

## Evolution of African American Politics

Since the end of the Civil War in 1865, when African Americans were granted the right to vote, through the 15th Amendment in 1868, electoral politics has played a dominant role in the African American Community. African Americans have been participating in electoral politics for 138 years.

With the North winning the Civil War and chattel slavery being abolished, under the Emancipation Proclamation, and as we were given the right to vote, through the 15th Amendment, many Black leaders began to feel that maybe conditions would change in America. Therefore, most leaders started urging Black people to join the Republican Party, the Party of Lincoln.

This period in history from 1863 to 1876 is called "Reconstruction" and the first time Black people began to participate vigorously in electoral politics.

During the late 1860s and early 1870s, many African Americans were elected to Congress and an African American Senator, Hiram Revels, was elected from Mississippi. The Political Abolition Party and the Equal Rights Party ran Frederick Douglass for Vice President of the United States in 1856 and 1872.

Many Black colleges were established during this period through the land grant act that called for public education at the college level. Because of these responses on the part of the

government many African American leaders felt that Black people's situation could be resolved in America through governmental intervention and effective voting.

The presidential election of 1876 brought into focus the real agendas of the white ruled Republican and Democratic Parties. Rutherford B. Hayes was the Republican candidate who was supposed to be representing the vital interests of the North and Samuel Tilden was the Democratic candidate alleging to represent the real interests of the South.

In a very close election, the South actually won the popular vote; however, during the Electoral College proceedings, neither candidate received a majority of electoral votes. The Southern representatives made it clear that their interests did not include winning the presidency of the United States, but reclaiming full autonomy for the South. Through much wrangling, a decision was made by those present that later became known as the "Great Compromise."

The Compromise of 1876 resulted in the Republican Hayes being announced the winner of the presidential election and both sides received what they basically wanted in the first place. Obviously neither side was interested in the liberation of Black people. The emerging northern industrialists wanted entry and new markets into the South and the southern plantation own-

ers wanted their land back.

The net result for African Americans was the repealing of some of the voting rights laws that immediately began to wipe out Black elected officials and made it virtually impossible for Black people to vote in the South again until the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1964.

Through all of this, Black leaders, and those African Americans who voted, remained loyal to the Republican Party even though their voting rights had been sold down the drain.

As pointed out, after Reconstruction, many Black people still remained loyal to the Republican Party and tried to fight for change within it just as some Black people are still fighting for changes in the Democratic Party today. This loyalty lasted until the 1930s when African Americans began to switch their allegiance to the Democratic Party and the so-called "New Deal Era" of the Roosevelt Administration. Essentially, since the 1930s to the present, African Americans have voted for Democratic Party candidates in large measure.

There have been a small group of African Americans who have historically called for a Black Political Party in response to the domination of the white ruled Republican and Democratic Parties. In fact, in 1972 in Gary, Indiana 10,000 Black people participated in the National Black Political Convention in which the call for the development of a Black Independent



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Political Party was a prominent discussion at this meeting. However, the allegiance of Black elected officials to the Democratic Party prevented any real movement toward the development of a Black Political Party or independent Black Political Organization. Instead, a strategy of the third force inside the Democratic Party was developed.

In Chicago, for example, since the death of the late Mayor Harold Washington, African American leaders are very much divided over strategy and tactics to continue the movement for Black political empowerment. This trend can be observed around the country.

There is no question that we need our own political party, or at best, our own political organization. But this must occur in a manner that truly represents the best interests of the African American Community.

## Waak Applauds Obama's First State of the Union Speech

DENVER - Colorado Democratic Party Chair Pat Waak issued the following statement regarding President Obama's State of the Union Address:

"Americans were looking for the President to lay out a vision to restore the middle class, get the economy back on track, create jobs and end the partisanship that has come to dominate Washington - and the President has succeeded on each count. The President offered common sense solutions that will get middle-class Coloradans back to work.

"And while we still have a long road ahead of us, we have made significant progress in the last year. Under President Obama's leadership, we passed the Lilly Ledbetter Act, guaranteeing women equal pay for equal work. Under the President's leadership we have expanded health care to an additional four million children under the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). We confirmed as the first Latina Justice in the history of the U.S. Supreme Court a woman

with more federal judicial experience than any Supreme Court Justice in 100 years. We passed the Recovery Act which has saved or created millions of jobs across the country and here in Colorado, bringing us back from the brink of depression. And we have come farther than ever before towards passing meaningful health insurance reform - a fight that is not yet complete.

"The President offered a hand of bipartisanship to Congressional Republicans who, we hope after a year of obstruction and hyper-partisanship, will accept it and work with us to turn this country around. With a refreshing amount of candor, President Obama talked about the challenges we face and the frustrations Americans feel about the pace of change they've seen so far. The President also reminded Americans that upon taking office just over one year ago, he inherited a 1.3 trillion dollar deficit which contributed to the economic crisis.

"The President's address was a powerful reminder of why we worked so

hard to elect him to lead our party and our nation through these challenging times. Under the President's leader-

ship we are weathering this economic storm and as a result we are growing stronger."

## Excerpts from State of the Union

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strong. We do not give up. We do not quit. We don't allow fear or division to break our spirit. In this new decade, it's time the American people get a government that matches their decency; that embodies their strength. And tonight, I'd like to talk about how together, we can deliver on that promise.

By the time I'm finished speaking tonight, more Americans will have lost their health insurance. Millions will lose it this year. Our deficit will grow. Premiums will go up. Co-pays will go up. Patients will be denied the care they need. Small business owners will continue to drop coverage altogether. I will not walk away from these Americans. And neither should the people in this chamber.

Rather than fight the same tired battles that have dominated Washington for decades, it's time for something new. Let's try common sense. Let's invest in our people without leaving them a mountain of debt. Let's meet our responsibility to the people who sent us here.

To do that, we have to recognize that we face more than a deficit of dollars right now. We face a deficit of trust - deep and corrosive doubts about how Washington works that have been growing for years. To close that credibility gap we must take action on both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue to end the outsized influence of lobbyists; to do our work openly; and to give our people the government they deserve.

That's what I came to Washington

to do. That's why - for the first time in history - my Administration posts our White House visitors online. And that's why we've excluded lobbyists from policy-making jobs or seats on federal boards and commissions.

But we cannot stop there. It's time to require lobbyists to disclose each contact they make on behalf of a client with my Administration or Congress. And it's time to put strict limits on the contributions that lobbyists give to candidates for federal office. Last week, the Supreme Court reversed a century of law to open the floodgates for special interests - including foreign companies - to spend without limit in our elections. Well I don't think American elections should be bankrolled by America's most powerful interests, and worse, by foreign entities. They should be decided by the American people, and that's why I'm urging Democrats and Republicans to pass a bill that helps to right this wrong.

I'm also calling on Congress to continue down the path of earmark reform. You have trimmed some of this spending and embraced some meaningful change. But restoring the public trust demands more. For example, some members of Congress post some earmark requests online. Tonight, I'm calling on Congress to publish all earmark requests on a single website before there's a vote so that the American people can see how their money is being spent.



**BY APPOINTMENT**

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**TUES - SAT**  
**9 A.M. - 6:30 P.M.**

**burlin & joyce morgan**