space to expand afterschool and summer programs for youth in Raleigh. Enhanced sports, wellness, and leadership development programs provide a safe, enriching environment for children and teens to thrive.

Project Name: Raleigh-Durham Airport Replacement Runway 5L/23R – Phase 1 Construction
Amount Secured: \$1,116,279
Description: The aging runway 5L-23R consists of deteriorated concrete pavement that is in urgent need of upgrades. This funding will help construct a new runway at RDU airport, enhancing safety, efficiency, and operational reliability while also ensuring continued high-quality service for passengers and airlines as travel continues to increase at the airport.

Project Name: GoTriangle Eastern Wake Transit Access Improvements
Amount Secured: \$800,000
Description: This project aims to improve access to regional transit service in Eastern Wake County in the Towns of Wendell and Zebulon. The project will construct 10 new bus stops to support expanded transit service connecting Eastern Wake County residents to Raleigh as well as to community destinations in Wendell and Zebulon. The proposed stops will improve access for existing transit riders and enhance mobility options for residents of a rapidly growing part of Wake County. Residents will be better connected to a key regional route that connects emerging job hubs in Wake County, as well as to retail employment destinations, medical services, and affordable housing.

Project Name: Raleigh Police Department Public Safety Intelligence Management System
Amount Secured: \$629,000
Description: The Raleigh Police Department's Public Safety Intelligence Management System project will help modernize the Intelligence Center with real-time actionable information on crime patterns and emergencies. The department seeks to partner with SAS to purchase their software, enabling detailed analysis to preemptively identify crime trends and patterns. This technology is crucial for law enforcement to target criminal acts in progress and drive police response to areas needing greater attention and enforcement action. The funding will improve public safety outcomes, enhance homeland security threat research, and enable law enforcement to affect outcomes by leveraging advanced analytical capabilities.

Project Name: Town of Knightdale Police Department Cruiser Replacements and Upgrades
Amount Secured: \$360,000
Description: The Town of Knightdale will use this funding to replace and upgrade police cruisers. Knightdale is one of the fastest growing communities in North Carolina, which increases call volume and officer response times to calls. Adding to Knightdale's patrol vehicle fleet and replacing outdated cruisers is critical to public safety and service delivery. This project will allow Knightdale to field modern police cruisers equipped with all the tools necessary for officers to perform at a high-level, thus increasing the police department's visual presence in the community and maximizing vehicle service life.

Project Name: Town of Morrisville Police Department Body-Worn Camera and In-Car Camera Systems Upgrades
Amount Secured: \$120,000
Description: The Town of Morrisville Police Department will use this funding for a body-worn camera and in-car camera systems upgrade project. The addition of new camera systems and moving to a cloud-based server would meet both current staffing needs and proposed future staffing needs in the coming years. This upgrade project is essential for improving the efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability of the Morrisville Police Department, ultimately leading to a safer community.

Project Name: Town of Apex Police Department Modular Vehicle Barrier System
Amount Secured: \$182,000
Description: The Apex Police Department will use this funding for a Modular Vehicle Barrier System (MVBS) for crowd safety at community events. In 2022, the Town of Apex hosted 14 community events in its downtown footprint with a total estimated attendance of 80,240 people. The town's largest single event attendance estimate reached 25,000 people. By purchasing a MVBS, the Apex Police Department will be able to reduce the number of staff assigned to street closures and increase flexibility of staff working the event footprint. This system provides the security the town needs to keep the crowd safe while allowing for quick flow of emergency vehicle traffic should the need arise.

'Johnston County Is Klan Country,' Expert Says In Racial Justice Act

By Kelan Lyons

NCRNewsline

Crystal Sanders did not think the billboards were that well known. They'd come down before she'd been born, erected in the 1960s as a response to the Civil Rights Movement: A robed white man with a burning cross encouraged passersby to fight communism and integration by joining the Ku Klux Klan. But when Sanders got to Duke University in the early 2000s and told a class she was from Clayton, her professor had an immediate reaction.

"The professor says, 'Oh, my gosh, you're from Clayton.' And he says to the rest of the class, 'Clayton is a part of Johnson County, and Johnston County is Klan Country,'" Sanders said. "That was very telling to me, because I did not know that the county had this reputation among people who did not live in the county."

Sanders, now a professor of African American studies at Emory University, recounted the story in a courtroom in the Johnston County courthouse Monday.

Sixty years earlier, one of those billboards was just blocks from that courthouse. Any Black people reporting for jury duty from west of Smithfield would have had to drive past it.

"It sends a message of white supremacy, it sends a message of racial intimidation," Sanders said. "It undergirds the fact that the courthouse was essentially a 'whites' only' space."

Sanders was in court Monday to testify in an ongoing evidentiary hearing for Hasonn Bacote, a Black man on North Carolina's death row whose attorneys are trying to get resentenced to life in prison. Their arguments rely on the Racial Justice Act, a law that gives those on death row a path to getting resentenced if they can prove prosecutors sought or obtained their death sentences because of their race.

Bacote's attorneys have argued his case is not just about him. Using information gleaned from the 680,000 pages turned over by the state in preparation for the hearing, Bacote's legal team has likened North Carolina's death penalty to "a legacy of racial terrorism," that the state's history of racial violence informs the present-day use of capital punishment.

"It is hard to overstate the significance of what's happening in Johnston County right now," Gretchen M. Engel, the executive director of



the Center for Death Penalty Litigation, said in a statement. "Typically, we look at death penalty cases one by one, focusing only on the facts of a single case. The Racial Justice Act has given us the rare chance to step back and see the full picture. When we do that, it is shockingly clear that our state's history of racial violence did not simply disappear; it transformed into the modern death penalty."

All the experts who testified last week talked about their research on jury selection in capital trials both across North Carolina and in Johnston County. A professor at Michigan State University College of Law said that her research showed that Black prospective jurors were more than 2.5 times more likely to be struck from a jury pool statewide, four times more likely to be struck from a jury pool in Johnston County and 10 times more likely to be struck in cases tried by Assistant District Attorney Gregory C. Butler, who also prosecuted Bacote.

Another expert testified that every Black person who has faced a jury in a capital trial in Johnston County between 1991 and 2014 received a

death sentence; none were given a life sentence.

Sanders' testimony was different. Rooted in history, Sanders explored how Johnston County's past could explain racial disparities in jury selection and the imposition of the death penalty.

She did that by pointing to a multitude of examples of discrimination and racial terror in the county: the Klan burning crosses in the yards of Black families that had moved into white neighborhoods; Smithfield Police killing an unarmed Black man in broad daylight while trying to conduct a warrantless arrest; a prosecutor indicting a 14-year-old Black boy on capital charges for raping a white girl with whom he was in a consensual relationship; a Black man given a death sentence despite the case's star witness saying it was a white man who had assaulted her, an allegation the prosecutor failed to tell the defense or the jury.

Then there was Terence Garner, a teenager convicted of robbing and attempting to kill a white woman by a Johnston County jury in 1998. A Black eyewitness had told inves-

tigators Garner hadn't been one of the three robbers. Two days after Garner's conviction, someone else confessed to the crimes.

It still took another four years before Garner got out of prison.

"When I think about the Terrence Garner incident, I feel like, unfortunately, our prosecutors said 'Any black person would do,'" Sanders said. "They got a conviction, they convicted a black man, case closed."

That comment drew an objection from Jonathan P. Babb, special deputy attorney general with the North Carolina Department of Justice. Babb said Garner's prosecutor helped get the conviction overturned.

"I don't think that's a fair characterization," Babb said.

Later, when questioning Sanders, attorneys with the state presented evidence showing that the district attorney who prosecuted Garner publicly stated that it wasn't justice to imprison an innocent person. They also noted that that same D.A. who tried Garner had hired the first Black assistant district attorney in Johnston County.

Connecticut NAACP President On Yale-HBCU Partnership: 'How does that help our community?'

By Joshua Q. Nelson

Fox News

The president of the Connecticut NAACP criticized Yale's initiative to partner with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU), which is intended to provide HBCU students opportunities to conduct research and teach at the Ivy League institution.

Despite Yale's efforts to rectify its past and support HBCUs, Connecticut NAACP president Scot X. Esdaile questioned the initiative, asking, "How does that help our community?"

Yale Provost Scott Strobel announced Tuesday that the Ivy League institution plans to commit \$2 million annually over the next five years to the initiative.

The partnership, titled "Alliance for Scholarship, Collaboration, Engagement, Networking and Development (ASCEND)," pledges to "strengthen Yale's partnership with HBCUs, whose missions center on the education of Black Americans."

ASCEND programs in collaboration with HBCU partners "commit to increasing representation and amplifying the significant contributions of HBCUs in shaping the academic landscape."

For instance, Yale will offer and fund fellowships for HBCU faculty



members to conduct research projects at Yale for one semester. They added that the fellowship will "enable research collaborations, access to Yale's collections, and engagement with other university resources."

Additionally, the ASCEND initiative will facilitate faculty collaboration grants and teaching fellowships for Yale and HBCU staff.

But the program didn't satisfy Esdaile.

"I'm not trying to disrespect, but I think that the constructive criticism should be there ... by putting in \$10 million for students to come back to Yale, how does that help our community?" the NAACP leader told Yale Daily News.

He continued, "... making Yale a more powerful institution doesn't help our community. This is a step in the right direction, but I think that [Yale] has so much more that it needs to do."

Yale announced the partnership two weeks after Yale University President Peter Salovey and Senior Trustee of the Yale Corporation Joshua Bekenstein issued a formal apology for Yale's ties to slavery.

In addition to the apology, the university released the findings of the institution's connection to slavery from the Yale and Slavery Research Project and published a book "Yale and Slavery: A History."

However, Esdaile took issue with

Yale taking copyright ownership over the book and said failing to mention how Yale was complicit in eugenics and excluding the matter "undermines any real efforts toward reconciliation and real justice."

Per Yale Daily News, "Esdaile also raised concerns about the book's lack of mention of Yale's historical connections to eugenics. The American Eugenics Society was founded on Yale's campus at 185 Church St. in 1926 by economics professor Irving Fisher and was run largely by Yale faculty."

The book ended in 1915 with the unveiling of the Civil War Memorial because the monument marks "the end of the concern over slavery directly." Yale News highlighted that while the memorial honors the lives of soldiers on both sides of the Civil War, it makes no mention of slavery.

Blight explained to Yale News that there were "great plans" to cover Yale's history after 1915 and into the 1930s but that "the book got too long."

A Yale spokesperson explained further to Fox News Digital that the "research team chose 1915 as the end-point for the book, in part because the dedication of Yale's Civil War Memorial was the capstone to decades of deliberate forgetting, both at Yale and in the country as a whole, about the reasons for the Civil War."

"In addition, the research team felt the book could end in 1915 because other students and scholars at Yale, led by Professor Daniel HoSang, have done so much work to research and understand the history of eugenics at Yale," the spokesperson said.

"Professor HoSang's current research projects include a collaborative investigation into the history and afterlives of Eugenics research at Yale documented through the Anti-Eugenics Collective at Yale. Yale's collections are available for other faculty members, scholars, and students to conduct further research on the legacies of slavery and racism in the 20th and 21st centuries."

As far as the university taking copyright ownership of the book, Esdaile took a swipe at Yale, claiming they are "executing a power dynamic that benefits the institution at the expense of marginalized communities."

"This is a whitewashed version of the story, and I think that Black historians, Black civil rights activists, Black leaders and Black educators need to come together and tell the real story," Esdaile said.

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Business & Finance

Cincinnati Addresses Deep-Rooted Housing Inequities

NNPA—Cincinnati officials have settled a federal lawsuit spanning four years, addressing allegations of racial bias in the city's residential tax abatement program. The lawsuit, which accused Cincinnati of favoring white homeowners, shed light on enduring disparities in homeownership between Black and white residents. Advocates said the resolution, signed on Feb. 8, signifies a crucial step towards rectifying historical injustices and fostering a more equitable housing landscape.

National data from the National Association of Realtors and Zillow revealed a stark homeownership

gap between whites and Blacks. Nationally, 73 percent of whites own homes compared to 44 percent of Blacks, representing a 29-percent-point disparity. However, Greater Cincinnati reportedly experiences an even wider gap, with only 33 percent of Black residents owning homes, creating a 40-percent-point difference.

Elisabeth Risch, executive director of Housing Opportunities Made Equal, emphasizes that historical discriminatory practices, including redlining, persistently impact contemporary housing trends. Redlining, a policy preventing minorities from buying homes in wealthier,

predominantly white areas, contributes to the deeply rooted segregation legacy in Cincinnati, Risch said.

Darrick Dansby, president of the Cincinnati chapter of the Realtists, also highlighted the potential gap worsening due to rising interest rates and low inventory, particularly affecting first-time and traditionally marginalized homebuyers.

The nonprofit, Housing Opportunities Made Equal, proposed comprehensive recommendations to narrow the homeownership gap, including tax abatement policy reforms, creating a grant fund for low- and moderate-income home-

owners, zoning modifications for inclusivity, property tax relief, and establishing a transparent monitoring process to prevent discriminatory practices.

Now, the recent settlement in the federal lawsuit mandates that the city expand outreach about the tax abatement program in areas with larger populations of poorer and Black residents. Cincinnati City Council has earlier considered reforms, including fair and non-predatory lending expansions to Black and low-income homeowners.

The Council's actions were in response to city records which revealed that, by 2020, Cincinnati had granted 2,640 residential tax abatements totaling \$183 million, with over \$53 million directed to a predominantly white, affluent neighborhoods. In contrast, two majority-Black neighborhoods received less than \$1 million in tax abatements between 2014 and 2018.

As part of the settlement, the city will pay \$110,000 to the homeowners who initiated the lawsuit. Cincinnati Mayor Aftab Pureval underscored the city's commitment to making the residential abatement program more impactful and accessible to underinvested communities. Pureval pledged to continue efforts to bring incentives and information about home improvement resources to those who need them the most, ensuring a more just and inclusive housing

landscape for all residents.

"Since taking office, we've worked to make our residential abatement program more impactful and accessible to the folks who need it the most. I'm proud of our administration's steps to bring more incentives, an easier process

and information about other home improvement resources to our underinvested communities," Pureval told Atlanta Black Star in a statement.

"As we move forward, those goals will continue to be our guiding light," Pureval said.



Rep. Clyburn Steps Down From House Leadership

By Stacy M. Brown

NNPA

Longtime South Carolina Democratic Rep. James Clyburn has announced his resignation from his House leadership position, effective immediately, while simultaneously committing to run for reelection. Clyburn, a staunch supporter of President Joe Biden, said he aims to focus on conveying the message of inclusivity and unity that defines the greatness of the United States.

During an interview on Sunday, Feb. 18, Clyburn, 83, expressed his continued disdain for former President Donald Trump's "Make America Great Again" mantra, asserting that the country is already great but needs to ensure accessibility and affordability for all citizens. He encouraged Biden to emphasize his experience, wisdom, and commitment to maintaining connections with the American people during the upcoming presidential campaign.

"I am fond of saying, this is a great country in no need of being made great. We just got to figure out ways to make this country's greatness accessible and affordable for all of our citizens. And Joe Biden is doing that. And we have got to stay focused on that," Clyburn stated emphatically.

Clyburn, who had previously announced his intention to seek reelection, also reiterated that he's only stepping aside as assistant Democratic leader, which marks the end of his influential tenure in House leadership. The move comes amid years of speculation about Clyburn's retirement and the subsequent race to fill the void in the majority Black 6th Congressional District, covering substantial parts of the Interstate 95 corridor, Northeast Columbia, and North Charleston.

Expressing gratitude for the trust placed in him by colleagues throughout his career, Clyburn acknowledged the changing political landscape and his role in shaping it. Last year, he played a pivotal role in moving the South Carolina Democratic presidential primary to a leading position. He collaborated with Republican Governor Henry McMaster to expand broadband access to rural South Carolina.

The departure of Clyburn from his assistant Democratic leader role represents a broader shift in leadership dynamics, completing the transition from the era of former Speaker Nancy Pelosi, of California, to a younger generation led by Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries of New York.

"I am deeply grateful for the confidence my colleagues have placed in me throughout my career," Clyburn stated.



NY Sues Cash-Advance Operation For Issuing Fraudulent Loans With Rates As High As 820%

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — A New York-based cash-advance operation exploited struggling small businesses across the country by issuing fraudulent, "predatory" loans at interest rates as high as 820%, New York Attorney General Letitia James alleged in a new lawsuit.

James filed the suit Tuesday against Yellowstone Capital, along with a network of related companies and people she says carried on its operations after Yellowstone purportedly shut up shop in 2021 while facing multiple investigations.

The operation, which allegedly rebranded as Delta Bridge, continued issuing illegal loans disguised as merchant cash advances, a form of short-term, high-interest funding for small businesses, the suit

charges. One long-time Manhattan eatery, City Bakery, was forking over more than \$2,000 a day and eventually shut down as a result, James' office alleges.

"Yellowstone Capital, Delta Bridge, and the other companies pretended to offer a helping hand, but instead provided only illegal, ultra-high-interest loans," said James in a statement. "Small businesses are the foundation of our economy, and they face severe challenges without also having predatory lenders taking advantage of them."

Phone and email messages left with contacts listed for Yellowstone and Delta Bridge requesting comment were not immediately returned. The former owner of

City Bakery, Maury Rubin, did not immediately respond to email messages requesting comment.

The lawsuit also names officials from the companies who negotiated and serviced the alleged illegal loans, including David Glass, who co-founded the company in 2019 after pleading guilty to insider trading charges. Messages left at phone numbers listed for Glass were not immediately returned.

James is asking for a court order barring Yellowstone, Delta Bridge, and their affiliates and officials from continuing the operation. She is also asking for a lifetime industry ban for Glass.

James says her office is seeking at least \$1.4 billion for the impacted small businesses.

In 2020, federal regulators sued Yellowstone and its owners, alleging the company withdrew money from its customers' bank accounts without permission. In 2021, the company agreed to surrender more than \$9.7 million in funds to the Federal Trade Commission, which was later redistributed to the harmed businesses.

In 2023, the company and its affiliates reached an approximately \$27 million settlement with the state of New Jersey to resolve allegations similar to New York's.

Before filing the New York lawsuit, James reached settlements with five individuals involved in the Yellowstone scheme, which included \$3.37 million for impacted businesses, according to her office.

Bill That Could Lead To Nation-Wide TikTok Ban Gaining Momentum.

TikTok once again finds itself in a precarious position.

This time, it comes in the form of legislation that would ban the popular social media platform if it doesn't break ties with ByteDance, its Beijing-based parent company.

On Thursday, a House panel unanimously approved a bipartisan bill that would require the Chinese firm to divest TikTok and other applications it owns within six months of the bill's enactment in order to avoid a nation-wide ban. The legislation also creates a process that lets the executive branch prohibit access to other apps that pose a threat to national security.

House Majority Leader Steve Scalise announced Thursday that he would bring the bill to the House floor for a vote next week. It's unclear what will happen in the Senate, where several bills aimed at banning TikTok have stalled.

In a remark to reporters at Joint Base Andrews on Friday, President Joe Biden said "If they pass it, I'll sign it."

Here's what you need to know:

Why are lawmakers concerned about TikTok?

Lawmakers from both parties have long expressed concerns that Chinese authorities could force ByteDance to hand over data on the 170 million Americans who use TikTok. The worry stems from a set of Chinese national security laws that compel organizations to assist with intelligence gathering - which ByteDance would likely be subject to - and other far-reaching ways the country's authoritarian government exercises control.

TikTok has long denied assertions that it could be used as a tool of the Chinese government. The company has said it has never shared U.S. user data with Chinese authorities and won't do so if its asked. To date, U.S. government also has not provided any evidence that shows TikTok shared such information with Chinese authorities.

Apart from security concerns, some lawmakers, researchers and critics of TikTok also posit the app



suppresses content unfavorable to Beijing, which TikTok denies.

What happened to the previous attempts made to ban TikTok?

In 2020, former President Donald Trump attempted to ban the social media platform through an executive order, which was blocked by the courts after TikTok sued.

The Biden administration revoked that executive order but continued a review of the platform by the secretive Committee on Foreign Investment in the U.S., an intra-agency committee that reportedly threatened to ban TikTok last year if its Chinese owners don't divest their stakes. The White House ac-

knowledge last month that review remains ongoing.

Other efforts from federal lawmakers to enact nationwide bans were stalled last year amid lobbying from TikTok as well as influencers and small businesses who use the platform. The American Civil Liberties Union and some digital rights groups have opposed a TikTok ban on free speech grounds and argued the latest House bill would violate the rights of Americans who rely on the app for information, advocacy and entertainment.

How are TikTok users reacting to the latest bill?

TikTok sent a notification to some users this week urging them to call their representatives about the measure, which it characterized as a "TikTok shutdown."

The company told users Congress was planning "total ban" on the plat-

form that could "damage millions of businesses, destroy the livelihoods of countless creators across the country and deny artists an audience."

On Thursday, many users responded by inundating congressional offices with calls, leading some to shut off their phones.

In a joint statement released Thursday evening, Mike Gallagher, the Republican chair of the House Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party, and Raja Krishnamoorthi, a ranking Democrat on the panel, rebuked what they called TikTok's intimidation campaign. The lawmakers, who introduced the bill, said the legislation was not a ban on TikTok but "about making sure" it doesn't answer to the Chinese Communist Party.

Krishnamoorthi also said TikTok's notification to its users backfired and "proved the point" of the bill.

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'Dragon Ball' Creator Akira Toriyama Dies At 68

TOKYO (AP) — Akira Toriyama, the creator of the best-selling Dragon Ball and other popular anime who influenced Japanese comics, has died, his studio said Friday. He was 68.

Toriyama's Dragon Ball manga series, which started in 1984, has sold millions of copies globally and was adapted into hugely popular animated TV shows, video games and films.

Toriyama died March 1 of a blood clot in his brain, Bird Studio said in a statement.

"He was working enthusiastically on many projects, and there was still much he was looking forward to accomplishing," the studio wrote.

A new TV adaptation of Toriyama's "Sand Land," a desert adventure story released in 2000 and later adapted into a 2023 anime movie, is due to be released on Disney+ in the spring.

Messages of condolences and grief from fellow creators and fans filled social media.



Eiichiro Oda, creator of the blockbuster manga "One Piece," said Toriyama's presence was like a "big tree" to younger artists.

"He showed us all these things manga can do, a dream of going to

another world," Oda said in a statement. His death leaves "a hole too big to fill," Oda added.

Bird Studio thanked fans for more than 40 years of support. "We hope that Akira Toriyama's unique world

of creation continues to be loved by everyone for a long time to come."

Born in Aichi prefecture in central Japan in 1955, Toriyama made his manga debut in 1978 with the adventure comic "Wonder Island," published in the Weekly Shonen Jump magazine. His Dr. Slump series, which started in 1980, was his first major hit.

It made him a celebrity, but Toriyama avoided the spotlight. In 1982, he told Japanese public broadcast NHK: "I just want to keep writing manga."

Dragon Ball, the story of a boy named Son Goku and his quest for seven magical balls that can make wishes come true, has sold 260 million copies altogether, according to the studio.

Toriyama also designed characters for the video game series Dragon Quest. He received awards in the manga industry and beyond, including France's Knight of the Order of Arts and Letters.