



Mistrial declared in the Hinds County DA case

By Othor Cain
Contributing Writer

After a little more than two and a half hours of deliberations, and with the jury unable to reach a verdict, the judge presiding over the case of Hinds County District Attorney Robert Shuler Smith, declared it a mistrial. Jurors began their deliberations

Wednesday afternoon to determine whether Smith was guilty of hindering the prosecution of criminal defendant Christopher Butler.

During deliberations, a note of concern was sent to the judge stating that one of the jurors knew the defendant personally, and should be replaced by an alternate.

The decision was made not to replace the juror, however, Attorney General Jim Hood released the contents of the note sent to the judge. The note read: "What do we do about a juror who has previous knowledge of Robert Smith and has a previously formed opinion of him and is basing her verdict on previous knowledge

and opinion instead of current evidence?"

The jury was unable to reach a unanimous verdict on any of the three counts against Smith. They were 6-6 on the hindering prosecution charge,

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Smith PHOTO BY JACKIE HAMPTON

Historians rank President Obama's legacy



Historians agree that the Affordable Care Act will stand as one of President Obama's greatest achievements during his tenure in The White House. FREDDIE ALLEN/AMG/NNPA

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA News Wire Contributor

Supporters and critics alike may eventually come to view President Barack Obama's two-term White House tenure the same way.

His determination for change never appeared to cause him to stumble on his goals, be it Obamacare or commuting the sentences of so many who were imprisoned for so long – primarily because of antiquated laws that punished mostly low-level minority drug offenders.

Even as Obama is set to leave office, he took unprecedented steps to retaliate against alleged Russian interference in the 2016 election.

Obama labeled Russia's action as significant, malicious and cyber-enabled and sanctioned six Russian individuals and five Russian entities while ordering dozens of Russian diplomats to leave the country.

The president also gave them and their families just three days to pack up and leave.

"These actions follow repeated private and public warnings that we have issued to the Russian government, and are a necessary and appropriate response to efforts to harm U.S. interests in

Obama
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No action from Jackson Public Schools Board in superintendent search

By Othor Cain
Contributing Writer

It appeared during Tuesday's meeting of the Board of Trustees for the Jackson Public Schools District, that members at times struggled to come to an agreement. It was also evident that some board members didn't know what was on the agenda. "I thought we were here to discuss the search for a superintendent and nothing else," said school board member Jed Oppenheim, who stressed the importance of getting community input during the search process.

During a packed meeting held outside of the confinements of the normal board meeting venue, because of the district's holiday schedule, parents, teachers and other community stakeholders were ready for answers from district leaders as to 'what the process would be to find a new superintendent?' Their questions remain unanswered.

It has been nearly two months since former Superintendent Cedrick Gray submitted his resignation from Mississippi's second largest school district and nearly one month since State Superintendent of Education Carey Wright, appeared before the board and stressed the ur-



Burt



Campbell



Hobbs



Jones

gency of fixing the problems within the district, yet board members are still at ground zero with crafting a plan and moving forward. "We've got to get this right, we can't afford to make a mistake, we are accountable for this," said Richard Lind. "We need your help."

The board, based on Trustee Rickey Jones' motion, voted 5-2 to table a motion to hire a consulting firm to help them develop a list of prospects for the job. "This board has not done its due diligence to proceed, we've not done a needs' assessment," Jones said. "We need to know what we want and be totally engaged in the process."

The board decided to use its secretary Vikki Mumford as an information clearing house for suggestions and



Lind



Oppenheim



Simms

input from the community as to what it would like to see in the districts next superintendent.

Working Together Jackson, a 40-member institution, reiterated its pledge to support the board in its quest to find a new school chief. "We stand with you in providing input, assistance and support as we work together

to re-establish Jackson Public Schools as a successful district with quality schools throughout the city," Okolo Rashid read from a prepared statement. "We stand committed to remaining engaged with the school board and new superintendent in the years to come to help JPS return to and maintain a successful school district."

Board member Kimberly Campbell voted for the delay in hiring a consultant, but expressed her concern for the board to heed Wright's warning. "MDE is watching us, they have already told this board that we are behind in letting them know a timeline for the process," Campbell

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The CBC celebrates history with 49 members in the 115th congress

By Freddie Allen
Managing Editor/NNPA Newswire

During the Ceremonial Swearing-In event a few blocks from The White House, the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, Inc., honored Rep. Cedric L. Richmond (D-La.), the new chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) and members of the CBC that will serve during the 115th Congress.

A. Shuanise Washington, the president and CEO of the CBCF, said that 115th Congress will have the largest CBC in history with 49 members.

"While the CBC grows in numbers, there remains a lack of diversity and inclusion when it comes to senior staff placement in senate and congressional offices," said Washington. "The CBCF is committed to doing its part to change the landscape of Capitol Hill and we're doing so with one of our newest initiatives: Emerge 535."

Launched in 2013, the Emerge



Members of the Congressional Black Caucus participate in the ceremonial swearing-in event for the 115th Congress at The Warner Theatre in Washington, D.C. FREDDIE ALLEN/AMG/NNPA

535 program will enable the CBCF to expand opportunities for young people of color by providing 535 scholarships and fellowships to work on Capitol Hill.

During her comments at the

CBC ceremony, House Minority leader Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) blasted Republican lawmakers for blocking President Barack Obama's last Supreme Court justice nominee and efforts to pass an updated

Voting Rights Act (VRA).

Pelosi also noted the irony in the fact that some of the same Republicans, who attended the opening of the National Museum of African-American History and Culture and the fiftieth

anniversary of "Bloody Sunday" in Selma, Ala., refused to work with Democrats on Capitol Hill to restore the protections of the VRA.

"It's not about Democrats, it's not about Republicans, it's about America," said Pelosi. "The greatness of America is affected by how [Republicans] have rejected the ability of our president to appoint a [Supreme Court] justice, how they have rejected our calls for correcting the injustice of the Supreme Court decision [in Shelby v. Holder]. It's all about justice."

Pelosi called the CBC the "conscience of the Congress and indeed of the country," and she added that it was exciting to see that some of the newest members of the CBC were representing districts who had never elected a black lawmaker to serve in the U.S. Congress.

The newest members of the CBC are: Senator Kamala Harris, who is California's first

African-American senator; Rep. Val Demings (D-Fla.); Rep. Lisa Blunt-Rochester (D-Del.), the first African American woman to serve in Congress from Delaware; Rep. Anthony Brown (D-Md.); Rep. Dwight Evans (D-Pa.) and Rep. Donald McEachin (D-Va.).

After the ceremonial oath of office was performed, outgoing Chairman G.K. Butterfield (D-N.C.) said that 2016 is now in our rearview mirror.

"We find ourselves facing a difficult, political and legislative environment, unlike any that we have ever seen before, but I promise you that the CBC will rise to the occasion and we will meet these new challenges," said Butterfield. "The consequences are too enormous for us to be indecisive and to allow conservative forces and forces of the alt-right to defend our na-

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