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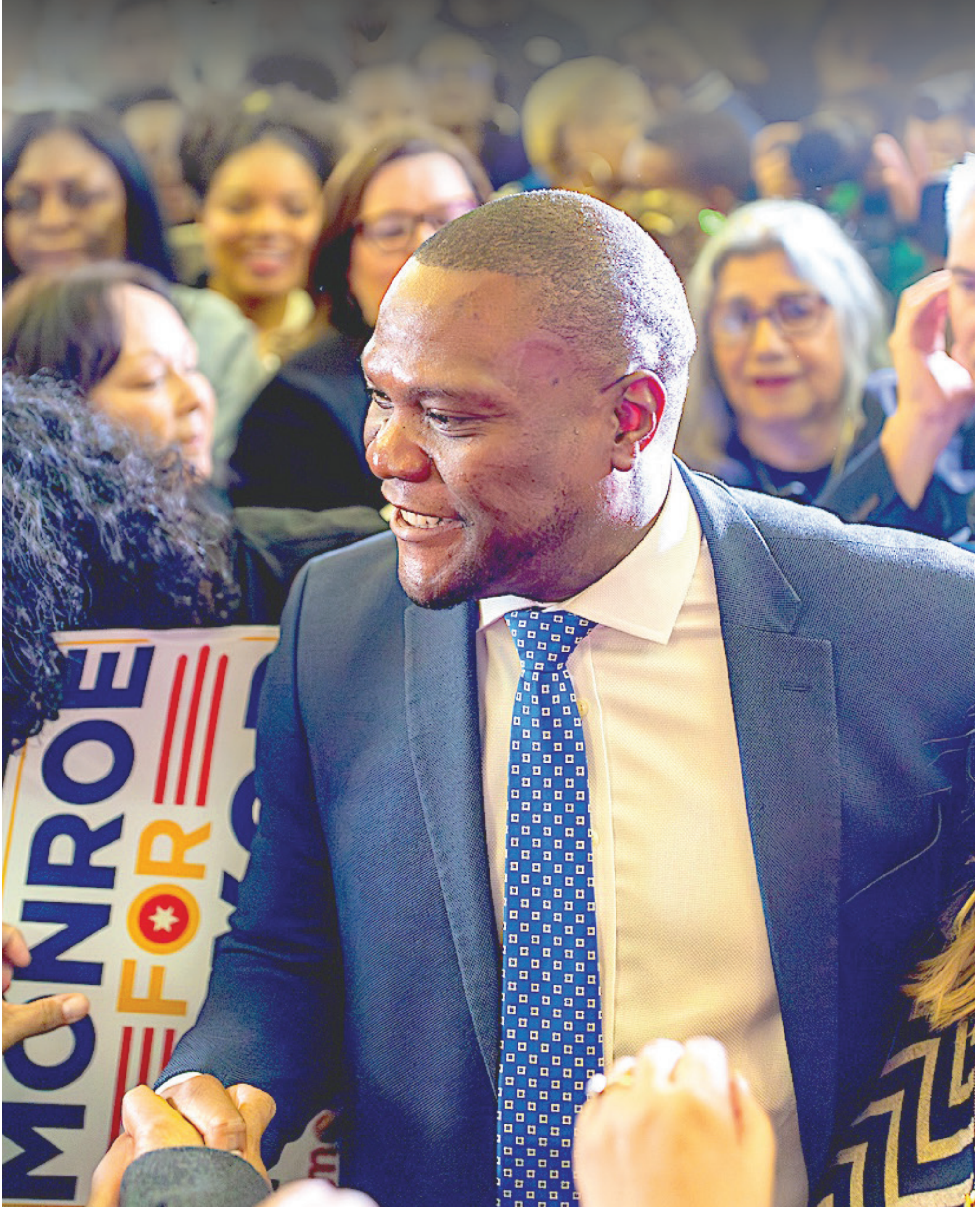
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VOL. 103 NO. 45

November 8, 2024 - November 14, 2024

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Education Department Abruptly Cancels Search for Bible Vendor

School Bibles, A5



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Oklahoma legislative races see little change for makeup of Senate, House

OK Legislature, A5



(ABOVE AND BELOW) Monroe Nichols, Tulsa Mayor-Elect, addressing supporters during election night event at Greenwood Cultural Center. Nichols makes history as first Black Mayor for the City of Tulsa, Okla.

PHOTOS BASIL CHILDERS, THE OKLAHOMA EAGLE

Nichols

Nichols elected *Tulsa's first Black Mayor*

KIMBERLY MARSH
The Oklahoma Eagle

Oklahoma State Senator Monroe Nichols (D-72), beating out challenger Tulsa County Commissioner Karen Keith, was elected Tulsa's first Black mayor Tuesday night.

"If anyone out there still questions that Tulsa is a place where big things are possible. If there's anybody out there who doubts that no matter who you are you can make an impact, tonight, you got your answer," Nichols told a jubilant crowd at the Greenwood Cultural Center Tuesday night.

At about 9:06 pm, Nichols acknowledged a hard-fought win with gratitude for a large voter turnout that showed that voters "understand that the work of building a strong city is the work of all of us. And that

work starts at its most basic level, with our greatest American principle, one person, one vote."

As his competitor, Commissioner Keith, wound down her mayoral bid at an election watch party at the Stokely Events Center, Nichols thanked her for her service to the city.

With 98 percent of the precincts reporting, both candidates called the race with their supporters. The results were 55.57 percent of the votes, totaling 75,483, for Nichols and 44.43 percent for Keith, with 60,362 votes.

"Although the campaign brings out differences as we compete, I know that both the commissioner and I share a deep, deep love for this community, and I look forward to working with her."

In this nonpartisan race, Keith and Nichols campaigned aggressively, and at times negatively, for votes. Overall,

they agreed to participate in many debates and forums. Their similar vision for the city was evident, but their approaches varied.

While calling for celebration Tuesday night, Nichols also paused to remember the thousands of people "who are prepared to sleep on streets." He said, "Let's not forget that the future of our young people is not quite yet guaranteed. Let's not forget that economic inequality still threatens our city's vitality. Let's not forget that crime continues to impact our neighborhoods." Nichols ran for mayor on a platform that included detailed plans for ending homelessness, making Tulsa safer while addressing mental health issues, improving student outcomes, increasing affordable housing and co-governing with Tribal Nations.

Keith encouraged her supporters to wholeheartedly put their support behind Nichols as mayor.

Boley: An Historic Oklahoma All-Black Town

By LARRY O'DELL, THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF OKLAHOMA HISTORY AND CULTURE



Located halfway between Paden and Castle in Okfuskee County, Boley is the largest and most well known of the more than fifty All-Black towns of Oklahoma and one of only thirteen still existing. The town, established on land allotted to Creek freedman James Barnett's daughter Abigail, was named after J. B. Boley, a railroad official of the Fort Smith and Western Railway. Founded in 1903 and incorporated in 1905, Boley and the African Americans living in the area prospered for many years. The Boley Progress, a weekly newspaper, began in 1905. The paper and various advertising campaigns circulated through the South and lured many former slaves to the new town. At 1907 statehood Boley sheltered 824 individuals.

By 1911 Boley boasted more than four thousand citizens and many businesses, including two banks and three cotton gins. Booker T. Washington, founder of the National Negro Business League and the Tuskegee Institute, in Alabama, visited the town in 1905 and proclaimed it "the most enterprising and in many ways the most interesting of the Negro towns in the United States." The town supported two colleges: Creek-Seminole College and Methodist Episcopal College. Boley also had its own electrical generating plant, water system, and ice plant. The Masonic Grand Lodge completed a majestic Masonic Temple around 1912. At the time, it was said to be the tallest building between Okmulgee and Oklahoma City. Like many rural towns, Boley suffered through

hard times in the 1920s and 1930s, its population dropping to 1,154 in 1920 and 874 in 1930. By World War II the population stood at 942, and it declined to 573 in 1960 and to 423 in 1980. At the dawn of the twenty-first century, with a population of 1,126, the town was experiencing economic rejuvenation. The number of residents was 1,184 in 2010. Boley still hosts the nation's oldest African American community-based rodeo every Memorial Day weekend. The downtown business district is listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NR 75001568) and has been designated a National Historic Landmark by the National Park Service. In April 2020 the census counted 1,087 residents.

The Oklahoma Historical Society is an agency of the government of Oklahoma dedicated to promotion and preservation of Oklahoma's history and its people by collecting, interpreting, and disseminating knowledge and artifacts of Oklahoma.

Boley Town Council (3377.D.2, Oklahoma Historical Society Photograph Collection, OHS).

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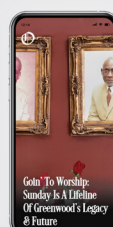
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OK Legislature

Oklahoma legislative races see little change for makeup of Senate, House

BENNETT BRINKMAN
NonDoc

In the Oklahoma legislative races held Tuesday, all three State Senate incumbents on ballots across the state held onto their seats. In the House of Representatives, all 27 incumbents retained their seats.

While Democrats had hoped to flip at least one or two House and Senate seats in the Oklahoma City and Tulsa metro areas, no single legislative seat changed party hands when the final precincts trickled in from Tulsa County shortly before midnight. Online results are unofficial until they are certified by the Oklahoma State Election Board.

In the three Senate races with incumbents:

- Sen. Warren Hamilton (R-McCurtain) received 76.9 percent support to defeat Democrat Jerry Donathan of McAlester for SD 7, which covers parts of Pittsburg, Haskell, Latimer and Sequoyah Counties;
- Sen. Jo Anna Dossett (D-Tulsa) received 59.2 percent support to defeat Republican Dean Martin of Tulsa for SD 35, which covers parts of Tulsa County; and
- Sen. Dave Rader (R-Tulsa) received 56.3 percent support to defeat Democrat Melissa Bryce of Tulsa for SD 39, which covers parts of Tulsa County.

Meanwhile, the nine open State Senate seats each remained in their respective parties:

- In Oklahoma County's Senate District 46, OKC Democrat Mark Mann (60.4 percent) defeated Republican Charles Barton (34.3 percent) and independent David Pilchman (5.3 percent) to win the seat held by Senate Minority Leader Kay Floyd (D-OKC), who is term limited. Mann is a former member of the Oklahoma City Public Schools Board;
- In Senate District 3, covering parts of Cherokee, Mayes and Wagoner Counties, Republican Dr. Julie McIntosh of Porter

Oklahoma House elections Tuesday contained no surprises, with all 27 incumbents up for reelection retaining their seats and all five open seats remaining with their current party.

defeated independent Margaret Cook of Tahlequah 78.7 percent to 21.3 percent for the seat held by Sen. Blake "Cowboy" Stephens (R-Tahlequah). McIntosh ousted Stephens in the Aug. 27 GOP runoff;

- In Senate District 15, covering parts of Cleveland County, Republican Lisa Standridge defeated Democrat Elizabeth Foreman 61.6 percent to 38.5 percent to win the seat held by her husband, Sen. Rob Standridge (R-Norman), who is term limited;
- In Senate District 21, covering parts of Payne and Creek counties, Republican Dr. Randy Grellner of Cushing defeated Democrat Robin Fuxa of Stillwater 64.6 percent to 35.4 percent for the seat held by Sen. Tom Dugger (R-Stillwater), who did not seek reelection;
- In Senate District 25, covering parts of Tulsa County, Republican Brian Guthrie of Bixby defeated Democrat Karen Gaddis of Tulsa 67.2 percent to 32.8 percent for the seat held by Sen. Joe Newhouse (R-Tulsa), who did not seek reelection;
- In Senate District 33, covering parts of Tulsa and Rogers counties, Republican Christi Gillespie of Broken Arrow defeated Democrat Bob Willis of Broken Arrow 67.2 percent to 32.8 percent for the seat held by Sen. Nathan Dahm (R-Broken Arrow), who is term limited;
- In Senate District 37, covering parts of Tulsa and Creek counties, Republican Aaron Reinhardt of Jenks defeated independent Andrew Nutter of Tulsa 69.6 percent to 30.4 percent for the seat held by Sen. Cody Rogers (R-Tulsa), who lost to Reinhardt in the June 18 primary;
- In Senate District 43, covering parts of Stephens, Grady, Garvin and McClain counties, Republican Kendal Sacchieri of

Blanchard defeated Democrat Sam Graefe of Purcell 80.5 percent to 19.5 percent for the seat held by Sen. Jessica Garvin (R-Duncan), who lost to Sacchieri in the June 18 primary; and

- In Senate District 47, covering parts of Oklahoma County, Republican Kelly Hines of Edmond defeated Democrat Erin Brewer of Edmond 52.9 percent to 47.1 percent for the seat held by President Pro Tempore Greg Treat (R-OKC), who is term limited.

Oklahoma House: Incumbents prevail, five open seats decided

Oklahoma House elections Tuesday contained no surprises, with all 27 incumbents up for reelection retaining their seats and all five open seats remaining with their current party.

By district, 27 House incumbents held onto their seats across the state:

- In LeFlore and McCurtain counties, Rep. Eddy Dempsey (R-Valliant) retained his House District 1 seat against Libertarian Victoria Lawhorn of Wister with 86.25 percent of the vote;
- In Cherokee and Wagoner counties, Rep. Bob Ed Culver (R-Tahlequah) retained his House District 4 seat against Democrat Christopher Wier of Tahlequah with 67.87 percent of the vote;
- In parts of Muskogee, Okmulgee and Tulsa counties, Rep. Scott Fetgatter (R-Okmulgee) retained his House District 16 seat against Democrat Rosie Lynch of Okmulgee with 71.43 percent of the vote;
- In parts of Pottawatomie County, Rep. Dell Kerbs (R-Shawnee) retained his House District 26 seat against Democrat Kerri Keck of Shawnee with 62.4 percent of the vote;

Cont. A7, OK Legislature

Members of the Oklahoma Senate, House of Representatives, state Supreme Court and other onlookers watch Gov. Kevin Stitt give his State of the State address Monday, Feb. 5, 2024.

PHOTO LEGISLATIVE SERVICES BUREAU

School Bibles

Education Department Abruptly Cancels Search for Bible Vendor

JENNIFER PALMER
Oklahoma Watch

With little explanation, the Oklahoma Department of Education canceled its search for a vendor to supply 55,000 Bibles for public school classrooms.

Oklahoma Watch's reporting on the state's request for bids attracted widespread attention when the specifications appeared to point to one Bible, Lee Greenwood's "God Bless the U.S.A." Bible, endorsed by President-elect Donald Trump and commonly referred to as the Trump Bible. They cost \$60 online, with Trump collecting royalties for his endorsement.

Bidders were notified Thursday the state's solicitation had been canceled. Dan Isett, a spokesman for the Education Department, didn't explain why.

Isett said he was too busy for a call with Oklahoma Watch. In an email, he said the agency will issue a new request for proposals "to ensure taxpayer money is utilized efficiently and the best possible resources

are made available to our students."

Excessive cost is one of several concerns critics have raised about Superintendent of Public Instruction Ryan Walters' plan. In September, he said he set aside \$3 million to buy Bibles, which came from personnel and administrative cost savings in this year's budget, according to Isett. A state lawmaker questioned whether Walters is authorized to spend that money and has asked for an attorney general opinion. Walters included an additional \$3 million ask in his agency's budget request for fiscal year 2026.

The department asked vendors to submit bids for 55,000 New King James Version Bibles, bound in leather or leather-like material and include copies of the U.S. Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, the Bill of Rights and the Pledge of Allegiance. Shortly after the solicitation opened on Sept. 30, the department amended it to allow multiple vendors to supply the religious text and historical documents.

The solicitation follows Walters' mandate that a Bible be placed in every Oklahoma

public school classroom and that all schools teach from the Bible in certain subjects, such as history or literature. Walters has said that teachers could be stripped of their certification for noncompliance.

The department has not been forthcoming with information about the plan. Oklahoma Watch on Sept. 27 requested, under the Open Records Act, records related to the purchase or intent to purchase Bibles during Walters' tenure, and the department on Nov. 1 said it failed to turn up any records.

Critics said Walters is using the mandate and Bible contract to get on Trump's radar.

One bidder, Mark Herkommer, said the state owes bidders an explanation for the abrupt cancellation. Herkommer is the managing director of the Herkommer Foundation in Willis, Texas, which spent time and money, including purchasing a \$500 insurance policy, to meet the bidding requirements.

"I would be disappointed if this was a stunt," Herkommer said.

He said he supports the idea of using Bibles in schools as a literary reference.

His bid, which he asked to keep confidential to protect the competitive process, significantly undercut the \$3 million allocation. But Herkommer said the two-week delivery time was unnecessarily restrictive and served to limit competition, and in his bid, asked that it be extended to 12 weeks.

"It's hard to imagine anybody could do this in two weeks unless they had 55,000 Bibles wrapped in pallets with shipping labels on them sitting in a warehouse somewhere," Herkommer said.

Reporting by the Associated Press revealed a printing company in China shipped 120,000 "God Bless the U.S.A." Bibles to the U.S. between February and March of this year, at an estimated cost of \$3 per Bible. It's unknown how many have been sold.

Jennifer Palmer has been a reporter with Oklahoma Watch since 2016 and covers education. Contact her at (405) 761-0093 or jpalm@oklahomawatch.org. Follow her on Twitter @jpalmOKC.



Legislatively-referred ballot initiative to authorize municipal public infrastructure districts flopped, with more than 60% of voters rejecting State Question 833.



Tulsa County voters register with election staff at a polling place in Tulsa.

PHOTO RIP STELL

Down-Ballot

Trump, Down-Ballot Republicans Dominate in Oklahoma

KEATON ROSS
Oklahoma Watch

The red wave showed no sign of slowing down in Oklahoma on Tuesday night.

For the third consecutive presidential election cycle, Donald Trump won at least 65% of the statewide presidential vote. The state's Republican congressional delegation also swept by double-digits and every incumbent Republican state legislator secured reelection.

The conservative-led effort to oust three Oklahoma Supreme Court justices proved partially successful as voters narrowly decided not to retain longtime Supreme Court Justice Yvonne Kauger. Voters retained Justices James Edmondson and Noma Gurich by a margin of 2% or less.

The results are unofficial and unverified and will not include provisional ballots until after 5 p.m. on Friday, Nov. 8.

Here are five takeaways from election night:

All 77 Counties Go Red

As results came in just after 7 p.m. on Tuesday night, Oklahoma County appeared to be in play for Democrat Kamala Harris. Joe Biden came within a few thousand votes of winning the county in 2020 and early voting had Harris with a double-digit lead.

That early advantage evaporated as precincts in the solidly Republican eastern half of the county began reporting results. With 290 precincts reporting, Trump won Oklahoma County by just under 2%, giving Trump a victory in all 77 of the state's counties for the third consecutive presidential election cycle. A Democratic presidential nominee hasn't won a county in Oklahoma since 2000.

Trump won by 15% or greater in every other county in the state.

Trump won Oklahoma County by just under 2%, giving Trump a victory in all 77 of the state's counties for the third consecutive presidential election cycle.

Voters Oust Kauger, Retain Gurich and Edmondson

The closest races of the night were three judicial retention questions for Justices Yvonne Kauger, James Edmondson and Noma Gurich. All were appointed by former Democratic governors—Kauger by Gov. George Nigh and Edmondson and Gurich by Gov. Brad Henry.

The trio faced a barrage of negative advertising from conservative outside groups leading up to the election, with the television advertisements and mailers claiming that the justices were too liberal for Oklahoma. At least \$3.4 million has been spent on the race since mid-September, according to Oklahoma Ethics Commission filings.

With 100% of precincts reporting at 11:15 p.m. on Tuesday night, Kauger trailed by 7,048 votes. Should the unofficial results stand, the Judicial Nominating Commission will submit three candidates to Gov. Kevin Stitt to replace Kauger, who has served on the Oklahoma Supreme Court since 1984.

Republicans Sweep Congressional Elections

Oklahoma's all-Republican congressional delegation likely didn't break a sweat.

Incumbent U.S. Reps. Josh Brecheen, Stephanie Bice, Kevin Hern and Tom Cole all won by a margin of 20 points or greater. Frank Lucas did not draw a general election challenger and was elected by default.

The most competitive race was in the 5th Congressional District, where Bice defeated cybersecurity expert Madison Horn with 60% of the vote. After Democrat Kendra Horn pulled off a surprise upset in the district in 2018, Oklahoma's Republican supermajority in the Legislature changed the boundaries of the district in redistricting to make it more favorable for Republicans.

Voters Split on State Questions

The proposal to change one word in the state constitution to forbid noncitizens from voting in non-federal elections received overwhelming support, with more than 80% of voters backing State Question 834.

Meanwhile, the legislatively-referred ballot initiative to authorize municipal public infrastructure districts flopped, with more than 60% of voters rejecting State Question 833. Several conservative lawmakers criticized the potential of the measure to increase taxes on homeowners, while Democrats expressed concerns that it would make property owners reluctant to support school bond measures. Backers of the proposition spent more than \$533,000.

Incumbent Legislators Keep Seats, Corporation Commission Seat Remains Republican

Every incumbent state legislator on the ballot kept their seat on Tuesday night, and no district flipped parties.

In Senate District 47, the northwest Oklahoma City district where Senate Pro Tem Greg Treat is term-limited, Republican Kelly Hines defeated Democrat Erin Brewer with just under 53% of the vote. The race attracted hundreds of thousands of dollars in campaign contributions and was expected to be among the most competitive legislative races.

The closest race was in House District 100, where Democrat Chaunte Gilmore came within 287 votes of ousting incumbent Rep. Marilyn Stark.

Republican Brian Bingman, who previously served as Senate pro tem and secretary of state, will replace outgoing commissioner Bob Anthony on the three-member Oklahoma Corporation Commission. The race was not expected to be competitive. Anthony was first elected to the Corporation Commission in 1988, but came under term limits for statewide offices passed by voters in 2010.

The Oklahoma Eagle

OK counties remain largely Republican led



(ABOVE) The Supreme Court of Oklahoma is a court of appeal for non-criminal cases, one of the two highest judicial bodies in the U.S. state of Oklahoma, and leads the judiciary of Oklahoma, the judicial branch of the government of Oklahoma. BELOW The Guardian stands atop the Oklahoma State Capitol, Jim Argo Collection, OHS.

PHOTO ABOVE OKLAHOMA STATE SUPREME COURT
PHOTO BELOW OKLAHOMA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

OK Legislature

From A5

- In parts of Payne County, Rep. Trish Ranson (D-Stillwater) retained her House District 34 seat against Republican Andrew Muchmore of Stillwater with 58.55 percent of the vote;
- In parts of Kay and Osage counties, Rep. Ken Luttrell (R-Ponca City) retained his House District 37 seat against independent Carter Rogers of Fairfax with 78.58 percent of the vote;
- In parts of Garfield, Grant, Kay, Logan and Noble counties, Rep. John Pfeiffer (R-Orlando) retained his House District 38 seat against Democrat Doyle Lewis of Enid with 84.83 percent of the vote;
- In parts of Oklahoma County, Rep. Erick Harris (R-Edmond) retained his House District 39 seat against Richard Prawdzienski of Edmond with 75.87 percent of the vote;
- In parts of Canadian, Kingfisher, Logan and Oklahoma counties, Rep. Denise Crosswhite Hader (R-Piedmont) retained her House District 41 seat against Democrat Mike Bockus of Edmond with 68.42 percent of the vote;
- In parts of Canadian County, Rep. Jay Steagall (R-Yukon) retained his House District 43 seat against independent Cassie Kinet of Yukon with 70.2 percent of the vote;
- In parts of Cleveland County, Rep. Annie Menz (D-Norman) retained her House District 45 seat against Libertarian Robert Murphy of Norman and Republican Matt Watson of Norman with 52.4 percent of the vote;
- In other parts of Cleveland County, Rep. Jacob Rosecrants (D-Norman) retained his House District 46 seat against Republican Alexander Torvi of Norman with 53.99 percent of the vote;
- In parts of Comanche County, Rep. Daniel Pae (R-Lawton) retained his House District 62 seat against Democrat Allison Offield of Lawton with 56.97 percent of the vote;
- In parts of Comanche, Cotton, Kiowa and Tillman counties, Rep. Trey Caldwell (R-Lawton) retained his House District 63 seat over Democrat Shykira Smith of Lawton with 81.18 percent of the vote;



- In other parts of Comanche County, Rep. Rande Worthen (R-Lawton) retained his House District 64 seat over Democrat Tom Sutherlin of Lawton with 53.82 percent of the vote;
- In parts of Osage and Tulsa counties, Rep. Clay Staires (R-Skiatook) retained his House District 66 seat over Libertarian Kenneth Blevins of Sand Springs with 76.45 percent of the vote;
- In parts of Tulsa County, Rep. Suzanne Schreiber (D-Tulsa) retained her House District 70 seat over Republican Bradley Banks of Tulsa with 56.46 percent of the vote;
- In parts of Rogers and Tulsa counties, Rep. Mark Vancuren (R-Owasso) retained his House District 74 seat over independent Aaron Brent of Owasso with 76.18 percent of the vote;
- In parts of Tulsa County, Rep. Melissa Provenzano (D-Tulsa) retained her House District 79 seat against Republican Paul Hassink of Tulsa with 54.57 percent of the vote;
- In parts of Oklahoma County, Rep. Eric Roberts (R-OKC) retained his House District 83 seat against Jimmy Lawson with 55.43 percent of the vote;
- In parts of Oklahoma County, Rep. Tammy West (R-OKC) retained her House District 84 seat against Democrat Jeremy Lamb of Bethany with 58.18 percent of the vote;
- Also in Oklahoma County, House Minority Leader Cyndi Munson (D-OKC) retained her House District 85 seat against Republican David Hooten of Nichols Hills with 60.92 percent of the vote;
- In parts of Adair, Cherokee, Delaware and Mayes counties, Rep. David Hardin (R-Stillwell) retained his House District 86 seat against Democrat Anne Fite of Tahlequah with 77.32 percent of the vote;
- In parts of Oklahoma County, Rep. Ellyn Hefner (D-OKC) retained her House District 87 seat against Republican Dave Schnittger of Oklahoma City with 61.5 percent of the vote;
- In other parts of Oklahoma County, Rep. Andy Fugate (D-OKC) retained his House District 94 seat against Republican Suzanne Jobe of Del City with 60.57 percent of the vote;
- In parts of Cleveland and Oklahoma

counties, Rep. Max Wolfley (R-OKC) retained his House District 95 seat against Democrat Tegan Malone of Midwest City with 54 percent of the vote; and

- In parts of Oklahoma County, Rep. Marilyn Stark (R-Bethany) barely retained her House District 100 seat against Democrat Chaunté Gilmore of Oklahoma City with 50.94 percent of the vote.

In addition, five open House seats were decided Tuesday:

- In parts of Wagoner County, Republican Mark Chapman of Broken Arrow garnered 79.06 percent of the vote to beat Democrat Crystal LaGrone of Coweta for the House District 12 seat, which is currently held by Rep. Kevin McDugle (R-Broken Arrow), who withdrew after the filing period;
- In parts of Cleveland and McClain counties, Republican Jonathan Wilk of Goldsby achieved 75.78 percent of the vote to beat Democrat Mitchell Jacob of Newcastle for the House District 20 seat held by Rep. Sherrie Conley (R-Newcastle), who did not seek reelection;
- In parts of Oklahoma County, Democrat Ellen Pogemiller of Oklahoma City beat Bobby McCollum of Oklahoma City with 76.89 percent of the vote, taking the House District 88 seat held by Rep. Mauree Turner (D-OKC), who did not seek reelection;
- In parts of Cleveland and Oklahoma counties, Republican Emily Gise of Oklahoma City received 66 percent of the vote to beat Democrat Nana Dankwa of Oklahoma City with 66.25 percent of the vote, taking the House District 90 seat held by Majority Floor Leader Jon Echols (R-OKC), who is term limited; and
- In parts of Tulsa and Wagoner counties, Republican Gabe Woolley of Broken Arrow received 67 percent of the vote to beat Democrat Cathy Smythe of Broken Arrow with 66.65 percent of the vote, taking the House District 98 seat held by Rep. Dean Davis (R-Broken Arrow), who lost to Woolley in the Aug. 27 runoff.

Bennett Brinkman became NonDoc's production editor in September 2024 after spending the previous two years as NonDoc's education reporter. He completed a reporting internship for the organization in Summer 2022 and holds a bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Oklahoma. He is originally from Edmond.

Trump, Oklahoma

Trump Makes Gains in Most Oklahoma Counties

KEATON ROSS
Oklahoma Watch

President-elect Donald Trump is more popular than ever in Oklahoma.

According to an Oklahoma Watch analysis of state election data, Trump boosted his margin of victory in 63 of 77 counties compared to 2020. The gains include the state's three most populated counties and a large swath of southeastern Oklahoma that conservative Democrats once dominated.

Trump also received nearly 15,000 more votes than he did in 2020. While voter turnout dipped about 5%, Oklahoma has added 180,000 registered voters since January 2021.

Just three counties — Canadian, Ellis and Grant — saw their margins for Trump drop by 1% or greater compared to 2020. Canadian County has experienced a suburban growth



Voters marked their ballots in even greater numbers for President-elect Donald Trump on Tuesday. PHOTO FILE PHOTO/OKLAHOMA WATCH

boom and with it a boost in registered Democratic and Independent voters. Ellis and Grant Counties saw a notable dip in voter turnout.

Oklahoma elected officials lauded the results as proof that voters are satisfied with Republican leadership.

"Our candidates ran phenomenal campaigns and voters locally and nationally made it clear they support our conservative vision," House Speaker-elect Kyle Hilbert, R-Bristow, said in a written statement. "Our caucus is ready to work with President Trump, our Congressional delegation, the state Senate and the Governor to continue building on the great momentum we have behind us in Oklahoma."

Keaton Ross covers democracy and criminal justice for Oklahoma Watch. Contact him at (405) 831-9753 or Kross@Oklahomawatch.org. Follow him on Twitter at [@KeatonRoss](https://twitter.com/KeatonRoss).



PHOTO GETTY/MOMO PRODUCTIONS

What a Black Father Tells His Son After Trump's Win

“I LIED TO MY SON BECAUSE I LOVE HIM. AMERICA WILL TELL HIM THE TRUTH EVENTUALLY BECAUSE IT DOESN'T.”

I lied to my son.

As if the election result cementing Donald Trump as our next President again wasn't enough of a punch to the face, a conversation with my 11-year son on Wednesday was the gut punch that dropped me to the canvas.

After returning home from school, flabbergasted as to how the country could elect a man like Trump President for a second time, my son asked me, “Do you think Donald Trump will try to make us slaves again?”

The velocity at which I attempted to answer his question was somewhere close to the speed of light. Yet before I could even get out my answer, he doubled down. “Are my friends going to be deported?”

I stumbled through my words to assure him that Trump could not make us slaves again. I also assured him that his friends would not be deported.

In my act of assurance, I lied to my son.

The audacity of me to not at first even give some thought to Trump potentially enslaving Black folks. How could I feign so much certainty given what I've seen him do to this country since 2016, even before he became the President?

The audacity of me to assure my son, who, here in Maryland, lives in the second most diverse city in the country, that his friends need not worry. The boldness in me to confidently assure him that in a place as diverse as Montgomery County, Maryland, his friends, classmates, and teammates — all from different walks of life, religions, and countries — would undoubtedly be safe.

I lied to my son.

But I had to, didn't I? I needed to protect the innocence of a sixth grader who plays basketball in his Kenyan friend's driveway a few times a week. I had to guarantee him that his other friend from Ethiopia, whom he had gone to elementary school with, was going to be OK. Who was I to tell him the truth?

In fact, why couldn't Donald Trump make us slaves again?

He once called for the termination of the Constitution and has recently threatened to eradicate the Department of Education. I never thought he'd be able to empower an angry mob to storm the capitol building, smash windows, climb walls, and look for members of Congress to maul. I never thought a convicted felon, found guilty of sexual abuse, could be elected President. I never thought a man who has verbally assaulted Women, Haitians, Africans, Detroiters, and Baltimoreans, just to name a few, could again garner so much support.

Who was I to underestimate what Trump could now do?

So I lied to my son. I lied about the safety of his friends. I feigned confidence that everything would be OK. An 11-year-old deserves that lie, don't they? Why should they walk around in terror, wondering when their friends, their friend's parents, or their teammates may be whisked away?

My son's middle school has a 90% minority enrollment. My attempt to shield him from the scars of this country is futile in the grand scheme of things. These kids are approaching adolescence, and they are having conversations at school, on the bus, walking home from school, and wherever else young minds begin to communicate about who their country really is. They have real fears.

So, I lied to my son.

Yet, I can't help but think about whether the lie or truth makes me a more responsible father. When he finds out the truth, will he appreciate my lie, or hold it against me? Would telling him the truth better cement our relationship? Is it better for him to engage with his friends, knowing that some of these relationships could be temporary?

Maybe I should just dive in and let him know that, as Black folks in this country, we may be on an island all by ourselves. Maybe I should tell him that Black

people only make up about 14% of the population, and Black folks alone won't be able to effect major change when it comes to voting. We will need other groups like white men, white women, and Hispanic men to assist us in our quest for a decent, fair, and equitable America.

Maybe I should tell him that with the results of this week's election, all signs point to Black folks not getting enough support from those groups anytime soon. White men, white Women, and Latino Men voted for Trump at 59%, 52%, and 54% clips, respectively. Maybe I should tell him that even immigrants who come to this country eventually want to swim in the pool of anti-Black Americanness.

In the end, I made the right decision by lying to my son. I don't think there is a need yet to expose my son to the fact that most of the country didn't vote for Trump strictly due to policy. They voted for Trump to obstruct the browning of a changing America. It's that simple. My son's neighborhood friends and their parents represent a threat to Trump's traditional and outdated ideas of what America is in its purest form.

I lied to my son because I love him. America will tell him the truth eventually because it doesn't.

John Celestand is the program director of the Knight x LMA BloomLab, a \$3.2 million initiative that supports the advancement and sustainability of local Black-owned news publications. He is a former freelance sports broadcaster and writer who covered the NBA and college basketball for multiple networks such as ESPN Regional Television, SNY, and Comcast Sportsnet Philadelphia. John was a member of the 2000 Los Angeles Lakers NBA Championship Team, playing alongside the late great Kobe Bryant and Shaquille O'Neal. He currently resides in Silver Spring, Maryland, with his wife and son.

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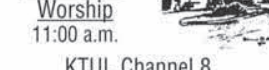
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FEATURED

Meet the Woman Who Changed National Laws on Minority Hair Discrimination

Hair Discrimination, A11



FEATURED

Do We Owe Black Men an Apology?

After Kamala Harris's defeat by Donald Trump, the question remains: Did 20% of Black men really decide this race?

Black Men, Apology, A14



Trump 2.0

After Kamala Harris lost the election, Black women and abortion rights advocates share their fears, concerns, and hope.

Reproductive Rights Advocates Tell What Trump 2.0 Means for Black Women

ANISSA DURHAM
Word In Black

As Americans come to terms with — and brace themselves for — a second Donald Trump administration, many have an eerie feeling of uncertainty and disappointment. Top of mind for many women is how this will affect already dwindling reproductive rights.

More than two years ago, the Supreme Court ruling in *Dobbs v. Jackson* overturned *Roe v. Wade*, eliminating the constitutional right to have an abortion. Supreme Court justices Trump appointed during his first term played a pivotal role in the controversial decision. So, what happens next?

Currently, 13 states have banned abortion, but in two states, Missouri and Arizona, voters passed ballot measures that amends the state constitution to protect reproductive freedom. With no federal standard about abortion care access, states are still allowed to set their own policies to ban or protect abortion care.

Vice President Kamala Harris was outspoken about reproductive freedom and disagreed with overturning *Roe*.

Restoring the reproductive freedoms that *Roe* provided became a major part of her campaign. The hope around reproductive rights that a Harris-Walz administration offered many women is in stark contrast to what Americans will likely see under a Trump administration.

After Harris lost the election, Black women, reproductive rights advocates, and leaders in abortion access spoke with *Word In Black* about their fears, concerns, and ultimate hope as the fight continues.

"Today is about mourning the opportunity a Harris administration would have been, as the first woman, first Black woman, the first South Asian woman to be president," Kelly Blanchard says, president of IBIS Reproductive Health, a global nonprofit research organization that advances sexual and reproductive health. "She was a real champion for sexual and reproductive health rights and justice. We could sort of taste the idea that there would be budgets without funding bans. I'm mourning the fact that we won't get to see that future as soon as we wanted."

Trumps Playbook

Most experts say it's too early to tell exactly what changes Americans may

Cont. A12, Trump 2.0

Hair Discrimination

Meet the Black Woman Who Changed National Laws on Minority Hair Discrimination

"Over the last 46 years, we have successfully affected legislation in all but six states, making it legal for women of any income level to earn a living through hair braiding."

DR. PATRISE HOLDEN
Word In Black

National hair health expert Pamela Ferrell, 65, owner of *Cornrows & Co.*, has fought injustice from youth, and as the country's leader in hair discrimination cases, the entrepreneur, educator and advocate is continuing her freedom fight.

On Oct. 16, her more than four decades of advocacy work resulted in Pennsylvania becoming the 34th state to sign a total exemption for hair braiders from costly conventional cosmetology licensure. Now, she is currently lobbying the D.C. Council and Mayor Muriel Bowser to have the nation's capital follow suit.

"If you are threatened with jail, hefty fines, business closure, work termination or school suspension in regard to natural hair, what do you do," Ferrell questioned. For 46 years she has been the voice and the educator of people across the country who find themselves in these exact predicaments.

Raised in Rhode Island, Ferrell moved to Washington, D.C., in 1977 after litigation against the police department for shooting at her.

Determined to succeed despite the traumatic event, she attended college while pursuing her dream of becoming a fashion designer. At 18 years old, while working at *G Street Fabric* store, her boss indicated that her braided beaded hairstyle did not align with the company's vision.

"If you want to work here you have to remove your hairstyle. It is not appropriate for our clients," Ferrell recounted being told by her male supervisor.

She recalled how she felt at that moment. "I went to the break room and cried. Then I gathered my things and left knowing that I would never return. I called a legal aid type of organization but I didn't know how to exactly detail what had taken place, nor that it was discrimination," Ferrell told *The Informer*.

Cont. A12, Hair Discrimination



PHOTO ROY ROCHLIN/GETTY IMAGES FOR DNCG

NEW YORK, NEW YORK - OCTOBER 01: Stickers tying J.D.Vance to Project 2025 are seen on the street outside the CBS broadcast center in Manhattan on October 01, 2024 in New York City.

Trump 2.0

Potential barriers to health care that's essential to many Americans, across racial, ethnic and economic spectrums



PHOTO COURTESY OF OCTAVIA CONNER.

From A11

experience under the incoming Trump administration, but we do have some insight.

Trump said in a March interview he supported a nationwide ban on abortions after 15 weeks' gestation. Vice President-elect JD Vance has suggested he would support a national law limiting abortion. But recently Vance and Trump have aligned to let states decide. What further abortion bans and restrictions will be imposed is unknown.

Monica Edwards, senior policy manager at Power to Decide, says we can look to Trump's previous administration and Project 2025 as an indication of what may happen.

The 900-page document proposes restricting and eliminating access to mifepristone, denying access to abortion care in emergency situations. Project 2025 policies would also increase misinformation and disinformation about reproductive health, attack contraception, and eliminate the Department of Education.

"Project 2025 is a real threat of what could come," Edwards says. "Now that he is president, there is a real fear that this Project 2025 document will now be the playbook used to ban contraception, ban abortion, and ban reproductive health rights and justice broadly."

Texas, which has one of the most restrictive abortion bans, has already seen an increase in infant deaths since the state's abortion ban became law on Sept. 1, 2021. ProPublica reported two Texas women died after they faced delays in getting miscarriage care because of the state's abortion ban. And two Black women died in Georgia because of the state's abortion ban.

Black women and birthing people have some of the highest rates of maternal mortality in the United States. In 2022, according to the Centers for Disease Control

“

Project 2025 is a real threat of what could come... Now that he is president, there is a real fear that this Project 2025 document will now be the playbook used to ban contraception, ban abortion, and ban reproductive health rights and justice broadly.

Monica Edwards, senior policy manager at Power to Decide

and Prevention, the rate for Black women was 49.5 deaths per 100,000 live births compared to 19 for white women and 16.9 for Hispanic women.

"The policies in Project 2025, if implemented, we are going to continue to see people face barriers to all kinds of health care," Edwards says. "This does have real impact on people's reproductive well-being ... people will continue to struggle to get care, if they can get care at all."

The Fight Must Go On

Octavia Conner, 41, is a Black woman and mom of four in Atlanta. She is concerned about a woman's right to choose with Trump back in the White House. She worries that Georgia's abortion ban could limit the future health care access for her three daughters who are 11, 17, and 20.

"For Black women who are having babies or plan to have babies and some unfortunate event happens, that can be very, very, very scary," she says. "And I think about that for my girls."

Conner, a fractional CFO and tax strategist, knows what it's like to financially struggle as a parent. Initially, she was a single parent for two years with her now 23-year-old son — she credits her grandmother for getting her through that time.

"If you're forced to take care of a child that you wasn't prepared to have, it can be very detrimental," she says. "It can be very, very challenging. And then, with limited help and resources in the economy, it makes it even worse to survive."

A 2024 report by the Federal Reserve found that parents living with their children younger than 18 experienced a sharp decline in financial well-being in just three years. In 2021, 75% of parents reported doing okay financially, but in 2023, only 64% said the same.

"It's not the time for me to be emotional or crawl under a rock," Tamika Smith, 39, from New Orleans, says. "Now is the time to press, press, and press — and continue to stay on the front lines."

The new administration and its seemingly bold commitment to dismantling all forms of reproductive health care puts women in a difficult situation. At 17, Smith gave birth to her son and had a support system. But for teen parents in communities that are low income, already struggling with lack of resources, education, and accessibility, she worries about what will happen to them under Trump.

"We're talking about life or death at this point," she says.

If a teen gets pregnant and is not allowed to make her own decisions or not informed about her options, Smith is worried about what that outcome will be. States are already allowed to decide what kind of comprehensive sexual health care will be taught in schools. 25 states and the District of Columbia mandate both sex education and HIV education, according to the Guttmacher Institute. But only 18 states require program content to be medically accurate.

Living with endometriosis for the last five years, Smith says she doesn't want her emotions to get in the way of the continued fight for reproductive rights. With any new administration, things will change. And Smith understands how this can increase anxiety and worry for women living with reproductive health care issues, disabilities, and chronic health conditions. But she hopes people will not stop trying.

"I'm hoping that as Black people ... we continue to persevere," she says. "This will be our notation for us to come together, not to be in competition with each other. But to collaborate, to uplift, to support, to encourage. Especially Black women and Black women."

Project 2025

Also known as the 2025 Presidential Transition Project, is a political initiative published by the American conservative think tank the Heritage Foundation in 2023.

The project aims to promote conservative and right-wing policies to reshape the federal government of the United States and consolidate executive power after Donald Trump is inaugurated into office following the 2024 presidential election.

Anissa Durham is the health data journalist for Word In Black. She reports on healthcare inequities and mental health in the Black community.

Hair Discrimination

An art worthy of it's own distinction

From A11

Birth of a Hair Advocate

Determined to make a change after her termination, in early 1978, Ferrell started her own hair braiding business in her apartment. Even though she was merely eight months out of high school, she quickly gained a large clientele.

As her grandparents had owned a soul food restaurant, entrepreneurship was not new or intimidating to Ferrell.

"I was so angry that I could be fired without cause for a hairstyle until I had to do something that I felt was important. I figured if I braided a lot of heads and put them out there, that would help make change," she said.

In 1980, she opened her storefront salon with the support of her future husband, Taalib-Din Uqdah, 72, an activist known for starting the first open-air health food market in SE. However, her business faced immense pressure from DCRA (Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs), who demanded that she shut down the salon as she was not licensed in cosmetology.

Uqdah, did not mince words with DCRA, declaring: "we ain't shutting nothing down, we are braiding hair, cosmetologists dye and straighten hair."

During the 10-year legal battle that ensued, "Taalib-Din Abdul Uqdah v. District of Columbia," the couple eventually hired an attorney.

"While ultimately, we did not win, we also did not lose. The judge summarily told DCRA, 'you need to figure this out,'" Ferrell recounted.

Despite tremendous pressure, the couple



PHOTO COURTESY OF CORNRROWS & COMPANY

Cornrows & Co. provides treatment for alopecia and products crafted by Pamela Ferrell for all hair textures and curl patterns.

never shut down services at their business.

As Ferrell's hair braiding services grew, attracting clients from all over the country, including celebrities such as Diana Ross, so did the news of her 10-year battle with DCRA. Eventually, local and national news outlets picked up the story.

"We began receiving calls from hair braiders all over the country who were being threatened with closure or were afraid to open up salons so they kept braiding at home," she explained.

During the same time period, the salon was inundated with calls from women, who like Ferrell, had their employment threatened or terminated for wearing natural hairstyles.

The Fight for National Legislative Change

In 1997, Isis Brantley, braider and hairstylist for Erykah Badu, was handcuffed, strip-searched and jailed in Texas for operating a braiding salon without a license.

This incident, in association with the momentum gained through Ferrell's work, illuminated the need for national legislation for the rights of braiders.

Ferrell and Uqdah, with the help of attorney Eric Steele, fought the injustice from a two-pronged approach.

Uqdah formed The American Hairbraider and Natural Haircare

Association (AHNHCA), which advocated for women all over the country who had been fired or threatened with termination to come forward. AHNHCA even covered their legal fees.

In addition, through litigation on behalf of the women who came forward, Ferrell enacted policy changes affecting African American hair with organizations such as: Hyatt Hotels, Marriott, Avis, American Airlines, the Metropolitan Police Department, and the United States Army, Navy, and the Pentagon.

Uqdah fought on the legislative side, advocating for changes in law, while Ferrell

Cont. A13, Hair Discrimination

Hair Discrimination

Natural hair care education embraced by global communities

From A12

served as a subject matter expert. In 1997, they played a pivotal role in groundbreaking California legislation, *Cornwell v. California Bd. of Barbering and Cosmetology*, which found “no rational relationship between the 1600 hours of training required by the California Board of Barbering and Cosmetology and the practice of African hair styling.”

This legislation stated that braiders in California could not be forced to attend cosmetology schools where braiding was not specifically taught.

In 1993, when former D.C. Mayor Sharon Pratt signed into law that braiders would have a separate cosmetology license, it was Ferrell who was elected to write the rules for that license. During that same year she was appointed to the District’s Barber and Cosmetology Board.

In 1997, Ferrell and Uqdah spearheaded Maryland’s fight that signed into law bill SB-501, granting total exemption for braiders from cosmetology licensing requirements. During that same year their work led to Michigan law no longer requiring braiders to obtain a cosmetology license, instead they could voluntarily choose to obtain a cultivation license. The couple was also instrumental in changing licensure requirements in Washington, D.C. (1993), Georgia (1998) and Kansas (2000).

To date, they have successfully enacted legislative changes in 44 states and the District of Columbia.

Empowering Through Natural Hair Care, Education

Janet Davis, 61, Sgt 1st Class Army, Ret. credits Ferrell with teaching her to embrace her natural hair.

“Back in those days we were made to feel as if our hair wasn’t good enough, Pam got me over that mentality,” Davis told *The Informer*.

Davis said that in 2014, flat twists and other similar natural hairstyles were deemed against Army regulations.

“You could, however, wear a wig. If you step into a chemical environment you would have to take that wig off because when you put on headgear such as a gas mask it has to form a complete seal. Lifesaving headgear such as a gas mask will not seal over another cap. A wig is a cap,” she explained.

The Army sergeant knew just who to call on 10 years ago when she was working to promote change.

“I brought Pam in on the conversation. By then she had already helped change Navy and airline policies surrounding natural hair regulations,” Davis said.

Ferrell wrote a letter to the Secretary of the

This movement for natural hair care rights all began in D.C. with a fight against DCRA that would end up becoming national news and subsequently take me all over the world.

Janet Davis, 61, Sgt 1st Class Army, Ret.

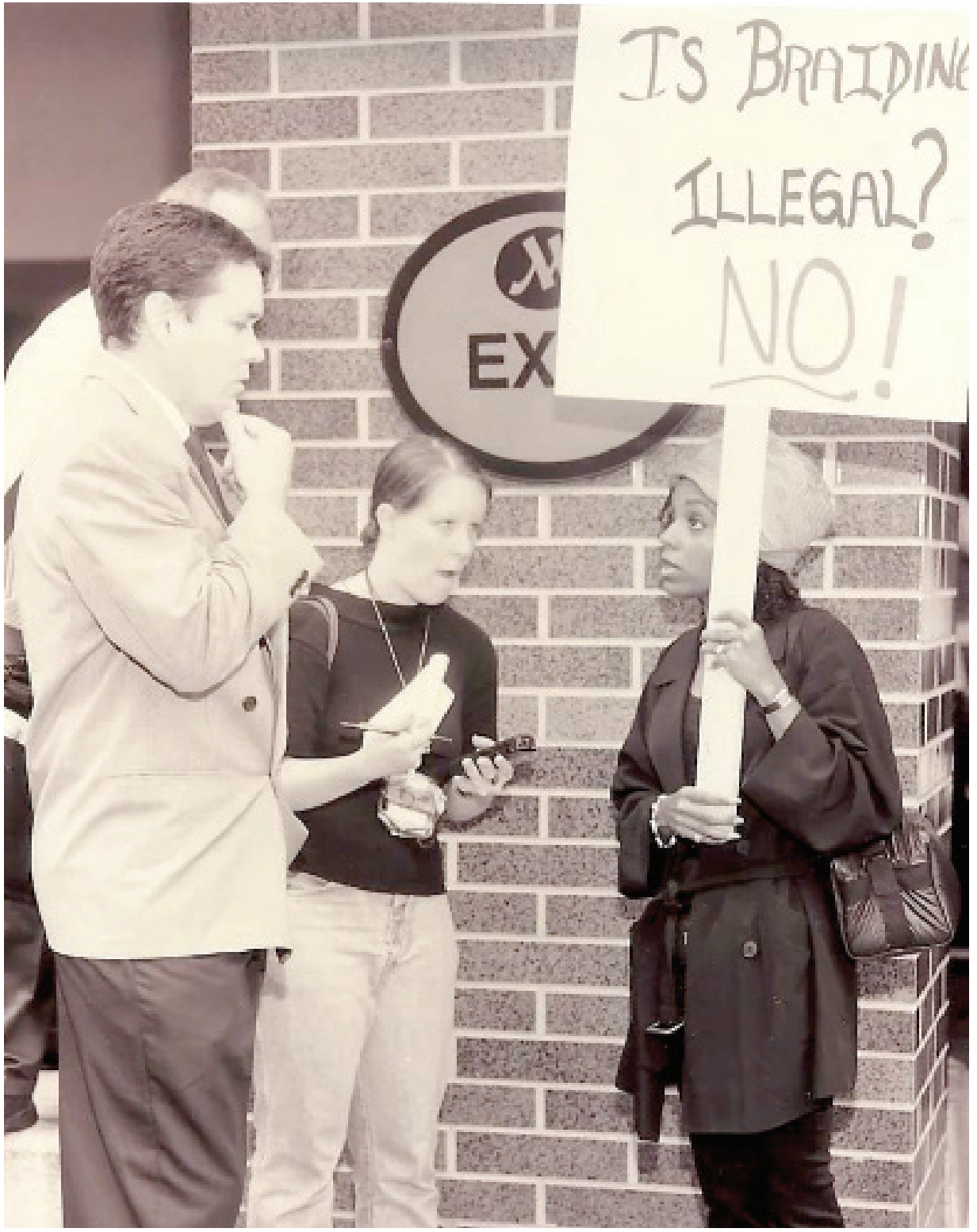


PHOTO COURTESY OF FERRELL

Pamela Ferrell (right) speaks with reporters while fighting discrimination against employees wearing braided hairstyles in the workplace at Marriott Hotel in 1996.

Army. She was subsequently invited to speak before a 24-man panel at the Pentagon. As opposed to arguing discrimination, Ferrell spoke on hair.

“Racism can be subjective to a person or entity while policy and science, in this case, hair, can often be logically proven,” Ferrell recounted.

She demonstrated to officials at the Pentagon that certain hair textures grow upward and in a tighter circle pattern while Army policy was written based on hair that grows downward. Her testimony effectively brought change in the hair grooming policies of the Army, Army Reserves and Army National Guard.

As the primary subject matter expert in the country in hair discrimination cases, Ferrell’s work has taken her around the world. However, she proudly said her fight for hair freedom started in D.C.

“This movement for natural hair care rights all began in D.C. with a fight against DCRA that would end up becoming national news and subsequently take me all over the world,” she told *The Informer*.

In her current work, Ferrell treats alopecia in African Americans and continues to lobby for rights of hair braiders and those facing hair discrimination in schools and the workplace.

Under the 14th Amendment individuals have a constitutional right to earn an honest living without unjust interference and regulations.

“Are regulations to force a hair braider to attend a costly cosmetology school based on caucasian hair practices not overburdensome,” reasoned Ferrell. “Over the last 46 years, we have successfully affected legislation in all but six states, making it legal for women of any income level to earn a living through hair braiding.”

The legendary braider, educator and advocate reflected on her decadeslong journey.

“I would have never imagined that hair, education on hair care, and advocacy would provide the opportunity to meet people around the world, change unjust laws and policies and build a legacy of people of all ages who proudly embrace the beauty of natural hair.”

DCRA

The District of Columbia Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA) is a former District of Columbia agency that issued licenses and permits. On October 1, 2022, DCRA was split into two agencies—the Department of Licensing and Consumer Protection (DLCP) and the Department of Buildings (DOB).



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Black Men, Apology

Do We Owe Black Men an Apology?



Not since Willie Horton became a household name in the 1988 presidential election have Black men been at the center of such intense political debate.

PHOTO GETTY/VESPERSTOCK

tapped into their lingering resentment of the Democratic Party, arguing that liberals always prioritize other groups, like women and the LGBTQ community, instead of them.

“Any African American or Hispanic — and you know how well I’m doing there — that votes for Kamala, you gotta have your head examined,” he said during a rally in Atlanta last month. “Because they are really screwing you.”

Perry says the GOP has spent years quietly crafting a message that blue-collar Black men, and other voters who didn’t go to college, can easily relate to. Elites, it goes, look down on you; Trump is one of you.

That simple message “resonates with people without a college degree, and there’s many more Black [male] and Latino voters” in that class, Perry says. It was a mistake, he says, for Democrats to expect party loyalty, or Harris’s race, to supersede Trump convincing Black men they are seen and understood, even if it isn’t necessarily so.

Until the Democrats can course-correct, Perry says, Black male defections to the GOP may continue, albeit incrementally.

That includes an X user with the handle @TonyXTwo.

Sporting a MAGA ballcap over his dreadlocks, he posted a video of himself talking about how he rebuffed an electioneer who assumed he was a Democrat; then narrated a video of himself in the ballot booth, voting Republicans all the way down the ticket.

The caption reads, “I’m showing you I’m done with the Democrat Party! Absolutely done! TRUMP 2024!”

By contrast, @Pinko69420 used percentages to make his point: white women, not Black men, are the real scapegoats.

“53% in 2016, 55% in 2020, 56% in 2024,” he wrote. “Because society insists on bestowing them with the Disney Princess/Damsel In Distress/Inherently Virtuous treatment, [white women] will never receive the level of castigation Black Men and other demographics receive.”

For her part, Packnett isn’t scapegoating. She just expects more.

“I know Black men voted like they always do. I’m saying I’ve always wanted them to do better,” she wrote on Threads. “If your mom was always good w you bringing home a C, we got raised differently. I can hold high standards for my brothers like they hold them for me.”

After Kamala Harris’s stinging loss to Donald Trump in the election on Tuesday, the social media Blackisphere chopped up why an accomplished Black woman — the sitting vice president, a former senator and prosecutor — lost. How, they wondered, could Harris have crashed out to a scandal-plagued, insurrectionist convicted felon, an old white man who was one of the least popular presidents in recent history?

To some, the villains are obvious: the roughly 20% of Black men who, according to exit polls, voted for Trump.

“I just seen a black man say ‘i didn’t vote for Trump.... I voted against Trans rights and LGBTQ people rights, High inflation and a Broken Economy,’” television personality Ts Madison wrote on X. “Trying to Hurt a small group of people as a BLACK person definitely shows me that you don’t want rights.... You want privilege!”

Not so fast, said Joy-Ann Reid, host of MSNBC’s “The Reid Report.”

“Every four years, I go through this ritual,” she said Tuesday night, noting 8 in 10 brothers chose Harris, not Trump, at the ballot box. “The world just wants to say that Black men are realigning, and they’re all gonna run to Donald Trump,” even though the Latino vote shifted far more dramatically to the former president than in 2020.

“It is not Black men. They are not shifting,” she said. “You are not seeing Black men shift. Please stop.”

Andre Perry, a senior fellow at Brookings Institution, thinks the debate over whether Black men turned their backs on Harris when she most needed them is misguided because “it really does not reckon with why people vote, or the rationale for people’s votes.”

Misogynoir — resentment and anger towards Black women — may have

motivated some Black men to choose Trump, Perry says. But it overlooks more complex socioeconomic issues, and the GOP’s continuing outreach to Black men.

“I think there’s sexism among men, but the truth is economic shifts, like overseas trade agreements, hit Black men just as hard as whites,” Perry says. That, he says, makes both groups more receptive to Trump’s message.

Unfairly Scapegoated?

Not since Willie Horton became a household name in the 1988 presidential election have Black men been at the center of such intense political debate. Unlike Horton, who became the face of violent crime in America for Republicans, there’s no consensus on whether Black men are the avatars of Harris’s 2024 defeat.

What is clear, however, is that narrative has taken hold among many Black Harris supporters.

The exit poll numbers tell a conflicting, nuanced story.

At nearly 80%, Black men were Harris’s second-largest voting demographic; only Black women voted for her at a higher percentage. Meanwhile, Trump’s highest demographic — white men — clocked in at 57%, more than 20 percentage points lower.

But Brittany Packnett, an educator, organizer, and activist, argues good wasn’t good enough in an election in which the outcome could mean the difference between life or death for some Black women.

“Black men, I should be able to lovingly say to you that 78% was strong but it’s still a C+—and there’s room for improvement to fix your attachment to patriarchy,” she wrote on Threads.

If Harris had received a higher percentage of the Black male vote, it

“

Trying to Hurt a small group of people as a BLACK person definitely shows me that you don’t want rights.... You want privilege!

Twitter, Ts Madison, television and media personality

could have been enough to win a swing state or two — especially since Trump’s margin of victory in some states was a few hundred thousand votes or less. And it wasn’t like the Democrats couldn’t see it coming.

In August, Harris rolled out her “Opportunity Agenda,” a blueprint aimed at helping Black men get ahead. Black men, the agenda said, “have long felt that too often their voice in our political process has gone unheard.”

But in October, at a campaign stop in Pittsburgh, former President Barack Obama said he’d heard reports of low energy for Harris in some neighborhoods that supported him in 2008. The problem, he said, “seems to be more pronounced with the brothers.”

“Part of it makes me think — and I’m speaking to men directly — part of it makes me think that, well, you just aren’t feeling the idea of having a woman as president,” he said.

Tapping Into Resentment

Unlike in 2020, however, Trump didn’t roll out specific policies intended specifically for Black men. Instead, he

Exit Polls: Black Vote

At nearly 80%, Black men were Harris’s second-largest voting demographic; only Black women voted for her at a higher percentage. Meanwhile, Trump’s highest demographic — white men — clocked in at 57%, more than 20 percentage points lower.

Joseph Williams, is a veteran journalist, political analyst, and essayist who has been published in a wide range of publications, including The New York Times, The Washington Post, Politico, The Boston Globe, The Atlantic, and US News & World Report. A California native, Williams is a graduate of the University Of Richmond and a former Nieman Fellow at Harvard University. He lives and works in metro Washington, D.C.

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