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We Need an Accurate Census, Not a Political One

There are a lot of issues to straighten out before the 2000 census is taken but the biggest one is the consistent undercount of certain populations—primarily racial minorities. The 1990 census was the most expensive in history, yet it missed about 10 million Americans.

What was most responsible for the undercount was the Census Bureau's exclusive reliance on the traditional method of locating people at specific addresses by mail or through personal contact with an enumerator. As a result, new immigrants, migrant workers, the homeless, the poor, residents sharing dwellings with others, and mobile young people all tend to be undercounted. Not only are African Americans and Hispanics overrepresented in these categories, but as these populations grow, particularly in larger cities, the process of counting them becomes more difficult.

Using traditional methods has always been problematic. In 1880, enumerators conducting the count of New York City residents were frustrated by the fact that there were, on average, three families per dwelling. One Census official at the time described New York as a city "with thousands of shanties, sheds, and inhabited sites… and its population is almost equally divided between natives and foreigners, no small part using languages other than English… ." Similar conditions in the nation's inner cities have continued to thwart census takers up to the present.

Exacerbating the problem further is the January resignation of Census Bureau Director Martha Riche. A respected professional demographer, as head of the Bureau Riche advocated reducing the undercount dramatically by employing proven statistical sampling methods to supplement the traditional head count. Sampling has long been used to derive several government indicators, including the Labor Department's employment report, and has been endorsed by professional statisticians, economists, and the National Academy of Sciences.

Unfortunately, Riche's efforts to institute a procedure devised by professional demographers and statisticians to make the census more accurate has been vigorously attacked by GOP members of Congress. Conservative Republicans have fought sampling, fearing that a better count of minorities, who tend to vote Democratic rather than Republican, might put the GOP at a political disadvantage.

Regrettably, undercounting blacks has been a problem since the founding of the Republic. When the Framers of the Constitution drafted Article I, Section 2 of the nation's charter, which mandates a decennial census, they devalued blacks by counting free persons as whole persons, excluding Indians, and counting "all other persons" (black slaves) as three fifths of a person. After the 1940 enumeration, far more young men answered the call to join the military than the Census Bureau had actually counted.

Census figures are used to determine the shares of federal dollars states receive. They are the raw material for drawing state and federal legislative districts lines. They are essential to a broad range of businesses as they plan new products. Scholars use the data in research and analysis. An accurate count of the people who reside within these shores is essential—indeed, accuracy is far more important than any political consideration.

Martha Riche had fought admirably to establish a process that would yield an accurate count. With her resignation, the responsibility for carrying out that mission has fallen on the shoulders of acting Census Bureau Director James F. Holmes, who happens to be an African American. A professional statistician, Holmes is a veteran of 30 years with the Bureau and most recently headed its Atlanta regional office. It is to be hoped that our national leadership will rise above politics and support him as he works to ensure that *everyone* in the nation is counted in the year 2000 while the search for a permanent director proceeds. ■



PRESIDENT

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The Global Warming Treaty

Environmentalists Urge Approval of Treaty to Curb Greenhouse Gas Emissions That Threaten the Health of Everyone

by Bailus Walker, Jr.

Last December, diplomats from more than 160 nations met in Kyoto, Japan, to negotiate a treaty to cut emissions of "greenhouse" gases—chiefly carbon dioxide—which result from the burning of fossil fuels such as coal and oil. After 11 days of complex bargaining, the countries agreed on a legally binding protocol to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The overall worldwide reduction for all industrialized countries would amount to 5 percent below 1990 levels. The U.S. commitment is 7 percent below 1990 levels. The United States is the world's greatest emitter of greenhouse gases.

The agreement is likely to be a prime topic in U.S. budget discussions this year as well as in the congressional elections and perhaps the next presidential election. Environmental groups, public health associations, and energy conservation advocates, among others, will mount intensive campaigns to help persuade the U.S. Senate to accept the agreement. With equal fervor, the coal, auto, oil, and chemical industries are expected to step up their advertising campaign to build opposition to the treaty, arguing that it will wreck the U.S. economy.

The "greenhouse effect" is caused by gases such as carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide, which accumulate in the atmosphere and trap solar radiation, thus warming the planet. The natural levels of these gases help keep temperatures within a range that can support life. The projected global warming stems from the accumulation of these gases beyond natural levels.

The Kyoto pact is a reasonable step in what must be a long-term effort to find a global solution involving all countries emitting the gases. The United States lags far behind in addressing the problem: with 4 percent of the world's population, we emit 22 percent of the carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.

One of the most difficult aspects of the Kyoto negotiations, according to several members of the U.S. delegation and other experts, was deciding what reductions to require of developing countries whose economies are far less robust than those of the United States, Canada, or Japan. The participation of developing countries was especially important to the United States because of the passage of the Byrd-Hagel resolution in the U.S. Senate. Authored by Senators Robert C. Byrd (D–W.Va.) and Chuck Hagel (R–Neb.) and passed unanimously, the resolution states that no climate treaty will be considered that does not include binding emissions commitments from developing countries. This issue was not resolved at Kyoto.

How Will Global Warming Affect Us?

Economic growth and development as well as relatively cheaper energy have increased the United States' level of emissions in recent years. The current projections are that by the year 2010, this country will be emitting 35 percent more carbon dioxide, the main gas that traps the sun's heat in the atmosphere. The current emission level is about 23 billion tons per year. Climate change projections suggest a rise of another two to six-and-a-half degrees Fahrenheit by 2100, an average increase greater than any seen in the last 10,000 years.

This increase, if nothing else changes, will cause a significant warming of the earth's climate. There would be the potential for more frequent and widespread heat waves, even more severe than the one that caused the heat-related deaths of many elderly blacks in Chicago in July 1995. The effects also could lead to heavier rain storms, a rise in sea level, more severe floods and droughts, and other natural disasters with their attendant impact on public health, safety, property, and the economy.

The predicted weather-related disasters due to the much-publicized El Niño are also among the catastrophes that may become more frequent if we continue to add more greenhouse gases to the atmosphere. Flooding brought on by the El Niño weather phenomenon may be one of the causes of a mysterious illness that led to the death of 171 people in northeast Kenya in late December. The flooding contaminated Kenya's drinking water and caused an increase in the population of mosquitoes, lice, and ticks that breed in flood waters and spread disease. Due to increased international travel, infectious diseases in one country may well represent a threat to the health of high-density areas, such as inner-city neighborhoods, in the United States. Public health studies include a number of examples of diseases common in other countries that have been introduced into the United States by travelers.

With the projected warmer temperatures, the potential exists for increased concentrations of air pollutants that aggravate asthma, already at epidemic levels among black children. The pollutants could further increase the heart disease death rate among African Americans, which is now one-and-a-half times that of white Americans.

In the United States, approximately $1 billion per week is now spent to address the effects of extreme weather

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Dr. Walker is director of the health policy program at the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies.

Global Warming

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conditions, according to data from the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP). In 1997, $1.38 billion in tax dollars went to assist communities hit by violent storms and floods. In California, January floods broke major dikes in 56 places throughout the state. The floods killed a number of people, sent more than 100,000 persons looking for shelter, and caused property damage of at least $1.8 billion. But cost data do not reflect the human suffering, mental distress, and family disruption that result from the destruction of homes, loss of jobs, and increased health risks from contaminated drinking water and interruption of sewage disposal services. All of these effects commonly attend major storms and floods, disasters that are consistent with the predicted effects of severe climate change.

Allowing greenhouse gases to reach higher concentrations could also dramatically increase property and life insurance rates and costs to pension systems, as the incidence of injuries, premature deaths, and property damage rises. Global warming could also have a negative effect on agriculture, a source of employment for many African Americans, who make up 30 percent of the nation's migrant farm workers. In addition, black farmers, who have historically experienced financial difficulties, could be put at further disadvantage by weather conditions that reduce crop production. In coastal communities, warmer ocean temperatures could reduce the harvest of fish and shellfish.

Blacks are over-represented in jobs not only in agriculture and the seafood industry but in other sectors vulnerable to the effects of global warming, including construction, tourism, and other work dependent on weather conditions.

The Economy and the Environment

What is now becoming clear is that the debate over the Kyoto Treaty, when it occurs, will split the Senate into two groups:

1) Those who believe that early and effective action is necessary to prevent widespread climate, social, and economic disruption; and

2) Those who are convinced that any methods employed to reduce greenhouse gases will devastate the U.S. economy, causing a loss of jobs, increasing the price of energy, and hampering U.S. efforts to compete in a global economy.

Regarding the latter concerns, the results of environmental and occupational regulations in the United States provide ample evidence that the cost and related economic impact of reducing carbon dioxide emissions may be far less than initial predictions. For example, in the past some predicted "economic devastation" if the United States phased out leaded gasoline, set appropriate standards for controlling cotton dust exposure in workplaces, or reduced sulfur emissions. These prophecies of disaster—the record shows—were far off the mark. Predictions of "economic devastation" have long been a part of environmental policy discussions because environmental issues are inevitably economic issues. Whenever new environmental health legislation and regulations are proposed, the same questions are posed concerning job loss and competitiveness in the global economy.

Often overlooked in these discussions is the fact that the quality of the environment and the adequacy of its resource base are among the United States' greatest national assets. Indeed, companies that make products which cut the cost of production by cutting pollutants have prospered. Data from the *Wall Street Journal* show that the number of buyers for companies that make pollution control equipment has increased during the past year. Clearly, the prevention of environmentally related disease, the sound management of land and other natural resources, and the promotion of outdoor recreation are among the considerable rewards that stem from sound environmental policy.

What the naysayers of the Kyoto pact also fail to recognize is the massive U.S. research, development, and engineering capability that has evolved over the years. Many environmentalists charge that these resources are capable of meeting the challenges of cutting greenhouse gas emissions so that new jobs are created and the U.S. gross domestic product increased. The effort to reduce these gases could also create greater investment by U.S. companies in emissions-reduction projects in developing countries—design and construction of modern, fuel-efficient power-generating plants, for instance. Energy experts are developing a litany of energy-efficient measures that can reduce greenhouse gas emissions, prevent damage to health or loss of life and reduce liability, and result in lower energy bills for consumers. Some energy consumption alternatives have already been implemented

In the automobile industry, plans are underway to produce more fuel-efficient vehicles to further cut emission levels. Research is underway to improve electric cars, and cars are already on the market that go 70 miles on a gallon of gas. Air pollution control companies are projecting a multibillion-dollar market for pollution control equipment as plants continue to invest in new pollution control processes.

In Cambridge, Maryland, an elementary school is saving energy by using a geothermal heat pump for cooling and heating. This equipment reduces greenhouse gas emissions by 40 percent. The school district expects to save $400,000 in energy and maintenance costs over the next several years. The technology is already available for extracting more energy from coal and at the same time reducing carbon dioxide emissions. Using cleaner fuels, such as natural gas, could also help cut greenhouse gas emissions.

A substantial number of new employees will be required to design, redesign, develop, and market a variety of state-of-the art processes to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Economic activities in these areas can create jobs in other sectors, such as transportation, wholesale and retail trade, health care, personal services, recreation, and a wide range of environmental services.

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Reauthorizing Aid to Colleges

With the Federal Budget in Surplus, Minorities Hope Congress Extends the Higher Education Act with Increased Funding

by Ronald Roach

Every five years, the academic community gears up for the reauthorization by the U.S. Congress of the Higher Education Act (HEA). Consideration of the bill this year will take place in an environment that has changed dramatically since the last time the act was reauthorized. Three forces will be shaping the legislation that eventually emerges: the Republicans' control of Congress and their stated hostility to any federal role in education; a budget that is balanced for the first time in 30 years; and an aggressive educational agenda from the Clinton Administration.

First enacted in 1965, the HEA authorizes the federal government's institutional aid programs, student financial assistance programs, and support for disadvantaged students.

Currently, some form of federal financial aid is received by seven million students, accounting for more than 40 percent of the total in American higher education. During the 1996–97 academic year, HEA's student aid programs, covered under Title IV of the Act, provided $33 billion to students to help them pay for post-secondary education—$26 billion in student loans, $6 billion in grants, and more than $800 million for work-study positions.

The President's Budget

President Clinton's proposed fiscal year 1999 budget reflects the priorities set out in last summer's historic balanced budget agreement. Clinton's proposal seeks to increase work-study assistance while reducing student loan borrowing costs. It would also fund new programs that would improve teacher training, and fund support services to help prepare disadvantaged students for higher education.

In last summer's agreement, the Clinton Administration engineered a package of education tax credits worth $40 billion. This dramatic expansion of tax credits makes it unlikely that the Republican Congress will seek to overhaul or make major changes to the Higher Education Act, according to political observers.

"President Clinton and Education Secretary [Richard] Riley had their finger on the pulse of the American public," commented Anita Estell, a Washington-based attorney-lobbyist for Spelman College and the University of Puerto Rico. [Clinton] assessed that education more than crime was the issue Americans cared most about. The public has rallied with the President on education."

Some key components of the balanced budget deal for higher education take effect in 1998, including a new stream of $35 billion in benefits over five years delivered to higher education through the tax code:

- **Hope Scholarship Credit:** The Hope Scholarships grant tax credits up to $1,500 for each of the first two years of college or post-high school training. The credits became available for college enrollment on January 1, 1998. An estimated 5.8 million students will benefit annually.
- **Education IRAs:** For a child under age 18, families may deposit up to $500 a year into an education IRA in the child's name. Interest earned on the accounts is tax-exempt, provided the money is used for higher education. The program took effect January 1, 1998.
- **Lifetime Learning Credit:** This tax credit will offset tuition costs for college juniors and seniors, graduate and professional degree students, and adults returning to school, changing careers, or upgrading work-related skills. Recipients are eligible to receive a 20 percent tax credit for the first $5,000 of tuition and fees each year through year 2002, and for the first $10,000 of tuition and fees in subsequent years. According to the Department of Education, 7.1 million students are expected to take advantage of the credit annually. The credit will take effect July 1, 1998.
- **Pell Grants:** Low- and moderate-income student recipients of the two-decades-old direct, need-based student assistance Pell grant program will receive an increase of $300, making the grant worth up to $3,000. The increase, which takes effect in the 1998-99 academic year, is the largest since Pell grants were established.

Congressional Initiatives

Congressional Democrats, such as Rep. William Clay (D–Mo.), the ranking minority member of the Education and the Workforce Committee, and Rep. Chaka Fattah (D–Pa.) are eager to build on last year's budget deal to expand educational opportunities for disadvantaged students. Rep. Clay proposes increases in maximum Pell grant awards to take them from $3,000 to $4,500 by FY 2002.

Rep. Fattah hopes to attach to the legislation a bill he first introduced last year to increase college enrollment among disadvantaged students. Titled the "21st Century Scholars Act of 1997" (H.R.777), it requires the federal government to notify sixth graders residing in high-poverty areas (at least 75 percent of families living in poverty) that they are guaranteed four years of the maximum Pell grant.

The goal of the program is to motivate low-income students to complete high school in order to take advantage of the grants. Fattah's proposal is modeled after private ventures, such as the "I Have a Dream" program

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Mr. Roach is senior writer for *Black Issues in Higher Education* magazine.

College Aid

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created by millionaire Eugene Lang, who in 1981 promised full college tuition to a class of sixth graders at his old elementary school in East Harlem.

Title III and HBCUs

Dating back to the first enactment of the legislation, Title III of the Higher Education Act has directed a significant level of funding to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). "Developing institutions," which include Native American tribal colleges and Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), receive funding through Title III's "Part A" provision. Thirty-seven HSIs—institutions with 25 percent or more Hispanic enrollment—received Title III funding in FY 1997.

Last year, plans to expand Title III funding hit a snag when Hispanic and African American leaders disagreed over how expansion should proceed. Hispanic leaders have advocated a plan that would create a separate category for Hispanic Serving Institutions, similar to Title III's Part B, which covers HBCUs (in FY 1996, 103 HBCU institutions received Title III B funding). A similar category for tribal colleges was also proposed. Black leaders have stated that new categories akin to Part B would lead to diminished funding for HBCUs even if Congress increases total funding for Title III programs. They have also argued that Part B should remain a unique African American category because it was originally created to address historic discrimination that HBCUs once suffered as institutions.

Currently, HBCUs receive the largest chunk of Title III funding. In 1997, it amounted to $128 million, of which $109 million was used for undergraduate programs and $19 million for graduate programs. In comparison, HSIs last year secured just $10.8 million in Title III funding.

Although most African American leaders oppose the creation of a new Title III category for other minority groups, they are allied with Hispanic and Native American leaders in calling for increased funding for HSIs and tribal colleges. Legislation introduced by U.S. Representative Ruben Hinojosa (D–Tex.), a Hispanic lawmaker, seeks an increase in Title III funding that would bring HSI funding to $80 million. The Clinton administration has responded by meeting those requests halfway—with a Title III proposal that calls for increasing the HSI share to $24 million and the HBCU total to $149 million, and earmarking $5 million for tribal colleges.

"I think the bottom line is that we have an opportunity to establish a framework either of collaboration or confrontation," says attorney-lobbyist Estell, who represents both an HSI and an HBCU, "This is a defining moment for both communities."

Other Key Issues

In addition to student financial aid and Title III funding, African American leaders and higher education advocates will monitor and lobby Congress on other key issues during the HEA reauthorization.

- **HBCU Loan Default Exemption:** More than five years ago, during the previous reauthorization of the HEA, members of the Congressional Black Caucus successfully argued that HBCUs and tribal colleges be granted an exemption from federal loan-default sanctions. The exemption was sought because nearly a third of HBCUs were in danger of losing access to federal loan and grant programs due to their students' high loan default rates. The schools had become vulnerable to higher rates of loan defaults partly because of their tradition of serving students from low-income backgrounds in regions of the nation where the economy has remained weak.
- **TRIO:** The prospects for this program, which recruits disadvantaged students for college and gives them critical support services, are positive, according to higher education advocates. TRIO programs include Upward Bound, Talent Search, Educational Opportunity Centers, and the Ronald McNair Post-baccalaureate Achievement Program. "TRIO has a lot of bipartisan support," says Estell.
- **Teacher Training and Assistance:** Legislative proposals that would boost the numbers of minority teachers will be considered during HEA reauthorization. Clinton has announced a proposal for a new national effort to attract quality teachers to high-poverty communities by offering scholarships for those who will commit to teach in those communities for at least three years.

  The Administration's proposal for the reauthorization of Title V of HEA would replace numerous small, disconnected authorities with two programs. They would focus on recruiting new teachers for the high-poverty urban and rural areas that have the most difficulty in recruiting and retaining a qualified teaching force, and preparing those teachers to teach all students to high standards. The cost of this proposal would be $67 million in 1999 and $350 million over five years.

  Rep. Clay has proposed related legislation, which would allow new teachers at schools with high concentrations of poor students to have their student loans forgiven. Eligible teachers would have 15 percent of their loans forgiven in the first and second years of teaching; 20 percent in the third and fourth years; and 30 percent in the fifth year, according to the legislation.
- **Federal Work-Study:** In the proposed FY 1999 budget, Clinton is seeking a $70 million increase in work-study funding. The Federal Work-Study Program provides undergraduate and graduate students with part-time employment to help them meet their financial needs. The increased funding would bring total work-study funding to $900 million and add 55,000 positions, pushing the program's total workforce past a million work-study participants by the year 2000.
- **Affirmative Action:** HEA observers say Republican lawmakers might try to attach an amendment to the legislation to prohibit federal aid to institutions that practice affirmative action. Virtually all American higher

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Ron Dellums' 30-Year War for Peace

The Representative from California Who Helped Lead the Anti-War Movement Retires from Congress

by David C. Ruffin

In the early 1970s, the fledgling Congressional Black Caucus demanded greater power in the House committees. Not satisfied to be limited to membership on authorizing committees dealing with civil rights and social issues, the black legislators appealed to then House Speaker Carl Albert (D–Okla.) to place some of them on panels where money decisions were made–Ways and Means, Appropriations, and Budget. Albert agreed, and with the integration of these powerful committees, Congress's budget priorities also began to change.

When the Caucus asked for participation on the Armed Services Committee, the accommodating Albert asked who it recommended. The answer was Ron Dellums from California. The Speaker was stunned because Dellums, a self-described radical, was one of the Pentagon's biggest foes on Capitol Hill. Albert flatly insisted that Dellums was unacceptable, but in a conciliatory gesture he offered to accept anyone else. The adamant Caucus got its way and in 1973 Dellums became the first African American to sit on the House Armed Services Committee. A tall, charismatic advocate for progressive causes, Dellums would remain a controversial figure on the national political scene until his retirement this February.

Speaker Albert was correct in his perception that Dellums was unsympathetic to the nation's defense establishment. In 1970, running to represent a congressional district that included Oakland and Berkeley, California, Dellums, a former Marine, campaigned as an aggressive opponent of the Vietnam War. This was at a time when President Richard Nixon was ordering the invasion of Cambodia by U.S. troops. Dellums used his seat in Congress as a forum to condemn the war as "illegal, immoral, and insane," and held ad-hoc hearings on war crimes by U.S. military forces. When the "Pentagon Papers" were published, exposing America's covert activities in prosecuting the war, Dellums had them read into the *Congressional Record*.

After the war, he remained in the forefront of the peace movement, opposing both the overt and covert U.S. military interventions in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Panama, and Grenada. With notably greater success, he led the opposition to building the Mobile MX Intercontinental ballistic missile (the project was canceled). He was among the leaders who successfully opposed the production of additional B-1 Bombers.

With growing seniority, Dellums became chair of the Subcommittee on Military Installations and Facilities in 1983. To the surprise of some, he did not attempt to impose his philosophy on the panel's deliberations, but scrupulously protected the objectivity and integrity of the legislative process. Dellums would preside over multi-billion-dollar military construction bills crafted with bipartisan involvement–and then he'd vote against them. He would later chair other Armed Services subcommittees where he worked to redirect funds from building new bases so they could be used for improving the quality of life of service personnel and their families.

While chairing a Congressional Black Caucus braintrust on foreign affairs in the mid-1980s, Dellums pledged to continue his anti-war stance on the Armed Services Committee, vowing to an applauding audience, "I'm going to outlive them all." He was implying that through seniority and attrition, he intended to eventually chair the full committee.

In 1993, when President Clinton asked then Armed Services Chair Les Aspin (D–Wisc.) to be Secretary of Defense, Dellums, the next in line, filled the vacancy. As chair of Armed Services, Dellums pressed the government to make military technology and closed bases available for domestic economic purposes. He also pushed for the speedy environmental clean-up of military bases.

Dellums' chairmanship ended in 1995, after the GOP won a majority in Congress. But his efforts to reduce military spending never flagged. His "White Paper" on defense policy, issued this year, proposed a $220 billion reduction in Pentagon spending over the next five years.

Dellums' commitment to peace extended to his concern for social justice around the world and has transcended political partisanship. For example, he was arrested in front of the White House while demonstrating against President Clinton's failure to commit the United States to an aggressive policy to reestablish democracy in Haiti. One of the first bills he introduced in Congress, in 1971, was a measure to compel American businesses to divest their holdings in the South African economy. Dellums pursued sanctions for more than a dozen years until finally the sanctions bill he introduced in 1986 was adopted over President Ronald Reagan's veto by an overwhelming majority.

On February 6, 1998, Ron Dellums resigned his seat in Congress. He leaves less a legacy of legislation than one of protest. Taking on what were often unpopular causes, certainly among the established order, he stood up for the weak and unempowered. He sought to create a world in which tanks were stilled and war planes rusted. Whatever his critics say of him, they cannot say he lacked integrity or the courage to fight for his beliefs. ■

Mr. Ruffin is the editor of FOCUS.

Global Warming

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Public Support

These benefits cannot be realized without public support for curbing global warming. Some analysts have suggested that gaining this support will be difficult because the consequences of climate change may not become evident until years in the future. However, in poll after poll, the public has expressed strong support for action on global warming. In a November 1997 *New York Times* poll, 65 percent of those surveyed said the United States should take steps to cut its own emissions. A number of other polls show public support for stronger action to stop the world from "cooking" itself in greenhouse gases. Polling results indicate that the public supports efforts to prevent and control environmental problems. Indeed, public support for environmental policies and programs appears to be stronger today than ever before.

There is no quick fix for global warming, but there is considerable need for improved understanding of the relevant technical, social, and economic factors involved in addressing the problem. To do nothing would leave us at the mercy of events that could have disastrous consequences. Moreover, as Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright said when she released the State Department's first assessment of the global environment last May: "Improving the environment will help eliminate one major source of human conflict—competition for scarce resources." ■

College Aid

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education institutions have some form of affirmative action in place at their campuses.

William "Buddy" Blakey, the Washington-based attorney-lobbyist who represents the United Negro College Fund before federal agencies and Capitol Hill, believes it's unlikely that Republicans would attempt such a measure. He is convinced it would be met with loud and vigorous opposition, although it does have the potential to keep HEA from being reauthorized before the end of the legislative year.

Prospects

While the HEA undergoes reauthorization in today's radically different environment, President Clinton and congressional Democrats should continue to dominate higher education politics. Given the public's desire for relief from escalating higher education costs, the prospects for a speedy, bipartisan consensus on the HEA appear strong. ■

Join us at our Annual Dinner

George Fisher, chairman and CEO of Eastman Kodak Company, and Eddie N. Williams, president of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, invite you to the Joint Center's annual fundraising dinner on Wednesday, April 1, 1998.

The dinner will be held at the Washington Hilton Hotel, 1919 Connecticut Avenue, NW, in Washington, D.C. Vernon E. Jordan, Jr., will be the master of ceremonies.

Dinner tables are available at the: Chairman's Circle, $25,000, Sponsor's Circle, $10,000, and Patron's Circle, $5,000 (single tickets are $500).

For reservations and further information, please contact Alfreda Edwards at 202-789-3545.

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POLITICAL REPORT

First Black Speaker-Designate Ousted by Florida Democrats

With only one day's notice, Democrats in the Florida State House of Representatives voted January 7 to remove a fellow Democrat, Willie Logan of Opa-Locka, from the speaker-designate position he had held for less than a year. Should the Democrats ever regain control of the House, their speaker-designate would be expected to become speaker of the House. Logan was the first African American to hold the post. Anticipating the outcome, Logan and the rest of the 13-member black caucus angrily left the House chamber before the vote was taken. The remaining white Democrats selected Rep. Anne Mackenzie of Fort Lauderdale as the new speaker-designate. The justification for Logan's ouster by party officials was that he is too liberal in his political views and was ineffective as a fundraiser. A primary function of the speaker is to raise funds and recruit candidates for upcoming elections.

Black Democrats across the state were outraged by the action and called it racially motivated. On January 24, Leon Russell, leader of the Florida NAACP, met with black lawmakers to plan a response. They adopted a 10-point plan to exact retribution for the ouster, including efforts to vote out of office the 31 white Democratic representatives who had voted to remove Logan. Black U.S. Representatives Alcee Hastings and Corrine Brown were among those at the meeting who called for black Democrats to be "free agents," supporting candidates on the basis of issues rather than party affiliation. The action of the state NAACP was backed up by a strongly worded condemnation of Logan's ouster from NAACP national president Kweisi Mfume.

Current speaker-designate Mackenzie replied that an inspection of the Democratic voting record on issues of concern to blacks, compared to that of the GOP, should convince black Democrats of the folly of the "free agent" campaign. Further, she placed part of the blame for Logan's ouster on his fellow black legislators. None of them, she stated, had done anything to help Logan raise money. Mackenzie claimed that contributions had increased since Logan's removal due to her own diligence in making calls. Black Democrats respond that contributors were asked to withhold their donations until after Logan was removed to make it appear that contributions had gone up.

Florida Republicans have been quick to capitalize on the rift. Their comparison of Logan and Mackenzie's voting records showed a 93 percent match, and an analysis of Logan's fundraising showed that his record was equal to or better than those of his predecessors.

Notwithstanding the re-election of Democratic Governor Lawton Chiles over Republican Jeb Bush in a closely fought battle in 1994, the Democratic party in Florida has been losing ground to the GOP in recent years. Democrats lost control of the state senate in 1994 (currently, the GOP holds a 23–17 majority), and they lost control of the house in 1996. When Logan became speaker-designate, Republicans already held a two-seat majority—61 to 59. Since then, the margin has widened to 65 to 55 as three Democrats joined the Republicans and the Democrats lost a special election. As the number of white registered Democrats in Florida has also continued to drop, blacks have become an increasing proportion of the Democratic party. Currently, while they make up 15 percent of the state's population, blacks are one-third of the state's Democrats.

Few political experts believe that black disenchantment with the party will lead to party switching, but many think it may result in depressed voter turnout. State NAACP President Leon Russell has been quick to remind people that the GOP has not offered anything to black voters. The state's five black state senators have written to Logan to plead with him not to lead a break with the party. Although they were strongly critical of those

who voted to oust Logan, these senators argued that anything that helped the GOP would be likely to hurt the interests of black voters and reduce their political influence in the long run.

Meeks Succeeds Flake in Congress

Gregory W. Meeks of New York garnered 57 percent of the vote in the February 3 special election to fill the 6th congressional district seat of retired U.S. Representative Floyd Flake. Meeks is a 44-year-old former prosecutor and state assemblyman.

The population of New York's 6th congressional district, which covers portions of Queens, is 56 percent black, 29 percent white, and 14 percent Hispanic. Unlike many majority-black districts, the 6th is solidly middle income, with a poverty level below the state average.

After serving six terms, Flake announced last summer that he would retire in the fall to devote more time to his church, the Allen African Methodist Episcopal church in Jamaica, Queens, New York. Meeks' chief opponent in the five-candidate race was State Senator Alton R. Waldon, Jr., also black, who ran as an independent after losing the Democratic nomination to Meeks.

Although he has worked in the progressive presidential campaigns of the Rev. Jesse L. Jackson and the various campaigns of controversial activist Al Sharpton, Meeks is known for his ability to coalesce support from a broad political spectrum. When he chaired the Council of Black Elected Democrats, Meeks gained a reputation for being conciliatory, bringing together people who have different temperaments and represent different philosophies. Like Flake, Meeks is an advocate of economic development.

Born in 1953 in Harlem, the oldest son of a Manhattan taxi driver, Meeks grew up in public housing projects. Despite hardships, he went on to graduate from Adelphi University and Howard University Law School. When he returned to New York, he formed a community association to improve city services. From there, his interest in grassroots politics led him to form the Jesse L. Jackson Independent Democratic Club of the Rockaways, a political club that supported candidates who endorsed grassroots causes. In 1991, Meeks lost his first bid for elected office in a Democratic primary election for City Council. The next year, however, he won a seat in the state assembly representing his home district, Far Rockaway.

Senate Okays Satcher as Surgeon General

The U.S. Senate voted 63–35 to confirm Dr. David Satcher, director of the Atlanta-based Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), as the nation's first surgeon general since Dr. Joycelyn Elders was forced to resign in 1994. The vote was a rejection of attempts by conservative groups such as the Christian Coalition and the Family Research Council to link Satcher to controversial causes and to frame the vote as a referendum on the "values and ethics" of the Clinton administration.

A widely respected public health official, researcher, and former medical school president, Satcher appeared headed for easy confirmation when President Clinton nominated him last September for the dual jobs of surgeon general and assistant secretary for health in the Department of Health and Human Services. The son of a foundry worker who never completed elementary school, Satcher grew up in rural Alabama during the segregation era, almost dying of whooping cough when he was a toddler. After receiving an M.D.and Ph.D. from Case Western Reserve University, he eventually became president of the predominantly black Meharry Medical College in Nashville and was tapped by Clinton to head the CDC in 1993.

The Senate confirmation amounted to a rebuff of Sen. John Ashcroft (R–Mo.), who led a filibuster to block the nomination. Even though Satcher's nomination was never in serious jeopardy, Ashcroft and other conservatives delayed action and mounted a campaign against his confirmation, citing issues from abortion to AIDS research. They criticized Satcher for siding with Clinton in opposing a ban on "partial-birth" abortions that made no exception to protect a woman's health, and criticized him for supporting needle exchanges for drug addicts.

Few other senators joined Ashcroft in his oratorical broadsides. Tennessee Republican Senator Bill Frist, the only physician serving in the Senate, insisted that Satcher's professional performance was in accord with proper medical ethics. "I can think of no one better qualified to be surgeon general than David Satcher," Frist said. While he disagreed with Satcher on abortion, Frist said he believed Satcher will be guided by "science, not politics" and that he will emphasize issues that "unite, not divide," such as anti-smoking and teenage abstinence programs.

Satcher had the support of the American Medical Association and other medical groups, as well as AIDS Action, which represents some 2,400 community groups serving AIDS sufferers. Thirty-one of 54 Republicans present voted to end the filibuster, and 19 of them voted for confirmation. All 44 Democrats present voted to end the filibuster and for confirmation. ■

ECONOMIC REPORT

by Cecilia Conrad and Malinda Lindquist

Caring at Two Extremes

Expanding Medicare

In early January, President Clinton announced a plan to expand Medicare coverage for two vulnerable populations, dislocated workers (ages 55 to 64) and early retirees (as young as 62). Currently, Medicare is only available to people age 65 and over who are eligible for Social Security benefits, people under 65 who have received disability insurance for at least 24 months, and individuals of any age suffering from end-state renal disease. Clinton's plan would give dislocated workers and early retirees (who often have difficulty obtaining health insurance due to their age and health status) the option to purchase Medicare coverage for an annual fee ranging from $3,600 to $4,800.

A disproportionate number of the nearly 3 million uninsured persons between age 55 and 64 are African Americans, who make up 14 percent of this category (414,000 African Americans) but only 10 percent of the overall population in that age bracket. The numbers are even more striking for poor, older African Americans. Over one-quarter (26.3 percent) of those living at or below 125 percent of the poverty level ($10,204 per year for an individual under age 65) were without health coverage.

Opponents of the Clinton proposal argue that it is likely to increase the government's costs, threatening the maintenance of existing Medicare coverage. Republican National Committee Chairman Jim Nicholson has publicly stated that it is fiscally unsound to extend Medicare benefits at a time when government is struggling to ensure its solvency for the next century. The White House responds that the plan is self-financing. As mentioned, displaced workers would pay premiums for their coverage. Early retirees would receive a loan from the Medicare system for the first years of their participation; once they reached age 65 they would pay additional monthly premiums, ranging from $10 to $50, above those paid by regular Medicare beneficiaries, in effect paying back the loan.

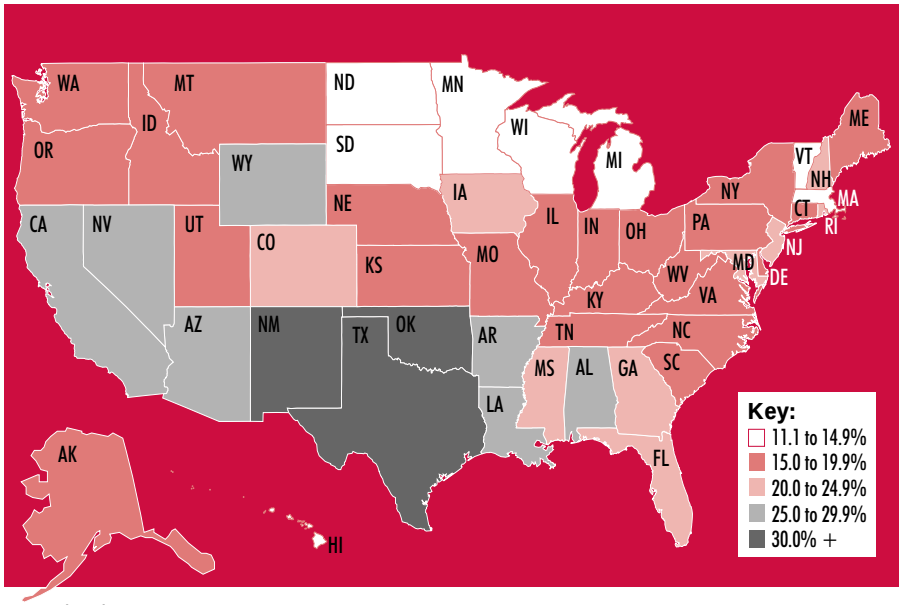
The White House acknowledges that the fee requirement of the proposed plan means it cannot be more than a stop-gap in the effort to provide more older Americans with affordable coverage. According to its own estimates, only 300,000 early retirees and dislocated workers, one-tenth of the eligible population, would take advantage of the plan. The participation rate is likely to be even lower among African Americans, since two-fifths of those eligible for this plan have incomes below 125 percent of the poverty level. The plan's premium fees would consume nearly half (47 percent) of the income of a single person in that income category, and 55 percent of the income of similarly situated couples.

Clearly, a tension exists between the financial viability of expanding Medicare and making health insurance available to those who need it. Only people with large disposable incomes could afford to enroll in Clinton's proposed plan. In the end, to remedy the problem for a substantial proportion of uninsured older African Americans would require much lower monthly premiums or subsidies to low-income families. However, both options would undermine its self-financing feature and, hence, its political feasibility.

Children's Health Insurance: An Update

Historically, it has been difficult to provide adults, who are expected to be self-reliant, with an economic safety net. In contrast, it has been easier to create legislation that speaks to the needs of children, who are universally recognized as a vulner-

Percent of children under 200 percent of the poverty level who were uninsured during 1993–95



Source: The Urban Institute

able group. In 1996, nearly a quarter of the population without health insurance were under age 18, and 48.3 percent were either African American or Hispanic.

According to the Urban Institute, the rate of uninsured youth is 22 percent among youth whose families earn less than 200 percent of the poverty level (less than $25,258 for a family of two adults and one child). Most of these uninsured children live in working, two-parent families, and are therefore ineligible for Medicaid, yet their parents cannot afford private insurance, and their parents' employers do not provide family health benefits.

In response to this problem, the 1997 Balanced Budget Act created a $48 billion program, the State Child Health Insurance Program (S-CHIP). S-CHIP disseminates funds to the states so that they can provide health coverage for youth living in working poor families. The legislation requires that states using these funds extend health benefits to a portion of these uninsured children either through their state Medicaid program or a new state program for youths.

Prior to the passage of S-CHIP, the Medicaid program provided health insurance only to those families eligible for the old Aid to Families with Dependent Children program (AFDC). In addition, federal law mandated that states offer health coverage regardless of AFDC eligibility to children under age 6 in families earning less than 133 percent of poverty level and to children ages 6 to 13 in families below the poverty level. However, the limits on age and income levels have allowed youths to fall between the cracks. S-CHIP allows states to extend health insurance to remedy this problem.

On October 1, 1997, the first installment of S-CHIP funds became available to the states with plans approved by the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA). States with the largest number of uninsured youth will receive the most funds. Some states struggle with larger portions of uninsured youth than others, and most southern states have an especially severe problem in this regard. (See map on previous page.) These differences reflect the wide variation in state policies and politics, indirectly revealing the conservative social policies prominent in the South, as well as the liberal policies most common in the north central and New England states. The southern states are home to approximately two-fifths of the black population and nearly three-quarters of the Hispanic population, so the new policies adopted by these states will determine the impact S-CHIP has on a large portion of uninsured minority youth.

While 16 states have submitted plans to HCFA, most have announced informal proposals. According to the Children's Defense Fund, as of January 30, 1998, 28 states plan to use the S-CHIP funds to expand their Medicaid programs. These expansions generally include increasing the number of eligible teens and extending coverage to the working poor. Three states—Arkansas, Hawaii, and Minnesota—already provide this coverage. Twenty states plan to set up programs for children in families with incomes between 100 percent and 200 percent of the poverty level. Some of these programs will require that parents pay at least a portion of their child's monthly premium. Sliding-scale premiums and co-payments may help to contain cost, ensure that parents do not abandon alternate sources of coverage, and allow participants to avoid the stigma often attached to means-based entitlement programs. However, even minimal costs may dissuade or exclude vulnerable populations most in need of these services.

Connecticut has proposed implementing one of the broadest and most innovative plans to increase health insurance among youth. Its Health Insurance for Uninsured Kids and Youth (HUSKY) program would enroll children in families between 185 percent and 235 percent of the poverty level ($23,363 to $29,678) for free. Families between 235 percent and 300 percent of the poverty level ($29,678 to $37,887) would pay a monthly premium of $30 for one child and $50 for two or more children. Families earning more than 300 percent of the poverty level could also join HUSKY. Their monthly premium would be $100 per child.

Other states are devising less generous programs. For example, California's "Healthy Families" program will extend health insurance to children only in families below 200 percent of the poverty level. Families would pay monthly premiums ranging from $4 to $27. To make the program as accessible as possible, California intends to streamline its application process, only require parents to submit a mail-in application, and base eligibility solely on income.

Connecticut and California offer two examples of how states intend to use S-CHIP funds. Most states, however, are still in the planning process, and there may be an opportunity to provide input about the policies other states adopt. Policymakers should keep in mind that expanding health insurance coverage not only improves access to health care services, but also serves an economic purpose. It makes it more feasible for families with children to make ends meet on low wages and therefore makes the work requirement associated with welfare reform more palatable. ■