



**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE
NORTH CAROLINA STATE CONFERENCE**

114 W. Parrish Street, Second Floor • Durham, North Carolina 27701

866-626-2227 • 919-682-4700 • FAX 919-682-4711

www.naacpnc.org www.ncprosecutorialmisconduct.com www.hkonj.com

Rev. Dr. William J. Barber, II
President

Amina J. Turner
Executive Director

FOR RELEASE: 5:30 P.M. June 15, 2009

Remarks of Rev. Dr. William J. Barber, President of the N.C. Conference of over 100 Branches of NAACP across the State in Front of the N.C. Legislative Building at an Emergency Rally Against the Budget Cuts sponsored by the NAACP, its 85-Partners in the Historic Thousands on Jones Street People's Assembly, and the Together North Carolina Coalition.

Give Us A Vision and Budget that Works

In 2007, February, we held our first Historic Thousands here on Jones Street. We laid out our shovel-ready 14-Points. We laid out a vision--a program that would begin to reverse the steady decline our people were experiencing in education, in employment, in housing, in health care, in civil rights, and our public infrastructure—transportation and utilities. All the responsibilities of good government that make our economy and our people fair and strong.

For three straight years we have watched the legislature do its business as usual. Now we are in a total crisis. But everyday people were in a crisis before. Even before today's crisis we were told we couldn't fund education, even when the Courts had ordered it. We couldn't pay teachers more. We couldn't pass living wage. We couldn't insure health care. We couldn't bring parity to funding for HBCU's. Now we are told the budget for last year—which was way too low--is not attainable this year. Last year's budget gave us some crumbs. This year's budget does not even give us crumbs. The process reminds me of a game of three card molly. It doesn't have to be this way

This legislature needs a jolt. It comes, asks the tax people how much money we are going to take in, says, Oh, that's awful, and then starts looking at programs to cut, rather than thinking big, investing in our people and our infrastructure and figuring out how to get some real money into North Carolina's development.

We keep talking about Balancing the budget. We need to talk about fixing the budget process. A budget process that starts with dollars and cents, rather than direction and vision—people and priorities-- is a bad process.

A budget process that doesn't start with an unwavering commitment to fully caring for poor children, for educating all our people, for taking care of our elderly, for working with our mentally ill, for taking care of people when they are sick, and for respecting the rights of workers and other human beings—that is a bad process.

Our leaders hide behind the constitutional mandate which requires a balanced budget. But the same constitution mandates we govern for the whole of the people not just some of the people.

NC didn't say we don't have the money, when it had the vision and direction to found the Research Triangle Park!

FDR didn't say we don't have the money when he had the vision and the direction to set up the New Deal!

John Kennedy didn't have money in hand when he said, "Let's go to the moon!"

Vision determined the budget and how much would have to be raised. Vision first. Then provision. Where your heart is your treasure will be.

If we started with the premise --with the vision --that we need --that we must have the best education for all our children; The best re-entry program for all our sisters and brothers who are getting out of prison; The best health care; The best inclusion of African American and minority-owned businesses in our economy; The best workers' rights; The best compensation for teachers; The best affordable housing programs.

If this was our vision for the people of North Carolina, and we then examined all the state and federal resources at our disposal, we could make this happen. We could change the debate. Not from whether to raise or cut taxes. But to investing in our vision. Investing in our State. Investing in our children.

Then we could change the discussion from what's Liberal or what's Conservative to what's progressive and what's regressive.

This crisis demands our unity and commitment to the whole of the people. A budget is about futures. The future of people lives. The future of our children. The budget is a moral document!

Taxes are not dirty words when they are used to build community. When they are used to invest in our futures as a community. What is dirty is when the wealthy get tax cuts and the poor and our children get their opportunities cuts

We are in a moment where we must decide if we want Social Darwinism or social progress. Even the budget plan which some people fought hard for in the legislature does not get us where we need to be. It may keep us from losing some things, but it doesn't put us on a progressive arch.

Because before the crisis was official there was a crisis unofficial. We did not fully address the unofficial crisis now we have an official crisis and a budget that only moves us back to the numbers where the crisis was unofficial that's not progress that's pitiful.

Yes, we thank legislators who put one-fourth of the \$4 billion deficit back in the budget. What if the Governor, the educational leaders, the NAACP, the HKONJ COALITION, Together NC and other state and national leaders from N.C. all got together and decided on what we need in our stimulus package. Take it to the people.

What if we took our stimulus package to our Congressional delegation in Washington, and sat down and talked with the President. What if we figured out how to focus and maximize the impact of state dollars AND the federal stimulus dollars for most vulnerable.

This is a time when we have to come together, to face this struggle with unity, and to build an economy that works for everyone. As has always been the case in times of crisis, the burden is felt most deeply and painfully by the poor.

If we're serious about caring for the least among us, our budget has to show that. If we're serious about fairness, about justice, then we have to encourage state leaders to write that moral document in a way that leads us away from inequity, and toward opportunity for all.

Taking away pieces of the pie from those least able to endure more is not just morally wrong, it won't work. It won't work for any of the working families struggling to get by here in North Carolina.

That's why we are here.

We're fighting for a budget process that works a budget that works

We can't unfairly balance the budget on the backs of the poor. Low-income communities bear the greatest, most destructive burden from these budget cuts to education, health care and other crucial programs will disproportionately impact the poor, African American and Latino communities.

We want a budget that works for the whole of the people!

Works to lift up the left out

Works to make our tomorrow better than today

Works to give opportunity to the hopeless

Works to give jobs to the jobless

Give us a budget that works

The wealthy pay their share

Our dreams for a more just society are further realized

Give us a budget that works

Don't take education from our children

Make a mess of programs for the mentally ill

Give us a budget that works

###