



Daily Update

Blacks In Government 30th Annual National Training Conference
Volume 1 – August 11, 2008

“Rising Above the Storm: Navigating New Challenges with High Professional Competency and Dedication to Public Service”

2008 Delegates Assembly



Mr. Thomas Walton, National Delegates Assembly Chair

This year’s National Delegates Assembly took place at the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center in New Orleans, LA. The Assembly of Delegates is the most critical forum of Blacks In Government. The Assembly is where the operating arm of the organization (local chapters) comes together to conduct the business of the organization. This only occurs once a year and is conducted in an effective and efficient manner, as we continue to strive for excellence. The assembly convened on Sunday, August 10, 2008 and reconvened on Monday, August 11, 2008. The critical issues that the Assembly addressed included the amendments to the National Constitution, resolutions, Treasurers’ report, audit report and the election of the national officers for 2009-2010, which include the election of its’ National President, the 1st Vice President, 3rd Vice President, Secretary and Assistant Treasurer.

The Newly Elected Officers are: Mr. J. David Reeves, President-Elect, Ms. Carmelita Pope-Freeman, 1st Vice President-Elect, Ms. Janie Ealey, 3rd Vice President-Elect, Ms. Contress Braxton, Secretary-Elect and Ms. Norman J. Samuels, Assistant Treasurer-Elect.

Opening Plenary

The Crescent City opened its arms and welcomed back Blacks In Government in an opening plenary Monday morning that literally shook the rafters at the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center. From jazz and gospel music to impassioned pleas from political leaders to “ask the real questions and take back the real answers,” the 5,000 conferees received a resounding message: Your presence is making a powerful statement as the city continues its recovery and the nation stands at the brink of political history.

After a nine-year absence, BIG returned to New Orleans—frequently referred to as “the Big Easy”—to celebrate its 30th anniversary and lend a hand in the city’s economic and spiritual recovery. New Orleans City Councilwoman Cynthia Willard-Lewis brought the capacity crowd to their feet, evoking cheers and applause as she joined U.S. Congressman William J. Jefferson, Mayor Ray Nagin, City Council President Jacquelyn Brechtel Clarkson and a host of organizational leaders in opening the five-day conference.

As she lifted her voice in praise for the organization’s long history of leadership, she reminded the audience that just as the Louisiana Purchase changed the course of the nation, BIG has spent three decades creating a new course for Blacks to take leadership roles at all levels of government.

Willard-Lewis reminded the audience that post-Katrina flooding devastated the neighborhoods she represents, including the Lower 9th Ward and New Orleans East. Recovery in her district has been slow and difficult, largely because so many of her constituents are poor and lack the resources to rebuild and return to their beloved city. She has been a tireless—and unabashedly ferocious—fighter for her people, giving a voice to the disenfranchised and displaced residents.

Fighting the fight, standing firm, and creating a path to success are engrained in BIG's history, Willard-Lewis told the cheering throng, "and we deeply, deeply appreciate each and every one of you and what you do. We need you here to bear witness to what has happened—and what has not happened. We need you to do the work you do best."

Rep. Jefferson, who represents the 2nd Congressional District and lives in New Orleans, drew cheers when he spoke about the upcoming Democratic National Convention later this month in Denver, Colorado. This event, he said, "will change history."

"On Aug. 28, I will cast my vote as a superdelegate to nominate Sen. Barack Obama as the Democratic presidential candidate," Jefferson said. Obama's nomination "will mark a glorious moment in our history and is a giant step toward equality."

The historic nomination and possible election of a Black as the next U.S. President also carries great responsibility for BIG and its thousands of members across the nation, Jefferson warned.

"The issues of competency and professionalism will take center stage as never before," he said. "You must redefine your roles and places in government and continue to break through important ceilings. You must continue to work as advocates and bring more people into the public sector and train and teach them.

"You need to convince our young people that public service is a good thing, that it's a very good way to spend your time and your life, in service to the people. You carry a great responsibility and I urge you to stay the course."

Rep. Jefferson also encouraged BIG members to learn firsthand what has been done to help New Orleans recover from a "government-created" catastrophe, and to be aware of what has not been done. "With your presence here, ask the real questions and take back the real answers," he emphasized.

"Your presence here makes a powerful statement, and you have a legacy, a history, of educating and training leaders. We cannot rise about the storm unless you help lift us above the storm. We cannot recover without your help," Jefferson lauded the audience.

Although Mayor Nagin told attendees that an estimated almost two-thirds of the population have returned to the city, Rep. Jefferson added: "They aren't the same people who were here before the storm."

When levees failed after Hurricane Katrina and flood waters decimated 80% of the city, the chaotic aftermath "revealed how our folks live day in and day out, how they were left out and left behind," he said. The poor, the disenfranchised, and the uneducated have "again been pushed aside" in post-Katrina recovery efforts, particularly the thousands of residents who depended upon public housing. "First they were locked out, told not to come back, and now the housing is torn down and they can't come back," a somber Jefferson said.

"BIG must raise its voice and offer your support so we will never, ever, ever see this kind of thing happen in any other American city again," Jefferson concluded.

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## BLACKS IN GOVERNMENT ® GIVES BACK!

### **Project BIG Cleanup**

Now you have the great opportunity to participate in a service project that is critical to the rebuilding of the areas ravaged by Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans. There will be an opportunity for you to participate in a cleanup project that will assist those who are rebuilding their homes and lives. Use your free time to help someone to "rise above the storm".

Should you decide to participate in the cleanup project, you will need the following items:

- Work gloves, Masks to protect you from dust and other allergens
- Hat or head covering, Old clothes
- Boots if you have them but no open toe shoes
- Flashlight, since there is no electricity in the area

Transportation will be provided from the hotels; more information can be obtained at the Customer Service Desk.

## *Announcements*

Agency Heads Forum Breakfast with the National President, 7:00 a. m. -8:30 a. m., Hilton, Windsor Room

Graduate School, USDA Special Enhancement Program, 8:00 a.m-5:00 p. m.

AE/EEO Forum, 12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. Hilton Grand Ballroom B

BIG National President Picture Signing, 4:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.

BIG National President's Reception, 5:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

Ernest N. Morial Convention Center

Exhibitor's Hall

*Attendees are invited to share an evening with the National President, Ms. Darlene H. Young and enjoy the taste of New Orleans Masquerade*

Katrina Town Hall, 7:30 p. m. -9:30 p. m, Jefferson Ballroom, Hilton, Level 3

Broadcasting live, WBOK 1230 AM in the Ernest N. Morial  
Convention Center Exhibit Hall

Visit the BIG Store located in the  
Ernest N. Morial Convention Center on Level 1

Daily Update articles should be submitted no later than 6:00 p.m. each day. Please have your article typed and ready for download. Articles should be submitted to the Press Room, Ernest N. Morial Convention Center, Room 289.

The National Communications and Public  
Relations Committee



### **FEEDBACK!**

We need and want your input! Your feedback is very important in planning future national training conferences. Help us plan, improve and maintain a high quality conference by completing the Overall Conference Evaluation form located in the back of your souvenir book. Please take a few minutes to stop by the Evaluations tables located on Level 1 of the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center.

AND

Speak to a Roving Reporter or visit the **Press Room**, in **Room 289, Ernest N. Morial Convention Center**, to have your comments captured in the Daily Update.