

CAROLINA NEWS

Fla. group plans affirmative action march

BY STEVE BOUSQUET  
COLLEGE PRESS EXCHANGE

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — Hoping to capitalize on growing opposition to Gov. Jeb Bush's One Florida plan, a coalition of groups plans to march on the state capital next month to protest Bush's alternative to affirmative action.

The march is scheduled for 11 a.m. on March 7 — and the timing is no accident.

The first Tuesday in March is the opening of the annual legislative session that traditionally belongs to the governor, whose State of the State speech to a joint session of the Legislature sets the agenda for the two-month lawmaking session.

While leaders of the "Coalition of Conscience" were careful not to make turnout predictions, a show of force would overshadow Bush and steal the media spotlight at a moment savored by governors.

Organizers noted that March 7 also is the 35th anniversary of a historic civil rights march in Selma, Ala. It's also "Super Tuesday," the day of presidential primaries in several large states, where Bush's brother, Texas Gov. George W. Bush, hopes to clinch the Republican presidential nomination. Florida's presidential primary is a week later.

"If you believe in equal opportunity, and if you really believe that a segment of this state is being left out of the One Florida plan, please join us on March 7," said Adora Obi Nweze of Miami, president of the state National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

"We ask you to get on buses, vans and cars, and we look forward to making this the largest demonstration this state has ever seen."

The sheer size of Florida, and the fact that the capital is more than 400 miles from the major metropolitan area of Miami-Fort Lauderdale, pose obstacles for attracting large numbers of protesters from around the state. But organizers have a telephone hot line at 850-877-0307 and a Web site (www.marchontallahassee.com). Protesters include the AFL-CIO, NAACP, Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Floridians Representing Equity and Equality, National Organization for Women, Florida Association of Business and Professional Women, and League of United Latin American Citizens. A dozen Democratic legislators are co-chairs of the march.

Organizers said Kwiese Mfume, a former congressman and national president of the NAACP, and Martin Luther King III, son of the slain civil rights leader, planned to attend the protest; the Rev. Jesse Jackson also might attend. Organizers said an economic boycott of Florida businesses isn't under consideration.

Bush, who was in Bartow on state business Monday, has repeatedly said opposition to his initiative wouldn't deter him. Spokesman Justin Sayfie reiterated that the plan would increase diversity in university admissions and state contracting, not reduce it.

"The governor is not satisfied with the status quo, and he believes the One Florida plan will increase opportunities for hundreds of African-American high school students to attend the state university system and create millions of dollars in business for African-American businesses," Sayfie said.

"He's committed to implementing the plan to increase diversity. ... If people are simply posturing for political reasons, we're going to move on."

The protest is the latest outgrowth of last month's

all-night sit-in by two black lawmakers, Sen. Kendrick Meek of Miami and Rep. Tony Hill of Jacksonville. Hundreds went to the first One Florida hearing in Tampa, and more than 4,000 turned out in Miami last week.

The third hearing is set for Thursday in Tallahassee, and protest organizers called on Bush and legislators to change the location from a 300-seat legislative hearing room to a much larger site.

Yellow fliers circulating in Tallahassee encourage college students at historically black Florida A&M University to show up at Thursday's hearing: "The movement is on ... the masses must be uplifted," the fliers say. Although many protest leaders have close ties to the Democratic Party, the attitude of rebelliousness seems to have mushroomed far beyond what Meek and Hill envisioned when they decided to sit down on the lieutenant governor's couch Jan. 19.

Sayfie and Bush's deputy general counsel, Reginald Brown, attended the protesters' news conference in a sign of how seriously the administration appears to be treating the growing mood of opposition across the state.

"When the governor was elected, we did not elect a king. We elected a governor to represent the people of Florida," said Matilda Martinez Garcia, past state director of the League of United Latin American Citizens.

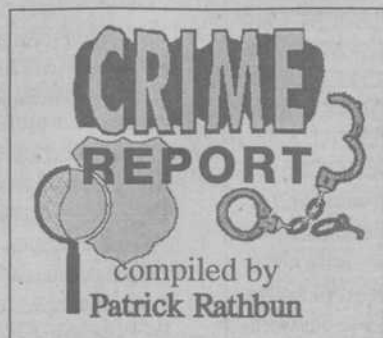
Jan. 5  
• Possession of cocaine, driving under suspension, minor in possession of beer, open container, failure to surrender suspended license, Blossom and Sumter streets. The responding officer was on routine patrol when the victim flagged the officer down and said he'd been robbed by subjects traveling in a light and dark four-door Lexus. The victim also pointed to a car about 150 yards in front of the responding officer's vehicle. The officer proceeded west on Blossom Street and caught up with a vehicle matching the description given by the victim. The victim also told the

hearing. No robbery arrest was made at this time. The drugs and beer can were placed into an evidence locker. A lock blade knife, mirror, razor blades and a metal holder were also placed into the locker for safekeeping.

Jan. 3  
• Driving under the influence and operating uninsured motor vehicle, Blossom and Sumter streets. The responding officer initiated a traffic stop on the subject vehicle. The vehicle had no tags, and the left front headlight was out. Upon approaching the subject vehicle, the responding officer noticed a very

strong odor of alcoholic beverage on the subject's person, as well as red, glassy eyes. The subject admitted that he had no insurance on the vehicle. The officer asked the subject to exit the vehicle for field sobriety testing. The subject consented to one test, which he was unable to perform, and refused any other tests. The subject admitted to consuming alcohol that evening. The subject was arrested on driving under the influence and operating an uninsured motor vehicle. The subject was transported to the Columbia Police Department for a datamaster test, which he refused. The subject vehicle was towed to the city garage, and the subject was transported to Richland County Department of Corrections.

• Assault and battery (mutual combat), Columbia Hall. The victim said the subject shoved her by placing her hands upon the victim's upper chest. The subject said the victim struck her in the face with an elbow. Both the victim and the subject provided written statements and said warrants wouldn't be sought. The subject was issued a trespass warning. Housing was notified, and the resident adviser responded to the incident location.



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