



## WORCESTER COUNTY BRANCH NAACP

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### PRESS RELEASE

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Edward S. Lee, Worcester County NAACP Branch President, accompanied by Maryland State Conference (MSC) NAACP officials and other Branch Presidents meet with State Secretary John R. Griffin, Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Secretary Luwanda Walker Jenkins Governor's Office of Minority Affairs, and Tonya Hardy, Executive Director MD Commission on African American History along with Wendi Perry, Museum Director Baneker-Douglass Museum Annapolis, during "Pocomoke's Capital for A Day recognition.

Marge Green, MSC 1<sup>st</sup> V. P.-Baltimore City, Jenkins Odoms, President Howard County, Mary Asanti, Wicomico NAACP President, Edsel Brown, Chair MSC Economic Development Committee, and local businessmen and women attended the meetings with Lee throughout the day.

**Maryland Costal Bays:** Lee said he thought the meeting with Secretary, John R. Griffin, Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) was productive. Dave Wilson, Executive Director MCB, joined the Secretary and the MSC Presidents for lunch to discuss the allegations brought by the State Conference against the MCB. Earlier this year the MSC petitioned the Maryland Legislative Black Caucus (MBC) to call for a full investigation of the MCB.

Following attempts to find a resolution to the allegations, Delegate Tawanna P. Gains, House Appropriations Committee, called for a meeting, June 11, 2008, with the Secretary of DNR, Griffin, Secretary Sharon Wilson, MD Department of the Environment (MDE) and the MSC in Annapolis.

As a result of that meeting, Secretary Griffin directed a letter to Gerald Stanbury, President MSC, setting forth recommendations to resolve the MSC concerns.

The major issues of concern to the NAACP involve: representation and appointments on the MCB's Policy Committee and its Board of Directors, a review the MCB's Minority Outreach and Investment Strategy (which the NAACP is credited with initiating), and engaging Worcester County Public School Students in the programming and use of the University Maryland Eastern Shore's Research Lab as a career ladder learning tool.

Lee and Wilson are scheduled to meet next week to continue discussion that could lead to resolving the representation and other issues. The NAACP has called for an outside consultant to review and make recommendations for the implementation for the Minority Outreach and Investment Strategy. Sect. Griffin has taken the MSC'S recommendation under advisement and will inform the NAACP of his decision. The NAACP questions the effectiveness of the current minority outreach program measured by its original intent.

The MSC expressed a strong interest in being involved in State Senator Lisa Gladden's efforts to re-introduce her legislation (SB 99) that failed to get out of committee during the last Session. In the Secretary's letter of July 25, 2008, he stated that "An informal Steering Committee has been established to modify the 2008 legislation for possible re-introduction in 2009." The NAACP acknowledged that we "...got out of the gate late this session on the Senator's bill and also on the budget process as it pertains to Department funding. President Odoms said, "...we are starting early this year and we will be on time."

**Economic Development:** The major focus of the meeting with the Secretary of Minority Affairs concerned how can the Eastern Shore business community benefit from the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC). It is reported that the State will realize Billions of dollars as a result of the military's logical realignments of its military bases.

The MSC and business representatives raised a series of questions with the Secretary and her Staff aimed at eliciting information and contacts to assist Eastern Shore Businesses in gaining access to available contracts. Lee said, "...The bottom line is that first and foremost businesses must be certified.

This is what is preventing Shore business from gaining access to BRAC and/or State Government Contracts. But, there is help available to assist in becoming certified that is not being utilized.”

“I think the most significant piece of information that came out of the meeting was that the long awaited Morgan State University ”BRAC Study” will soon be released. This study was commissioned to identify the over all impact of, minority participation and where the gaps exist that need to be filled, particularly as it relates to minorities and women.”

The Department is currently vetting the study. Wendell Sutton, Assistant Secretary Minority Affairs, promised to provide the NAACP with a copy upon its release, said Lee. “As soon as we receive the study, the Eastern Shore Presidents will call a meeting with local businessperson to review it and to determine compliance with the 25% set aside for minority and women vendors regarding the BRAC contracts.

**“Telling the Story”:** “The Telling the Story Project was the big winner of the day.” Lee said, the MSC’S meeting with Tonya Hardy, Executive Director Maryland Commission on African American History & Culture” and Wendi Perry, Museum Director Banneker-Douglass Museum, came to Pocomoke after hearing that the Project was extremely productive. Hardy and Perry said they have money and resources to help develop the Project and agreed to partner with the Project Committee and assist in the implementation.

The Worcester County Branch has financial commitments from Berlin, Snow Hill, Pocomoke and Ocean City to fund the research portion of the Project to be carried out by Dr. Clara Smalls at Salisbury University. Lee stated that some of the Township mayors have expressed concerns regarding the accountability and distribution of the funds. However, Lee has since met with Mayor Mc Dermott, Pocomoke City, and the Mayor has offered his office as the receiver of the funds from the Townships. His office will assume responsibility for the distribution and accountability for the Towns contributions. Mayor Mc Dermott serves on the planning committee. Dr. Tom Jones, Provost Salisbury University and Lee are the Co-chairs.

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