

September 29, 2010

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia: Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Virginia State Conference NAACP (the Conference). During its state conference on October 29-31, the Conference will celebrate its 75th Anniversary, and I would like to highlight some moments from the history of the organization and its contributions to the Commonwealth of Virginia.

The Conference is celebrating its 75th Anniversary in the hometown of one of its founders, the late Attorney Oliver W. Hill, near the site of the first planning meeting of the Virginia State Conference. The Virginia State Conference NAACP was formed in 1935 at a time when racial inequality was permitted under the law. This injustice is what caused eight individuals to get together to form the Virginia State Conference of Branches of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Those eight people were: Sadie Wyche, Suffolk; Atty. Oliver W. Hill, Richmond; Jesse M. Tinsley, Richmond; Jewel S. Carrington, Halifax; Zenobia Gilpin, Richmond; J. Byron Hopkins, Richmond; Dr. Leon Ransome, NAACP National Office, and Mrs. Spencer, Roanoke. The group held their first planned meeting in Roanoke in 1935.

Many presidents have faithfully served the Conference since the organization's inception: J. M. Tinsley, 1935-1954; E. B. Henderson, 1955-1956; Philip Y. Wyatt, 1957-1960; Robert D. Robertson, 1961-1962; L. Francis Griffin, 1963-1967; Charles Brown, 1968-1970; Melford Walker, 1971-1974; Isaac Ridley, 1975-1978; Roger Ford, 1979-1980; James Hicks, 1981-1982; James E. Ghee, 1983-1985; Charles Mangum, 1986-1988; Jack W. Gravely, 1988-1991; Erenest Miller from 1991-1995; Paul C. Gillis, 1995-1997; Emmitt Carlton, 1997-1999; Rovenia Vaughan, 1999-2003; Linda Thomas, 2003-2007. Currently, the organization is fortunate to have as its president Rev. Dr. Rayfield Vines, Jr., who has served since 2007.

In the Conference's early years, J. Byron Hopkins, Jr., Wendell Walker and J. Thomas Hewing, Jr. provided legal services for the organization. In later years, an organized legal staff included Oliver W. Hill, Martin A. Martin, Samuel W. Tucker, Edwin C. Brown, Sr., Spotswood W. Robinson III, Robert H Cooley, Jr., Roland Ealey, Philip S. Walker, Rueben E. Lawson, W. Hale Thompson, Victor Ashe, J. Hugo Madison, James A. Overton, Jerry L. Williams, Otto L. Tucker, Ruth Harvey, Henry L. Marsh, III, John W. Scott, Jr., James E. Ghee, Dennis Montgomery, James Hume, Stephanie Valentine, S. Delacy Stith, Gwendolyn Jones Jackson and presently, Richard Patrick.

Over the years, the conference has taken up several initiatives to help better the lives of Black

Americans. In conjunction with the Virginia Teachers Association, the Conference's first major policy campaign was the elimination of the difference between the salaries paid to the white and Negro public school teachers, a difference which was later determined to be unlawful in *Alston* v.

School Board of Norfolk
, 112 F.2d 992 (4th Cir. 1940).

Starting in 1947, the Conference took up the cause of eliminating segregation in public schools by requiring school boards to face the expense of equalizing schools for Negro children with schools for white children. Later, the Commonwealth of Virginia resolved to maintain racial segregation even after the United States Supreme Court struck down the premise of "separate but equal." The Conference was determined to help desegregate Virginia's public schools. The Conference filed suits against school boards in 37 counties and 15 cities or towns.

It also fought to reopen schools in Prince Edward County after they avoided desegregation by closing their public schools for 5 years, starting in 1959. In May 1964, the Supreme Court ruled that the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment did not permit closing schools in Prince Edward County while public schools were being maintained in all other school districts in Virginia.

The Conference supported defendants in criminal cases where the case highlighted racially discriminatory practices in the justice system, such as racial discrimination in the jury selection process.

In 1981, after several organizations challenged the redrawing of the Virginia General Assembly districts, the Conference supported the lawsuit filed in the Federal Court in Richmond. The Conference helped negotiate the settlement which created one hundred single member districts.

Madam Speaker, the Virginia State Conference NAACP has been instrumental in the fight to eliminate racial inequality and discrimination in Virginia. However, its work is not yet done. Racial disparities still exist in our education system, our criminal justice system, and elsewhere in our society. As long as these exist, I know that the Virginia State Conference NAACP will remain vigilant in its fight for civil rights, equality and liberty.

As the Virginia State Conference NAACP gathers to celebrate 75 years, the organization can truly remember its past, celebrate its present, and focus on the future with great expectations. I would like to congratulate Rev. Dr. J. Rayfield Vines, Jr., President of the organization, Executive Director King Salim Khalfani, and all of the members of the Virginia State Conference NAACP. I wish them many more years of dedicated service to the people of the Commonwealth

of Virginia.