

May 19 – May 31, 2011

# The Pontiac News

A POSITIVE NEWS SOURCE WITH A LOCAL FLAVOR

VOL. 2 ISSUE 8



Thank you, John Smith, for inspiring us all, keep up the great work!

## Pontiac Town Hall Meeting @ The Salvation Army Overview of Transform Pontiac Now Resource Fair and Town Hall on May 9th, 2011

By John Smith II  
Founder of Transform Pontiac Now

This gathering, sponsored by Transform Pontiac Now, was for the purpose of meeting the needs of the residents of Pontiac. The first half, the Resource Fair, provided for practical needs. The second half, the Town Hall, met the need for communication and information involving the present state and future of the City of Pontiac.

The Resource Fair was an efficient and effective way to meet the needs of the residents who came. This fair was a collaborative effort of Transform Pontiac Now and about 30 Community Partners. Residents arriving that evening were assisted in a variety of ways: child I.D., low cost insurance, animal care, information on after school programs, job assistance, college financial aid information, blood pressure screenings and more. In addition, local small businesses participated by getting the



word out on what they do to their customers.

The Town Hall provided for the need of communicating concerns and receiving information in a friendly atmosphere. Panelists were 14 yr old. Alexa Wright ( Teen

Community Activist), Sean Preston ( local rap group) , Autumn Butler ( Lighthouse) , Roland Elam Jr. ( Elam Community Service Organization), Councilman Kermit Williams, Sheriff Bouchard, State

Representative Tim Melton, Mayor Leon Jukowski, County Commissioner Tim Melton, Legislative Aide Sam Scott and Pastor Shelton Matthews. The issues that rose to the surface were the need for families to function well, activities for the youth, the need for every young person to get a good education, being proactive neighbors to prevent crime and the fact that God is doing a mighty work in our city. Sheriff Bouchard continued to assure us that the desire of his department is to make the Oakland County Sheriff transition smooth and ensure the safety of Pontiac residents.

In conclusion, what took place that night demonstrated the great diversity of the city and the powerful potential of working together. The issues that became the focus got to the root of the problems without passing blame on others. Essentially, that each one of us has a positive role to play and we need to encourage each other to ...Transform Pontiac Now.

## A Tribute to Freedom Riders @ Oakland County

### Oakland County Board Of Commissioners Commemorates the 50th Anniversary of the Freedom Riders and Civil Rights Movement Milestones

Members of the Board Honors Metro Area Heroes and Those Keeping the History of Civil Rights Alive.

On Wednesday, May 4, 2011, Oakland County Commissioner Mattie McKinney Hatchett, along with members of the Oakland County Board of Commissioners honored area Freedom Riders and those individuals who contributed to the Civil Rights and Albany Movement.

Also, Oakland County's very first Martin Luther King Walk organizer was honored for keeping the 26-year tradition in the county alive.

Detroit Public Television aired the Freedom Riders program on May 16th which looked at the courageous efforts of Americans who risked their lives to end racism in this country.

A representative from Detroit Public Television was on hand as well as some area Freedom Riders to receive proclamations recognizing their contributions.

Fifty years from the actual date of May 4, 1961 has passed, since the first Freedom Rider buses left Washington D.C. to fight segregation in the south.

Forty-five years has passed since the Voting Rights Act of 1965 became law protecting African Americans Right to Vote.

#### FYI THE VOTINGS RIGHTS ACT OF 1965

This act was signed into law on August 6, 1965, by President Lyndon Johnson. It outlawed the discriminatory voting practices adopted in many

southern states after the Civil War, including literacy tests as a prerequisite to voting.

This "act to enforce the fifteenth amendment to the Constitution" was signed into law 95 years after the amendment was ratified. In those years, African Americans in the South faced tremendous obstacles to voting, including poll taxes, literacy tests, and other bureaucratic restrictions to deny them the right to vote. They also risked harassment, intimidation, economic reprisals, and physical violence and death when they tried to register or vote. As a result, very few African Americans were registered voters, and they had very little, if any, political power, either locally or nationally.)



Pictured left to right back row: Board Chairman Michael J. Gingell, Dr. Silas Norman, former leader of Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee; Roger Goolsby current president of the Martin Luther King Jr. Task Force; and Commissioner Mattie McKinney Hatchett, front row: John Reeves representing Dr. William G. Anderson a freedom rider; the Honorable Claudia House Morcom, former legal representative for freedom riders; Lucy H. Maddox, former secretary of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; Reverend Richard L. Gleason freedom rider; Barbara Talley Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Task Force Peace Walk Organizer, Barbara Jean Johnson aided Freedom Riders and representative for the Detroit Public Television; and John Hardy a field organizer for freedom riders and Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and Oakland County Board Chairman Jeff Matis.

Photo by: Julia Ruffin

**Pontiac School District Kindergarten Round-up**

See Page 3 for details and how to enroll your child.

### Save The Date – Wednesday June 8, 2011 Oakland County 9th Annual Workplace Diversity Conference

Join us for the 9th Annual Conference: How Top Business Leaders Accelerate Results Through Diversity and Inclusion Wednesday June 8, 2011 at the Auburn Hills Marriott, Pontiac at Centerpoint. The most anticipated Diversity Conference in the Oakland County area is presented by OCEDC along with Oakland County Michigan Works, inviting you to enjoy a full-day of Diversity-themed presentations, discussions and information sharing. Our keynote speaker will be well-known diversity expert Tim Wise who will be addressing the Topic "Involving Men in Diversity & Inclusion Initiatives".

See Details on Page 9

**Great Lakes Academy**

for enrollment information go to page 16

# The National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women's Club of Pontiac Presented its 46th Annual Founders' Day Luncheon on May 7, 2011



Publisher R. Frank Russell

The Pontiac News (TPN) would like to thank President Maria Foster and the Board and membership of The NANBPW CLUBS, INC – PONTIAC, for honoring me as the recipient of the Frederick Douglas award, I do sincerely appreciate this recognition, especially since this is the second time that I have been so honored. Thank you Ladies and keep up your great work in our community!

**Others receiving recognition at this event and the awards presented were as follows:**

Dr. Earlean Davis, Sojourner Truth Award; Ariel Wiley, Four-Year Continuing Scholarship Award; Megan Ricks, Book Award; Vivian Terry and Beatrice Wright Women" Firsts" Award; Ombudsperson

Award, Earlene Baggett-Hayes, Esq.; **Female Pastors Awardees Included:** Pastor Diane Beverly, Pastor Andrea Ellis, Pastor Lila Martin, Pastor Karen Noel, Pastor Lorine Woods

The awards were presented by Monetta Foster, Marilyn D. Walker, Esq., and Catherine Sykes – Past National President

## The Pontiac News

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## Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglas Diversity & Inclusion

To my friend and sister Dr. Earlean Davis, the recipient of the Sojourner Truth Award:

"Diversity is the multiplicity of people, cultures and ideas that contribute to the richness and variety of life. Diversity broadly encompasses the mixture of similarities and differences along several dimensions: race, national origin, ability, disability, religion, age and gender. It includes values, culture, concepts, learning styles and perceptions that individuals possess. By its very nature, diversity fosters inclusiveness, encourages the exchange of new ideas, improves decision-making and broadens the scope of problem solving.

Diversity in all its dimensions must be valued. Where there is diversity, there is evidence of openness, emergence of inclusiveness, and a respect and appreciation for differences. Where diversity exists, there is indeed an enriched environment and community.

Diversity is about creating an equitable, hospitable, appreciative, safe and inclusive environment – one that embraces the full spectrum of all members' contributions. We must respond with effort and vigor to issues of diversity. We must commit ourselves to enhancing the quality of experience for all members of the community by enhancing and respecting our diversity."

Please know that I know, that both

Sojourner Truth and Frederick Douglas were strong advocates for and of Diversity, Inclusion, Freedom, Justice and Equality, I don't think Sojourner Truth would have publicly reprimanded (scolded) Frederick Douglas for acknowledging individuals (from a diversity of backgrounds) who contributed to his development as a positive human being!

**Peace & Love!**

See details of this event and photos below.



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School District of the City of Pontiac  
Thomas G. Maridada II, Ed.D. — Superintendent

# PRE-K REGISTRATION

Tuesday, June 7, 2011  
Wednesday, June 8, 2011  
9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

**P.E.A.C.E. Academy • Pontiac Early Academy of Childhood Education**  
Frost Elementary School  
723 Cottage Street  
Pontiac, MI 48342



**Play • Learn • Grow**

**PHYSICIAN ON SITE**  
**June 7, 2011 Only**

**FREE Physicals**  
**FREE Health Screenings**  
**FREE Immunizations**

*Available only for  
children registering*

**FREE PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAM FOR  
PONTIAC SCHOOL DISTRICT RESIDENTS**

**To register, your child must be 4 years old  
on or before December 1, 2011.**

Also, you must provide the following:

- Child's Official Birth Certificate
- Child's Immunization Record
- Proof of Residency
- Proof of Income

For more information, please call: (248) 451-7770

A World-Class School District — We Put STUDENTS First  
Excellence, Efficiency & Equity

**— What's Happening In Pontiac —**

During the next six (6) months The Pontiac News, The Youth Development Institute and New Pontiac in conjunction with other collaborating organizations will be promoting several fundraising events to help pay the cost of revitalizing/transforming our City. Two of these events are listed below:

**Satch Page - Perry Williams**  
 THE PONTIAC NEWS, YDI & NEW PONTIAC PRESENTS  
 1ST ANNUAL  
**PONTIAC OLD TIMERS**  
**MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND**  
**RE-REUNION DANCE**  
 (Back Together Again)  
**SATURDAY MAY 28, 2011**  
 8 pm until 2 am  
**THE PONTIAC SILVERDOME**  
 Main Event Ultimate Sports Bar  
 Featherstone and Opdyke  
 Advance Tickets \$15 • At the Door \$20  
**DJ: Ren Townsend • CASH BAR**  
 • 50/50 Raffle • Best Dressed Contest  
 • Dance Contest (*twist, ball room, bop, mash potato, calypso*)  
 • Hustle  
**For Ticket Information Contact:**  
 Satch Page 248-499-3827, Perry Williams 248-338-2899, Mary Russell 248-451-1665, Loretta Coleman 313-516-7222, Cecilia Wilson 248-894-9388, Sandra Benion 248-929-1861 or Elaine Wright 248-238-1489  
 PontiacHallFame@aol.com Or call 248-758-1411

New Pontiac, Inc. The Pontiac News, The Youth Development Institute and other collaborating organizations in conjunction with The School District of the City of Pontiac  
 Presents  
**"The PCH/PNH Hall of Fame Induction Banquet and Dance Finale"**  
**Saturday, October 1, 2011 - 2:00 – 7:00pm**  
**THE PONTIAC SILVERDOME**  
 Main Event Ultimate Sports Bar  
**Banquet Fee:** \$50 Single Ticket, Couple @ \$45 each, 5 or More @ \$40 each, Table of 10 @ \$400  
 Master of Ceremony: TBD  
**Special Pontiac Historical Presentation**  
 Invited - Esmo T. Woods  
**Current State of District Update**  
 Invited - Dr. Thomas Maridada II, Superintendent  
 Entertainment Provided By: TBD  
**FOR TICKET OR SPONSORSHIP INFORMATION CONTACT:**  
 PontiacHallFame@aol.com 248-758-1411



Pontiac Central Chief



Pontiac Northern Huskie



Pontiac High Phoenix

This event will provide the community with the opportunity to recognize the many Chiefs and Huskies that have made significant athletic, academic and/or other special contributions to both schools. As you know PCH currently has a Hall of Fame that includes a few of the outstanding student/athletes. This event would recognize those who were left off the list during the first recognition ceremony back in the late 80's, and would induct individuals who have earned the right to be in the PCH Hall of Fame since that time. This event would also establish a PNH (Husky) Hall of Fame and would induct outstanding student/athletes and others from the Huskie Family that has excelled since the schools opening in 1959. We plan to establish a location within the new Phoenix High School to showcase the achievers from the past with the intent of motivating comparable achievements by current and future Phoenix High students.

— What's Happening In Oakland County —



L. Brooks Patterson

Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson today honored six Main Street Oakland County communities for their accreditation by the National Main Street Center in Washington D.C. All six communities achieved a perfect score of 10 out of 10 for their annual evaluation.

The communities honored were: Farmington, Ferndale, Lake Orion, Ortonville, Oxford and Rochester. Patterson presented each of the six Main Street Oakland County (MSOC) communities with a certificate recognizing their accomplishment and detailing investment that totals more than half a billion dollars in the program's 11 years.

"The perfect scores attained by these six Main Street communities in their annual evaluation attests to the hard work of many in our downtown areas involved with our Main Street Oakland County program," said Patterson. "This is a wonderful and well-deserved recognition."

The ceremony took place at the Rust Belt Market, 22801 Woodward Ave., in Ferndale, downtown's newest business. To be considered for the national accreditation, the communities met each of the following:

1. Broad-based community support for downtown revitalization

2. A clear mission and vision statement for the downtown
3. A downtown revitalization work plan
4. A historic preservation ethic recognizing the importance of sense of place
5. A downtown management organization
6. An adequate operating budget
7. Paid professional program manager
8. Ongoing training for staff and volunteers
9. Reporting of key investment statistics
10. National Main Street membership

Main Street is a trademarked program of the National Main Street Center in Washington, D.C. Farmington, Ferndale, Franklin, Highland, Holly, Lake Orion, Ortonville, Oxford, Pontiac, Rochester and Walled Lake are MSOC communities. Berkley, Clarkston, Clawson, Hazel Park, Leonard, South Lyon, and Waterford participate in the mentoring program.

Since its inception in 2000, there has been:

- More than \$560 million of new investment in MSOC communities
- More than 5,100 jobs created
- 551 new businesses
- More than 1,100 buildings rehabilitated
- Almost 170,000 volunteer hours used.

Oakland County was the first county in the United States to operate a county-wide Main Street program.

For more information, see the MSOC website, [www.mainstreetoaklandcounty.com](http://www.mainstreetoaklandcounty.com).

— What's Happening In Lansing —

# Tim Melton – Michigan State Representative 29th District Pontiac Auburn Hills Constituent Work



Melton

My office is extremely proud of our dedication and focus to directly help the people of the 29th District. The work we do to help solve individual issues and concerns are just as important as any legislative work. My office is available and easily accessible for the people of Pontiac and Auburn Hills to contact. One of the first things I did entering office after the 2006 election was to open a full-time office in the district. In addition to my coffee hours and my Lansing office, citizens can contact or visit my office in Pontiac. We have made a concentrated effort to take an active role in the community and regular events.

My offices continues to handle a regular caseload of constituent issues we try to help with. We have always sought to take an active role in helping in any way we can. The issues we have helped with are wide-ranging and run the spectrum of issues people deal with on a day to day basis. Our

constituent work is especially useful in helping people navigate and deal with issues related to any office or department within our state and local governments. Some basic examples of issues we have helped solve include:

- Unemployment cases
- Department of Human Service issues
- Legislative concerns
- Friend of the Court cases
- Housing issues
- Insurance issues
- Coordinating with local governments
- Veterans issues
- Social Security issues, connecting with federal agencies

This is just a sampling of cases we have helped with. We are happy to listen to your concerns and see how we can help in any way possible. If we cannot directly help, we will work to put you in contact with someone who can. My office and staff have established contacts with state agencies and our representatives in congress to ensure that we offer the best constituent services possible.

For more information, please contact my District office at 248-335-4126

## Brooksie Way Half Marathon

The Brooksie Way Half Marathon is one of Oakland County's premier quality of life events. County Executive L. Brooks Patterson began the Brooksie Way races to promote Oakland County and encourage people to become more physically active.

Race proceeds support programs that encourage healthy and active lifestyle and are distributed through Brooksie Way MiniGrants.

The Brooksie Way falls under Count Your Steps Inc., a 501(c)(3) non-profit formed in 2004 to address the growing problem of

obesity through programs that promote increased physical activity and healthy eating in fun ways. Your contribution is tax deductible to the full extent provided by State and Federal law.

The first annual race was held in October 2008 and was named in honor of the late Brooks Stuart Patterson, Mr. Patterson's son.

**WHEN:** The race begins at 8:00 a.m. on Sunday, October 2, 2011.

**WHERE:** The race begins at Oakland University in Rochester Hills, Michigan and finishes at historic Meadow Brook Hall.

## Small Business Happenings & Resources June Business Workshops Offered By Oakland County

**Contact:** Steve Huber, Marketing and Communications, Economic Development and Community Affairs  
**Phone Number:** 248-858-1848

Business owners and entrepreneurs who need assistance are invited to attend seminars in June, 2011 offered by the Oakland County Business Center. Business Basics workshops are now offered in the evenings on alternating months.

- June 1: Effective Networking (evening)
- June 1: Social Media Marketing, Part 2
- June 2: Pre Business Research (evening)
- June 3: Planners' Gathering: Oakland County in the Civil War

- June 7: FastTrac New Venture
  - June 8: CEED Microloan Orientation
  - June 8: 5 Keys to Achieving Fiscal Fitness
  - June 8: Social Media Marketing, Part 3 (evening)
  - June 9: Fundamentals of Starting a Business (evening)
  - June 16: Fundamentals of Writing a Business Plan (evening)
  - June 21: Small Business Loan Workshop
  - June 23: QuickBooks Essentials, Part 1
  - June 23: QuickBooks Essentials, Part 2
- Registration: [www.oakgov.com/peds/calendar](http://www.oakgov.com/peds/calendar)

# LARRY JONES CPA

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or  
[ThePontiacNews@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ThePontiacNews@sbcglobal.net)

## — Africa (Alkebulan) & World News —

Editors Note: The ancient name for the continent of Africa is Alkebulan. It means "mother of humankind. Africa the current name, was given to this continent by the ancient Greeks and Romans. Source: Alkebulan Reference Center – www.ancient-knowledge-breakthrough.net

# Ghana earned \$112m from first oil lifting



**Kofi Annorh**  
*African*  
*Correspondent*

Ghana earned a whopping \$112,271,187 from 995,259 barrels of crude oil lifted from the Ghana Jubilee Fields at Cape Three Points in the Western Region, according to official figures released exclusively to The Chronicle, from the Head Office of the Ghana National Petroleum Corporation (GNPC) at Tema. According to the figures, contrary to general speculations that Ghana's oil might have been sold at a cheap rate on the international market, the first oil lifted by the GNPC was sold above the international market for Brent crude. The Chief Executive Officer of the corporation, Nana Boakye Asafu-Adjaye, told The Chronicle that a barrel of the first lifting by the corporation, sold at \$112.86 on the international market, at the same time the British Brent crude was doing the rounds at \$110 a barrel. "The first company (Tullow Oil) that lifted oil sold it at a discount.

Then the price started climbing. It would get to a point that there would be consistency in the premium over Brent. "By that, you can now know the value to give out. The first consignment lifted by GNPC on 9th March, this year, sold at a price of \$112.86 per barrel," Mr. Asafu-Adjaye explained, oozing with exhilaration. According to the Chief Executive, the Ghanaian Government had anticipated a market value of US\$110 per barrel, when it first lifted its share of the Jubilee light crude oil on the night of March 9, 2011, but little did she know that the escalating oil prices on the world market was going to be an added advantage. Overall, Ghana earned US\$112,271,187 from the sale of the oil produce, which was paid into the GNPC's account on April 8, 2011. For the first lifting of the Jubilee light crude, Tullow Ghana Limited reported that the price obtained was over US\$90 per barrel. Explaining why Ghana still buys oil from the international market at an expensive price, when the state owned oil company, GNPC, which holds 13.75 percent interest in Jubilee Fields, was lifting oil and selling on the international market, Nana Asafu-Adjaye said the Jubilee light crude oil was a new product on the world market, and like any new product, it needs to be branded in order to carve the right

market position internationally. "To get the value that we so much desire, the world must know the product. To get value for the Jubilee light crude, we really have to market it until all refineries in the world are satisfied with the quality," Nana Asafu-Adjaye told The Chronicle. Currently, Ghana produces 67,000 barrels per day from five out of the nine wells in the Jubilee Field. Officials of the GNPC further anticipate that by the middle of this year, all the nine wells in the Jubilee Field would be utilised, in order to get a production capacity of 120,000 barrels per day. "We are producing from five wells out of the nine drilled wells. By the middle of this year, around June or July, we will have all the nine wells producing. Currently, we are producing around 67,000 barrels per day. But, around June or July, we will hit close to 120,000 barrels per day," the CEO said, flanked by Mr. Andrew Badoo, Director of Administration, and Mr. Thomas Manu, Director of Exploration, both of GNPC. In November 2010, Ghana started production of oil in commercial quantities, with the first cargo of crude oil from the Jubilee Field lifted in January 2011 by Tullow Ghana Limited (the British company owns 34.7% stake in the Jubilee Field), and EO Group (has 1.5% stake in the Jubilee field). The quantity lifted was

649,064 barrels, which was marketed and sold through their agent, Vitol SA. Subsequently, Kosmos Energy Ghana HC, which owns 23.49% of the field, lifted 989,360 barrels of Jubilee light crude in January 2011, whilst Anadarko WCTP Company (23.5% stake) and Sabre Oil and Gas Holdings Limited (2.8% stake in the Jubilee field) also jointly lifted 996,708 barrels of Jubilee light crude on February 9, 2011. In terms of pricing, Nana Asafu-Adjaye said the oil markets are very volatile with spot prices changing daily. However, the GNPC boss said for the country to get optimum value for the Jubilee light crude oil, there ought to be consistency in terms of quality from all the nine wells in the Jubilee Field. This, he said, would build confidence in major refineries across the world, after having access to the Jubilee light crude oil. "Bonny light is an index bench mark crude. Brent is also a bench mark. They have been producing since 1974. We have just started, and it will take us some time. As it is known, and the brand is established, that optimum value in terms of price for the crude oil would be attained," said Mr. Manu, Director of Exploration at the GNPC. "The more you sell out, the more you are able to achieve for the establishment as a brand," he added

## — Guest Opinions —

# Don't Rejoice Over Killing of Bin Laden

By Quincy Stewart III



**Quincy**  
**Stewart III**

Amidst all of the rejoicing over Bin Laden's killing, I think it is appropriate at this time to offer a slightly different take on the whole affair. Let me preface those remarks by saying emphatically that I detest the mass murder of over three-thousand people and the devastating effect it had on their families. Needless loss of human life is always a sad affair for the human family and I understand why many of the families saw Bin Laden's killing as vindication. Let us put another spin on that idea and see it from many of the Middle Eastern countries' view that have felt the sting of the lash from America for many decades.

In America we sit at our TV sets at six o'clock or at eleven at night to watch the news. It seems like forever that we have seen bombs going off in other countries; Vietnam, all over Africa, Nagasaki and Hiroshima, Japan, and Asia to name a few. All of these places have had the American bomb devastate their land. We could never fathom until September 11, 2001, how such devastation could happen here. That was some image in a TV set in some far away place and even though your government was dropping those bombs and firing that napalm, it must have been for a good reason and then we reach for another beer or another slice of pizza and fall off to sleep.

Again, I do not justify the killing of three thousand folk in the World Trade Center. It was dastardly, evil and murderous. Yet, we must understand the reasons that are used to justify such acts of hatred. Bin Laden's just don't come out of the womb with a penchant for the blood of Americans or the Western Hemisphere in general. Until we set aside the need to see who can piss the farthest; who has the biggest phallus; these incidents of retribution begetting

more retribution will continue into perpetuity, or until we just wipe out this entire planet with madness.

What are the differences between America and those who make a case for hating her? Do we as a people have enough grasp on history to know what precipitated this relationship, or do we just blindly place our trust in government and let the historians on both sides hash it out? Have we outsourced our cognition to the point where its too much effort to have an independent thought away from the endless propaganda that talking heads and government "officials" give us?

For the United States, this is the first time since the War of 1812 that the national territory has been under attack from a foreign entity. Don't bring up Pearl Harbor either, because Hawaii at the time was a U.S. colony. By the way as a footnote since we are bringing up Hawaii and the Philippines, America slaughtered thousands of Filipinos and conquered both them and Hawaii, which is precisely what they wanted to do with Cuba, but Castro had other ideas before Batista would allow it.

You see, the problem with America in particular and the West in general, and yes, I am talking about Europeans or what many of you call "white" people, is that everywhere they have gone, they have at one point, time or another tried to conquer where they landed. No matter how welcoming the indigenous people were to the Portuguese, the Spaniards, the Dutch, the English and the French, to name a few, ultimately, it was about conquest, usurping the natural resources, enslaving the people, replete with rape, pillage and murder when necessary should there be resistance and that is just the plain truth. America has propped up all kinds of oppressive regimes across the African Continent, Asia and the Middle East as well as Nicaragua, Iran, Iraq, Uganda, and the Sudan and so forth. Most of the leaders of these propped up regimes by the United States were educated here and/or given resources to exist and fight others who were America's enemies.

Once those leaders became drunk enough from the vicarious power of the United States, they got beside themselves...too big for their britches as it were and then they became America's enemy. Certainly we all know that the Bin Laden family was an ally of the United States for years. America supplied arms to al-Qaida to fight Russia.

You see, America "uses" people like toilet paper and once they have no use for these puppet leaders, they kill them, jail them or banish them to reclusivity, never to be heard from again. Let us be mindful that under these propped regimes, are the poor masses of people who have no hatred in their hearts. Most of the people of the Middle East are not Bin Laden's by any stretch. They speak a different language. They dress differently. Many have a different religious outlook than many of you reading these words. But they are people, just like you- who truly would much rather live without bombs, without bayonets and guns. They would rather not bury their young and watch their women raped and their old disrespected. After a long time of being exposed to this, they can trace back that many of their woes lie within the prevue of the West and particularly America. Anti- America sentiment can be better understood when you realize the often reckless foreign policies of America across the globe. What's wrong with a sit down with all these groups, which hate this country and find out what's wrong? Whenever you have a dispute with someone, isn't a logical thing to perhaps discuss what it is? Obama merely suggested that and all the old white men came out and lambasted him for even the thought. The talking heads came out on every possible news channel there was; Dick Cheney for one, and said that any talking with America's "enemies" is tantamount to showing weakness. Obama, of course, relented.

Think about this before you wave the flag and shed tears when the National Anthem is sung: In 1986 the United States was condemned by the WORLD COURT for unlawful use of force. The Security Council called on all states

of the U.S. to adhere to international law. Naturally, the U.S. ignores the United Nations, as Bush did to start the unlawful, unwarranted War in Iraq.

Last couple of items for your consideration; when Michigan/Montana/ Idaho militia-man Timothy McVey blew up a building in Oklahoma City, killing many people including children, and showed no remorse when caught, and he was executed, did the United States government blow up Northern Michigan or Montana or Idaho? Did they target white young men with crew cuts at airports? Did they randomly pull over white young men after Columbine High School massacre in Colorado? Was there a ticker-tape parade and near mania-like jubilation when Tim McVey was killed? Yes, some...but to the point of what we saw last Sunday? No.

Nicaragua was subject to violent assaults by the United States killing thousands of their people. Nicaragua is still a mess today. It may never recover from what America did. Libya was chosen to bomb when the atrocities in the Sudan alone, let alone the Ivory Coast are beyond description. Yet, America chose to try and "rescue" the Libyans from Quadaffi. Part of that "rescue" was to secure oil and lithium. Many in the world see America as a terrorist state. We must all wake from the delusion that this country is seen as the world's moral epitome.

Please don't send hate mail to the Pontiac News, claiming I am un-American or siding with terrorists. I just happen to be a person who has an independent thought. I happen to be someone who does some research and reading more than the propaganda papers and tabloids, news programs and listening to the paid pundits and talking heads on TV. All I am saying for now is watch what you rejoice over. Killing Bin Laden only made him a martyr and an icon. True enough, he won't be around to plan any more attacks, but killing begets more killing and exactly when will you kill everyone that hates? Trying to do so is hateful in and of it's self.

# Our Part in Educating Our Children - It Takes A Village!



We are entering our season for graduating students. In just four short months I have been able to see firsthand the dynamics the Pontiac School District goes through to prepare our children for this very important day. Educating our child is not a snapshot event. The preparation actually begins from the cradle to the graduation ceremony.

Early education is extremely important to the success of our children. Parents who read to their children and are involved in the development of their child's learning experience before kindergarten will see their child excel. Simple things like talking to our children enhance their learning experience.

Our child's grade school experiences are very important as well. We should aim to be a proactive part of each step of their early educational development. Children learn more than reading and arithmetic in grade school. They learn artistic, motor and social skills which develop future habits. Reading to our child is extremely important. It has been noted in numerous data that if our children are not reading by the third grade, they will be challenge throughout their entire educational experience. Let's make visiting the library a weekly treat in our child's life.

It is crucial that we are involved in our child's middle school experience. It is here that social pressure begins. When our child faces puberty, they are bombarded with a

host of unknowns that only we can verify. When the world turns to them with alternatives, it is imperative that we are there with solutions. If our children develop their core academic, social, artistic and motor skills in grade school, it is secured in middle school by either parental/community involvement or by peer pressure.

High school begins a brand new world for many of our students. Our children are no longer waiting for a letter or an announcement from an authority. This is the age of instant messaging, social networks and of course, social pressure. The Pontiac School District is in the process of adopting a revised anti-bullying policy. This, alongside with our uniform dress code policy will help in providing a safe atmosphere of learning.

There are many opportunities being made available for the students of Pontiac School District. We are now providing our children with an Early Baccalaureate Program, we are in the process of providing our children with the opportunity to study in China, we have an early graduation program where our children will be able to graduate with a two year Associate's degree and most importantly, we have the Promise Zone Initiative where our children can go to college for free! These are great programs for our children but the learning experience begins in the cradle.

"The Board of Education believes that the Pontiac School District can become the premier school district as a recognized leader in student achievement, high school graduation rates, college readiness, and postsecondary success. We, the trustees of the Pontiac School District, are committed to achieving this vision, and realize that hard work coupled with community partnerships are paramount to

Not only the success of the school

district, but for the success of all our communities."

Remember, we must take time for our children. Our children come first. Who they are and who they will become depends on us. This is the "fierce urgency of now" and make no mistake, it will take this village, the Pontiac School District and its surrounding

communities to raise and educate our children. Let's all be a part, parents, teachers, board, administrators and most importantly, our community. It will take all of us working together to ensure success. The choice is ours.

**We congratulate all of our graduates from the Pontiac School District!**

## Crowne Plaza Hotel of Auburn Hills Employee of the Month



Michael Parker was selected Team Member of the Month for March, 2011, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel. In a unanimous vote, the Executive Team elected him to receive this honor. A local resident of Pontiac, Michael has been employed at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Auburn Hills for a little over three years. "Michael's contributions as a utility worker in the Food and Beverage Department

have been a strong key to our ability to provide a crisp, clean, safe work environment," said Food and Beverage Director Mary Coburn. "We are pleased to honor him as our March 2011 Team Member of the Month for the fine work he does."

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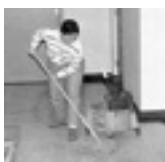
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## – Educational Matters

# Return on Educational Investment

According to a report released recently, some districts in Michigan—including Detroit Public Schools and Lansing Public School District—showed low educational productivity. The study also uncovers high productivity school districts in Michigan, including South Haven Public Schools, Cass City Public Schools, and Watervliet School District.

Our nation's school system has for too long failed to ensure that education funding consistently promotes strong student achievement. After adjusting for inflation, education spending per student has nearly tripled over the past four decades. But while some states and districts have spent their additional dollars wisely—and thus shown significant increases in student outcomes—overall student achievement has largely remained flat.

To spark a national dialogue about educational productivity, we've attempted to evaluate the return on investment (ROI) of almost every major school district in the country. Our project measures the academic achievement a school district produces relative to its educational spending, while controlling for factors outside a district's control, such as cost of living and students in poverty.

Key findings from the report include:

- Many school districts could boost student achievement without increasing spending if they used their money more productively.
- Low productivity costs the nation's school system as much as \$175 billion a year.
- Without controls on how additional school dollars are spent, more education spending will not automatically improve student outcomes.

View the full report and interactive district map. [http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2011/01/educational\\_productivity](http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2011/01/educational_productivity)

### Introduction and summary

This report is the culmination of a yearlong effort to study the efficiency of the nation's public education system and includes the first-ever attempt to evaluate the productivity of almost every major school district in the country. In the business world, the notion of productivity describes the benefit received in exchange for effort or money expended. Our project measures the academic achievement a school district produces relative to its educational spending, while controlling for factors outside a district's control, such as cost of living and students in poverty.

Our nation's school system has for too long failed to ensure that education funding consis-

tently promotes strong student achievement. After adjusting for inflation, education spending per student has nearly tripled over the past four decades. But while some states and districts have spent their additional dollars wisely—and thus shown significant increases in student outcomes—overall student achievement has largely remained flat. And besides Luxembourg, the United States spends more per student than any of the 65 countries that participated in a recent international reading assessment, and while Estonia and Poland scored at the same level as the United States on the exam, the United States spent roughly \$60,000 more to educate each student to age 15 than either nation.

Our aims for this project, then, are three-fold. First, we hope to kick-start a national conversation about educational productivity. Second, we want to identify districts that generate higher-than-average achievement per dollar spent, demonstrate how productivity varies widely within states, and encourage efforts to study highly productive districts. Third—and most important—we want to encourage states and districts to embrace approaches that make it easier to create and sustain educational efficiencies.

This report comes at a pivotal time for schools and districts. Sagging revenues have forced more than 30 states to cut education spending since the recession began. The fiscal situation is likely to get worse before it gets better because the full impact of the housing market collapse has yet to hit many state and local budgets. At a time when states are projecting more than \$100 billion in budget shortfalls, educators need to be able to show that education dollars produce significant outcomes or taxpayers might begin to see schools as a weak investment. If schools don't deliver maximum results for the dollar, public trust in education could erode and taxpayers may fund schools less generously.

**The Wisconsin school systems of Oshkosh and Eau Claire are about the same size and serve similar student populations. They also get largely similar results on state exams—but Eau Claire spends an extra \$8 million to run its school system.**

While some forward-thinking education leaders have taken steps to promote better educational efficiency, most states and districts have not done nearly enough to measure or produce the productivity gains our education system so desperately needs. Some fear that a focus on efficiency might inspire policymakers to reduce already limited education budgets and further increase the inequitable distribution of school dollars. To be sure, our nation's system of financing schools is unfair. Low-income and minority students are far more likely to attend schools that don't receive their fair share of federal, state, and local dollars. But while the issue of fairness must be central to any conversation about education finance, efficiency should not be sacrificed on the altar of equity. Our nation must aspire to have a school system that's both fair and productive.

Our emphasis on productivity does not mean we endorse unfettered market-based reforms, such as vouchers allowing parents to direct public funds to private schools. Nor do we argue that policymakers should spend less on education. Indeed, we believe neither of these approaches can solve the nation's pressing education challenges. Transforming our schools will demand both real resources and real reform. As Education Secretary Arne Duncan recently said: "It's time to stop treating the problem of educational productivity as a

grinding, eat-your-broccoli exercise. It's time to start treating it as an opportunity for innovation and accelerating progress."

### Summary of findings

• **Many school districts could boost student achievement without increasing spending if they used their money more productively.** An Arizona school district, for example, could see as much as a 36 percent boost in achievement if it increased its efficiency from the lowest level to the highest, all else being equal.

• **Low productivity costs the nation's school system as much as \$175 billion a year.** This figure is an estimate; our study does not capture everything that goes into creating an efficient district. But the approximate loss in capacity equals about 1 percent of the nation's gross domestic product.

• **Without controls on how additional school dollars are spent, more education spending will not automatically improve student outcomes.** In more than half of the states included in our study, there was no clear relationship between spending and achievement after adjusting for other variables, such as cost of living and students in poverty. These findings are consistent with existing research: How a school system spends its dollars can be just as important as how much it spends, at least above some threshold level.

• **Efficiency varies widely within states.** Some districts spent thousands more per student to obtain the same broad level of academic achievement. After adjusting for factors outside of a district's control, the range of spending among the districts scoring in the top third of achievement in California was nearly \$8,000 per student.

• **More than a million students are enrolled in highly inefficient districts.** Over 400 school districts around the country were rated highly inefficient on all three of our productivity metrics. These districts serve about 3 percent of the almost 43 million students covered by our study.

• **High-spending school systems are often inefficient.** Our analysis showed that after accounting for factors outside of a district's control, many high spending districts posted middling productivity results. For example, only 17 percent of Florida's districts in the top third in spending were also in the top third in achievement.

• **Students from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to be enrolled in highly inefficient districts.** Students who participated in subsidized lunch programs were 12 percentage points more likely to be enrolled in the nation's least-productive districts, even after making allowances for the higher cost of educating lower-income students.

• **Highly productive districts are focused on improving student outcomes.** We surveyed a sample of highly productive districts to learn more about their principles and practices. The districts that performed well on our metrics shared a number of values and practices, including strong community support and a willingness to make tough choices.

• **States and districts fail to evaluate the productivity of schools and districts.** While the nation spends billions of dollars on education, only two states, Florida and Texas, currently provide annual school-level productivity evaluations, which report to the public how well funds are being spent at the local level.

• **The quality of state and local education data is often poor.** In many instances, key

information on school spending and outcomes is not available or insufficiently rigorous, and this severely impedes the study of educational productivity. For instance, we did not have good enough data to control for certain cost factors, such as transportation. So a rural district with high busing costs might suffer in some of our metrics compared with a more densely populated district.

• **The nation's least-productive districts spend more on administration.** The most inefficient districts in the country devote an extra 3 percentage points of their budgets on average to administration, operations, and other noninstructional expenditures.

• **Some urban districts are far more productive than others.** While our main results are limited to within-state comparisons, we were able to conduct a special cross-state analysis of urban districts that recently participated in a national achievement test. After adjusting for certain factors outside a district's control, we found that some big-city school systems spend millions of dollars more than others—but get far lower results on math and reading tests.

### Summary of recommendations

**Policymakers should promote educational efficiency**

We hope this report launches a broad dialogue about educational productivity. Education policymakers should encourage further research in this area, as well as convene a national panel to recommend how state and federal governments can better support policies and programs that promote efficiency.

**States and districts must reform school management systems**

Education policymakers should create performance-focused management systems that are flexible on inputs and strict on outcomes. State and federal governments should also provide educators with the tools, technology, and training required to succeed with limited school dollars.

**Education leaders should encourage smarter, fairer approaches to school funding**

Education policymakers should develop funding policies that direct money to students based on their needs, so that all schools and districts have an equal opportunity to succeed. Federal policymakers should also continue to support competitive funding programs that create opportunities for reform and innovation.

**States and districts should report far more data on school performance**

States and districts should develop data systems that report reliable, high-quality information on educational outcomes, operations, and finance.

America's ingenuity and dynamism have helped make it one of the most prosperous countries in the world, and these traits will be key to boosting the productivity of our school system. Efficiency reforms will not come fast or easy, but they must come soon because our nation can no longer afford schools that fail to make the most of their limited resources. We hope that our interactive website together with the findings and recommendations in the following pages—will prompt a new way of thinking about educational success, one that does far more to guarantee that all schools and districts have the necessary data, tools, and incentives to be efficient with their school dollars.

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—Voices in the Community—

**Ask Elaine.com**

By Elaine Smith-Wright



Mrs. Smith-Wright started out as a Mass Communications major at Oakland University and now holds a B.A. degree in Nursing Home Administration and the Certificate of Gerontology and Sociology of the Aging from Wiley College along with a MBA Degree from East Texas Baptist University in Management. She also holds a Certificate in Filmmaking, Screenwriting and Directing from the Motion Picture Institute of Michigan.

Dear Ask Elaine.com:

My best friend and I (both 24) have been close since I can remember. We double dated and did just about everything together that best friends would do. We even went on trips and cruises together, would cook over at each other's house and go away for the weekend and just basically hang out together. We know each other's likes and dislikes and we always had similar tastes in clothing and in men. So we decided to have a girlfriends/best friends pack between us. We vowed that we would never mess around with a guy that one of us ever dated or ever had an intimate relationship with.

Well my best friend met this guy and I guess they fell in love and eventually they got married. I was even her Maid-of-Honor and was by her side during that whole wedding experience. After they were married they went on their honeymoon. I never heard from her when she got back and I called her at least five times a day because I wanted to know how the trip was, but I never received a phone call from her. I wanted to go over to her house and find out what her problem was but I didn't want to intrude on the married couple. That was six months ago. Now her ex-boyfriend that she left for her new husband is trying to talk to me! He's a cute guy, has a nice job and his own place and I have always wondered what it would be like to date him since my ex-friend didn't want him.

What do you think? Should I give him a chance to be my man now?

Signed,

No Longer My BFF

Dear No Longer My BFF:

Yes! She's no longer your friend, you haven't seen or heard from her in over six months and he's no longer her man because she's moved on and got her another. Why not? It's not like you're trying to cheat with her husband. I'm more curious about the reason why she doesn't want to be in contact with you any more. Even though people get married, they still need to hold on to their best friend if nothing drastic has taken place. Nose around and see if you can find a friend or a relative of hers who can tell you why she stopped all communication with you. Sometimes people become controlling and want to cut their mate off from anyone who can influence them so that they can have the upper hand with them at all times. Find out if she has cut off her communication with her family members or have alienated others who were close to her. That will tell you a lot about the man she's married. She may need a BFF right now and unable to tell anyone. In the meantime, you're still young! Date the ex-guy. You might as well have some fun of your own. Good Luck!

You can write to Ask Elaine.Com at: [ThePontiacNews@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ThePontiacNews@sbcglobal.net)

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## — Health Matters —

# Flavored Disease and Death for Minorities

## Why the FDA Must Ban Menthol Cigarettes

By Aisha C. Moodie-Mills

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration is currently considering a ban on the sale and distribution of menthol cigarettes in the United States—a measure that could save thousands of lives each year and drastically cut elevated smoking-related health problems experienced by African Americans as well as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Americans who often bear the brunt of smoking-related diseases. For so many reasons, this ban is a no-brainer.

In 2009 Congress directed the FDA to ban all other candy-, fruit-, and spice-flavored cigarettes but they fell short of eliminating menthol flavoring—even though it was believed to be the most widely used and highly addictive of all flavored cigarette additives. Instead, they mandated a comprehensive study to assess the impact of menthol smoking on the health of the general public, especially among our nation's youth and minorities who smoke menthol cigarettes at the highest rates.

Now, the findings are in and the evidence is conclusive. Menthol cigarettes are hazardous to the public health and should be removed from the marketplace. According to the independent Tobacco Products Scientific Advisory Committee, which performed the study and made recommendations to the FDA last month:

- Removing menthol cigarettes from the marketplace would greatly benefit the public health.
- Menthol cigarettes lead to a lifetime of smoking.
- Smokers of menthol cigarettes find it easier to start and more difficult to quit smoking.
- Menthol deceives users into the false perception that menthol cigarettes are less harmful than nonmenthol cigarettes.
- The availability of menthol increases the prevalence of smoking among African Americans.
- Predatory marketing by tobacco companies to youth, African Americans, and Hispanics also leads to the high prevalence of menthol smoking among these populations.

The need for a menthol ban is further evident when exploring the impact of smoking on gay and transgender Americans. Research shows that gays and transgenders smoke at rates up to twice that of the general U.S. population. And it is estimated that lesbians, gays, and bisexuals are 30 percent to 200 percent more likely to smoke than the rest of the American public, a rate higher than that of all the groups evaluated in the Tobacco Products Scientific Advisory Committee study. Alas, no comprehensive data are available on how many gay and transgender Americans smoke menthol-flavored cigarettes or suffer the consequences because national health surveys, and most state-based surveys, too, lack questions of sexual orientation or gender identity. Nonetheless, we can deduce that gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgenders are just as vulnerable to smoking-related disparities as African Americans and other ethnic minority groups, which is why they should also be treated as a special population in federal health studies.

Certainly, both groups would benefit from a ban on menthol for generations to come. And this is especially the case for gay and transgender people of color, for whom the scourge of smoking menthol-flavored cigarettes only compounds this assault on their health. This issue brief will look at the parallels in smoking-related health “disparities”—health care parl-

ance for elevated ill health among different groups of Americans—faced by adolescents, gays and transgenders, and African Americans; examine why they occur; and highlight how a ban on menthol cigarettes will help bridge the health and wellness gap for everyone.

### Menthol perpetuates extreme health disparities

All cigarettes, of course, are dangerous. Smoking is the single-most preventable cause of disease, disability, and death in the United States. Each year an estimated 443,000 people die prematurely from smoking or exposure to secondhand smoke, and another 8.6 million live with a serious illness caused by smoking.

Mortality rates are even more tragic for African Americans and gay and transgender smokers who suffer the greatest consequences of tobacco-related illnesses alongside already elevated rates of obesity, high blood pressure, cancer, and other diseases that are inflamed by smoking. Blacks, for example, are more likely to acquire and die from lung cancer than any other group of Americans, and the American Cancer Society estimates that a minimum of 30,000 gay and transgender Americans die each year of tobacco-related diseases. Rates are similar for strokes and heart disease. For gay and transgender African Americans, the risk is surely even greater.

Mounting evidence suggests that the availability of menthol cigarettes perpetuates the high rates of smoking among these minority groups, which result in these bleak health outcomes. There are currently 19.2 million menthol smokers in the United States, and more than a million of these smokers are adolescents between the ages of 12 and 17 (see Figure 1).

More than 80 percent of all black youth who smoke use menthol—the highest usage among all minority groups—and more than 70 percent of gay and transgender youth smoke menthol cigarettes—also among the highest usage of all groups within this age group.

The most effective way to tackle these appalling figures is to reduce the number of people who begin smoking in the first place. A ban on menthol cigarettes would effectively do just that. Here are the reasons why.

### Menthol cigarettes are a starter product for youth

Smoking and nicotine addiction is a pediatric epidemic, with nearly 80 percent of smokers having their first cigarette before the age of 18, and with one in three youth smokers projected to die prematurely from tobacco-related diseases. Research suggests that menthol cigarettes are the culprit, as menthol use is up almost 20 percent among youth despite a decline in smoking among the public overall.

Black, gay, and transgender adolescents account for a significant portion of this increase. They smoke menthol cigarettes at rates considerably higher than the rest of their peers (see Table 1).

It's not surprising that 50 percent of all youth who smoke cigarettes smoke menthols. Tobacco companies have long understood the allure of menthol to young smokers and have manipulated the levels of menthol in cigarettes to appeal to them. The minty flavor and cooling sensation masks the harsh tobacco taste and the peppermint effect eases inhalation, making cigarette use more palatable for youth and first-time smokers.

This early exposure to menthol cigarettes

contributes to the high rate of smoking-related illnesses and premature mortality within the general public, and among African Americans, gays, and transgenders in particular. That's why youth prevention is essential to reducing chronic smoking-related diseases among the general public. Eliminating menthol from the marketplace will drastically reduce the number of young people initiated into smoking that grow up to be lifelong smokers, which will ultimately save an entire generation from such harsh outcomes.

### Predatory marketing by tobacco companies

Contrary to claims by the tobacco industry, elevated rates of menthol use among these groups of Americans are not merely coincidental or a simple matter of smoker preference. Decades of tobacco industry documents reveal that African Americans, adolescents ages 12 to 17, and gay and transgender communities have all been targets of aggressive marketing tactics by cigarette companies who worked to position smoking as a cultural norm among these groups.

These campaigns more often than not were designed to perpetuate stereotypes and exploit vulnerabilities of each of these communities. The tobacco industry continues these campaigns despite heavy criticism over the years for their predatory nature. This is why continued high levels of smoking among minority groups is now more than just a health and wellness issue but also one of social justice and consumer protection.

Tobacco industry marketing tactics, for example, are historically condescending and downright offensive to minority groups who are also the most loyal customers. R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company, for one, has painted African Americans as naturally unhealthy, disinterested in self-improvement, and unmotivated to do anything other than try and impress others. They've also targeted the Bay Area gay community through a campaign called Project SCUM, the name alone quite telling of the sentiment toward the community.

Moreover, youth of color under the age of 18 are cited by the industry as a primary target, with menthol products heavily marketed to this group of Americans in order to loop them into smoking. The tobacco industry is preying on the next generation of customers and society is paying the price.

### The focus on gay and transgender smokers

Tobacco companies overtly target gay and transgender Americans in campaigns to hook them early and convert them into lifetime customers. And the high smoking rates of this group suggest the tobacco merchants are winning. Smoking among gays and transgenders is a health crisis, which is why policymakers must work now to develop culturally competent intervention programs and cessation models to reverse the trend.

A handful of state-based and privately funded studies offer us some insight on the root of such widespread smoking in the gay and transgender community. The American Lung Association's compilation of research, for example, finds possible contributing factors to be associated with:

- The stress and discrimination related to homophobia
- The tobacco industry's targeted marketing to gay and transgender customers
- The lack of access to culturally appropriate

tobacco treatment programs

Smoking becomes a coping mechanism to help them deal with these issues—issues that are further magnified for gay and transgender people of color who face discrimination due to both race and sexual orientation or gender identity.

Moreover, gays and transgenders disproportionately socialize in bars and clubs where they face less discrimination but where smoking remains prevalent. For many in this community, bars and clubs are often the only social outlets they have to connect with other members of the community, so whether smokers or not, they are still subject to the harms of secondhand smoke.

Whatever the case, we know smoking is highest among gay and transgender Americans, with rates ranging between 25 percent and 50 percent. A recent report also found that 30 percent of transgender Americans report smoking daily or occasionally, compared to just 20.6 percent of all U.S. adults.

Additionally, lesbians and bisexual women are the only group of women whose smoking rates exceed their male counterparts. In the general population men smoke much more than women, but one study found that lesbian and bisexual female youth were more than nine times more likely than their heterosexual classmates to have smoked in the last week. There was no difference found between smoking among gay or bisexual male youth and their straight classmates.

### Ban menthol cigarettes and most users would quit

The magnitude of the harm caused by the availability of menthol to the public health is striking. According to the independent Tobacco Products Scientific Advisory Committee estimates, 9 million more people will start smoking over the next 40 years due to the availability of menthol cigarettes. If trends hold true, we can then anticipate that the majority of these new smokers will be black, gay, or transgender. This is well beyond the number of new smokers that would take up the habit, whether menthol were available or not.

Should menthol remain on the market, more than 325,000 premature deaths will also result and millions will be faced with the excess burden of morbidity stemming from chronic diseases, infectious diseases, and diminished well-being that is attributable to smoking (see Table 2).

The good news is that the majority of menthol smokers report that they will stop smoking altogether should the FDA ban menthol cigarettes. A study by the National Cancer Institute found that almost half of African Americans polled said they would quit smoking and not use any other tobacco product if menthol were banned. Seventy percent of transgender smokers reported the same. No data is available on cessation plans of lesbian, gay, or bisexual smokers.

In summary, a ban on menthol would avert more than 300,000 premature deaths and divert 9 million people away from smoking over 50 years. It would also lead to a 50 percent reduction in the smoking prevalence among African Americans and a 70 percent reduction for transgender Americans—saving lives, bridging health and wellness gaps among minorities, and reducing health care spending across our nation. This is a win-win for every American.

See Flavored Page 15

– Financial & Legal Matters

# Debt and creditors got you down?

By Attorney Murray Grier

**The FAIR DEBT COLLECTION PRACTICES ACT protects you.**



Murray Grier

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC), the nation's consumer protection agency, is charged with enforcing the **Fair Debt Collection Practices Act (FDCPA)** which makes it illegal for debt collectors to

use unfair, abusive, or deceptive practices to collect a debt. The FDCPA covers personal, family, and household debts. It does not cover debts you incurred to run a business.

Certain actions by debt collectors are simply illegal and can result in a lawsuit against the collector. For Example:

A collector cannot contact you at inconvenient times or places, usually before 8 am or after 9 pm, unless you agree

Can not contact you at work if you tell them, orally or in writing, that you can't

receive calls at work

Can not harass you or third parties by using threats or repeatedly using the telephone to harass you. They can't publish your name (except to credit agencies), and they can't threaten to seize, garnish, attach, or sell your property unless they are permitted to by law and they intend to do so.

**YOU CAN STOP THE CALLS**

If a debt collector calls, it may be wise to try to resolve the matter. If you can't and don't want to speak to them again, tell the collector - in writing - to stop calling you. Follow these simple steps to ensure compliance:

- Make a copy of your original letter
- Send the original by certified mail, return receipt requested
- Once the collector receives your letter they can't call you again, except to confirm no further contact or to inform you of their intent to sue.

If you don't pay your debt your creditor can sue to collect. If they win the court will enter a judgment against you. The judgment states the amount you owe, and allows the creditor to get a garnishment against you,

directing a third party, like your bank to turn over funds in your account to pay the debt.

**PROTECTED ASSETS**

Many federal benefits are generally (BUT NOT ALWAYS) exempt from garnishment, including:

- Social Security Benefits
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Benefits
- Veterans' Benefits
- Civil Service and Federal Retirement and Disability Benefits
- Service Members' Pay
- Military Annuities and Survivors' Benefits
- Student Assistance
- Federal Emergency Management Agency Federal Disaster Assistance.

AGAIN: federal benefits may be garnished under certain circumstances, including to pay delinquent taxes, alimony, child support, or student loans.

**YOUR RECOURSE**

If a creditor violates your rights you can sue. If you win, the judge can award any

damages that you can prove you suffered due to illegal practices, including lost wages and medical bills. The judge can require the dept collector to pay up to \$1,000.00, even if you can't prove actual damages. A group of people who sue as part of a class action can recover up to \$500,000.

**I've been sued . . . Now what?**

If you are sued in a collection action, respond to the lawsuit, either personally or through your lawyer, by the date specified in the court papers to preserve your rights and protect your assets from garnishment.

**WATCH FOR INFO ON A FREE SEMINAR ON YOUR RIGHTS**

*Disclaimer: The information provided in this newsletter is not legal advice, but general information on legal issues commonly encountered. The information provided herein should not be construed to be formal legal advice nor the formation of a lawyer/client relationship. Individuals reading the contents of this newsletter are encouraged to seek legal counsel for advice regarding their individual legal issues.*

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# YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE: 1ST ANNUAL PHOENIX OPEN GOLF OUTING



Friday, June 24, 2011 at The Fountains Golf Course – Clarkston, MI

### YOUR ENTRY FEE OF \$100.00 INCLUDES:

Continental Breakfast  
Buffet Dinner (2 Entrees)  
Golf Cart

Team Picture  
Green Fees (18 Holes)  
Donations for PHS Athletics  
**Phoenix Hole Sponsor Fee - \$125.00**

On the Course Refreshments  
Door Prizes  
Scholarships

### FUN & GAMES CONTESTS:

Longest Fairway Drive (Each 9)  
Hit the Boat  
Skins Game  
Closest to Pin (Each 9)  
Scramble Golf (Team of 4)  
Hole-In-One Prize  
Raffle Tickets

**ADDITIONAL GUEST FOR DINNER & SOCIAL HOURS = \$25.00 EACH**

### GOLF DAY SCHEDULE:

7:30 – 8:30am = Registration & Breakfast  
8:30 – 1:00pm = Golf – Shotgun Start  
1:00 – 3:00pm = Social Hour Cash Bar

3:00 – 4:30pm = Dinner  
4:30 – 6:00pm = Awards Program  
6:00pm = Party Time

Proceeds from the Phoenix Golf Open are designated to the PHS Athletic Fund. Your support will help strengthen Pontiac High Schools total athletic program and is greatly appreciated. This event is limited to 144 participants and reservations will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis. **Advanced payment is required by June 10, 2011.**



**Make all checks payable to  
Pontiac Phoenix Open and mail to:**

Pontiac High School Athletics  
1051 Arlene Street  
Pontiac, MI 48340

If you have any questions please call (248) 451-7311.

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# –Community Calendar–



## TRANSFORM PONTIAC NOW

PO Box 430395 PONTIAC, MI 48343

Facebook Group: "Transform Pontiac Now" pontiacnow@comcast.net

248-830-4664 • 248-935-4784 • www.transformpontiacnow.com

### MAY

When:	What:	Where:	Time:
May 21, 2011	Block Party	Murphy Park Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. (South) Pontiac	2 to 4:00
May 23, 2011 – May 28, 2011	Assessment Week	TBD	TBD

### JUNE

When:	What:	Where:	Time:
June 3, 2011	Park Clean Up / Dist. Fliers	Howard Dell Community Center 345 Edison St, Pontiac	5 to 8 p.m.
June 4, 2011	Block Party	Howard Dell Community Center 345 Edison St, Pontiac	2 to 4 p.m.
June 5, 2011	TPN Focus Meeting		
June 17 – 18 2011	Downtown Outreach	Downtown Pontiac	
June 23 – 24 2011	Journey for Life Walk	Downtown Detroit to Downtown Pontiac	

## Palace – DTE & Meadow Brook Musical Festival – May Events

May 25 - Doobie Brothers at DTE Energy Music Theatre

May 27 - Eddie Money at DTE Energy Music Theatre

May 28 - Cirque D'Or at Meadow Brook Music Festival

For a complete calendar of events:

**The Palace of Auburn Hills**

<http://www.palacenet.com/files/media/PLComingEvents051111.doc>

**DTE Energy Music Theatre**

<http://www.palacenet.com/files/media/DTEComingEvents051111.doc>

**Meadow Brook Music Festival**

<http://www.palacenet.com/files/media/MBComingEvents051111.doc>

To access Palace Sports & Entertainment Media site, you can find show and venue information, including press releases and images to upcoming shows at The Palace.

**Media website: [www.palacenet.com/media](http://www.palacenet.com/media)**

## Flavored from Page 12

### Recommendations

#### Ban menthol

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration should unequivocally ban the sale and distribution of menthol cigarettes in the United States. This would unequivocally reduce the overall smoking prevalence among all Americans and the disproportionate use of cigarettes among minority Americans.

#### Invest in cessation programs and prevention education

The National Tobacco Control Program of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, which coordinates and funds the national effort to reduce tobacco-related diseases and deaths, should ensure adequate funding to states to implement culturally competent smoking intervention services, cessation programs, and quit lines. In light of a menthol ban, the CDC should allocate a substantial portion of the proposed \$79 million in the fiscal year 2012 budget for antitobacco media campaigns to menthol-specific education campaigns and support services for the hundreds of thousands of current users expected to quit.

The CDC should also give special consideration to Community Transformation Grant applicants working to reduce menthol use and smoking in general among African Americans and gays and transgenders. The proposed FY 2012 budget for these grants is \$221 million. Congress should allocate some of this funding to support the menthol ban.

#### Recognize lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender communities as a "priority population"

In order to fully assess the impact of health disparities in general, and smoking specifically, on this group of Americans, accurate population-based health data is necessary. We call on the FDA, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Center for Disease Control, and other federal agencies to include questions of sexual orientation and gender identity on national health surveys so we can learn more about how smoking in general affects this group. Just as racial and ethnic minorities receive "priority status" in review of health disparities, so should gay and transgender Americans.

#### Broaden advocacy coalitions

The availability of menthol cigarettes in the marketplace leaves both African Americans and gays and transgenders vulnerable to smoking-related health disparities and predatory marketing by tobacco companies. A shared interest in combating this scourge presents a great opportunity for collective advocacy by organizations representing both groups to promote smoking cessation in general alongside measures to reduce health disparities among minority groups in particular. Doing so will help bolster working relationships and foster partnerships that can be leveraged toward collaborative work on other policy issues.

Aisha C. Moodie-Mills is the Advisor for LGBT Policy & Racial Justice at the Center for American Progress. Her work with the Fighting Injustice to Reach Equality, or FIRE, initiative explores the impact of public policy on gay and transgender people of color.

This article was published by The Center for American Progress (online) "Center for American Progress ([www.americanprogress.org](http://www.americanprogress.org))"

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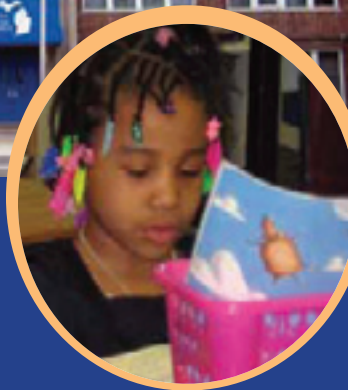
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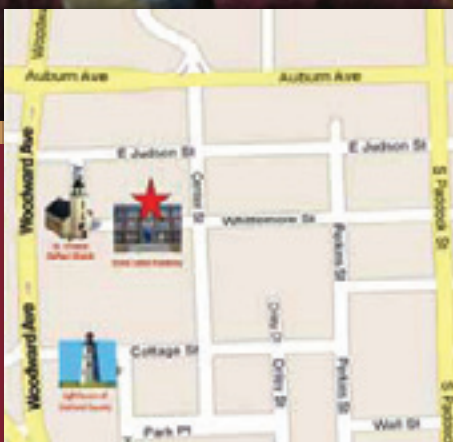
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