

THE ALLIANCE OF NORTH CAROLINA

Black Elected Officials

MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

*The North Carolina
Legislative Black Caucus*

*The North Carolina
Conference of Black Mayors*

*The North Carolina
Caucus of Black School Board Members*

*The North Carolina
Black Elected Municipal Officials*

*The North Carolina
Association of Black County Officials*

Partners

*The North Carolina
State NAACP Council of Branches*

*The North Carolina
Black Leadership Caucus*

The Triangle Urban League

The NC CDC Association

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PRESS RELEASE

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NC BLACK ELECTED OFFICIALS HOLD FIRST BLACK SUMMIT

Raleigh—If the enthusiasm on display at the North Raleigh Hilton this weekend is evidence, we can expect a renewed commitment from African American Leaders to advancing issues of concern to the Black community. Over 300 elected officials and public policy advocates met for the first Annual Black Summit to hear about and advance what they believe should be priorities in North Carolina and to witness the historic signing of a coalition document to form an Alliance among organizations representing Black Elected Officials throughout the state of North Carolina.

The Summit, which featured sessions focused on the ills that plague our community, is designed to arrive at a proactive agenda that meets the issues head-on. "We do not just want to identify problems," says Alliance Chairman Moses Carey. "We have worked to bring together some of the best minds in North Carolina to help solve those problems."

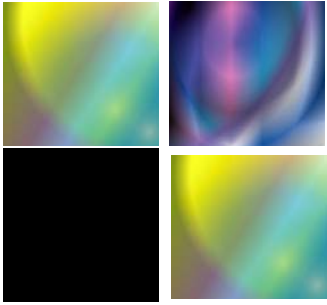
In keeping with that philosophy, the Summit featured a stellar cast of presenters and facilitators who led participants in tackling the issues of crime and justice, access to health care, educational achievement, and economic empowerment.

"These sessions have been phenomenal," says Brad Thompson, who helped organize the conference. "But this is just the beginning; the real work has not yet begun." Thompson says that the sessions, which were facilitated by leaders such as former representative Dan Blue, Durham Mayor Bill Bell, and M&F Bank Executive Joseph Sansom, will result in a detailed report that will lay out the issue as identified by participants. "The session recorders captured both the issue and the recommended solutions," says Thompson. "We will be spending the next month or so wading through this information and eventually come back together to officially present a "Black Covenant for North Carolina" which will include action items for every facet of government in our state.

Among the presenters was recently appointed Associate Justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court, Patricia Timmons-Goodsen who challenged participants to get engaged, citing involvement and participation as a key element in the development of meaningful change in North Carolina politics. Attendees were reminded of the sacrifices already made as they viewed a video featuring Congressman John Lewis as he retold the story of "Bloody Sunday" in 1965 that led to the passage of the Voting Right Act. Attorney Anita Earls, Director of Advocacy for the UNC Center for Civil Rights, provided participants with vivid examples of recent voting rights violations and reiterated the need to renew the provisions of the Voting Rights Act that expire in 2007.

Among those attending the Summit were members of the NC Congressional Delegation and Council of State Members. A reception hosted by former State Auditor Ralph Campbell, included political leaders such as Congressmen David Price, Bob Etheridge, and Brad Miller, as well as Insurance Commissioner Jim Long, Attorney General Roy Cooper and State Treasurer Richard Moore. Representatives for Lt. Governor Beverly Perdue, Secretary Of State Elaine Marshall and Congressman Mike McIntyre were also in attendance.

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Black Elected Officials

BLACK SUMMIT (Continued)
Page 2 of 2

A highlight of the summit was the Friday evening banquet where Congressman Jim Clyburn of South Carolina, the highest ranking Black official in the US House of Representatives clarified the issues surrounding the Voting Right Act. "The Voting Rights Act is not going to expire," Clyburn told the group. At issue, he explained, are sections of the Voting Rights Act due to expire that protect against laws that would dilute a citizen's right to vote. Clyburn indicated that North Carolina's Congressman Mel Watt is a key player in ensuring that those sections of the Act will continue in force. For that kind of leadership displayed by both Congressmen Mel Watt and GK Butterfield the Alliance honored the two North Carolina Representatives for meritorious leadership in Congress.

Clyburn also challenged participants to put aside personal egos and commit to work together for change. He stated "the lack of ideas will not be our test, it will be whether or not we possess the will."

Also a highlight of the event was the address by NAACP State Conference of Branches President Rev. William Barber during the Partnership Breakfast on Saturday morning. Nearly 200 people listened as Barber delivered a powerful speech that called participants to action. "While we celebrate the achievements we have made as elected officials, the fact of the matter is none of these titles matter one bit," he said. "The key is what you work for, what you stand up for, what you are willing to sacrifice for. A contract is just an instrument that reflects words but a Covenant is made with the heart. It is a blood pact to do or to die. We must be willing to make that full commitment to the empowerment of our community, to stand up even when we are alone. In the end we will not be known by our titles, we will be known by our testimony."

Barber's speech was preceded by partner presidents Keith Sutton of the Triangle Urban League, Sue Perry Cole of the NC Association of CDC's, Charles Clark of the Service Employees International Union, Thea Monet of the Old North State Medical Society and Carnell Robinson of the NC Black Leadership Caucus. Each organization laid out their organization goal and committed to a partnership with the Alliance. The group then broke for a new round of breakout sessions designed around the issues raised in Tavis Smiley's Best Seller "Covenant with Black America."

During the final session, Chairman Carey and the sponsoring presidents described next steps for the Alliance. Key is to process all the input received during the conference and create a "Covenant with Black North Carolina". This document will be distributed to all attendees with findings published on the Alliance website (www.ncbeoalliance.org)

Summit Coordinator Brad Thompson, President of BTA Public Relations indicated that further actions include web-based communication with attendees and an extended list of supporters and officials, regional training institutes for current and those interested in becoming elected officials, publication of the "Covenant with Black NC," development of a questionnaire for all seeking elected office for use by local organizations, and planning for the next NC Black Summit.

Organized by The Alliance of Black Elected Officials, the Summit was sponsored by a wide range of organizations representing elected officials and groups focused on policy issues in the state. Chaired by Commissioner Moses Carey of Orange County, President of the NC Organization of Black County Officials, this group boasts the support of Black Elected Officials at all levels. Congressman Mel Watt, Congressman GK Butterfield and former State Auditor Ralph Campbell joined Presidents of the NC Legislative Black Caucus, the NC Caucus of Black School Board Members, the NC Conference of Black Mayors, the NC Black Municipal Officials and Commissioner Carey to initiate what they deemed "an historic event in NC". They were joined by a host of "partner" organizations including the NAACP, the NC Black Leadership Caucus, and the NC Association of CDC's, the Triangle Urban League, the Old North State Medical Society and many other supporters.

For more information visit www.ncblacksummit.org or call BTA Public Relations at (919) 833-6394.

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