

National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.

Dr. Julius R. Scruggs, President

Rising to New Challenges

A Dialogue at the White House

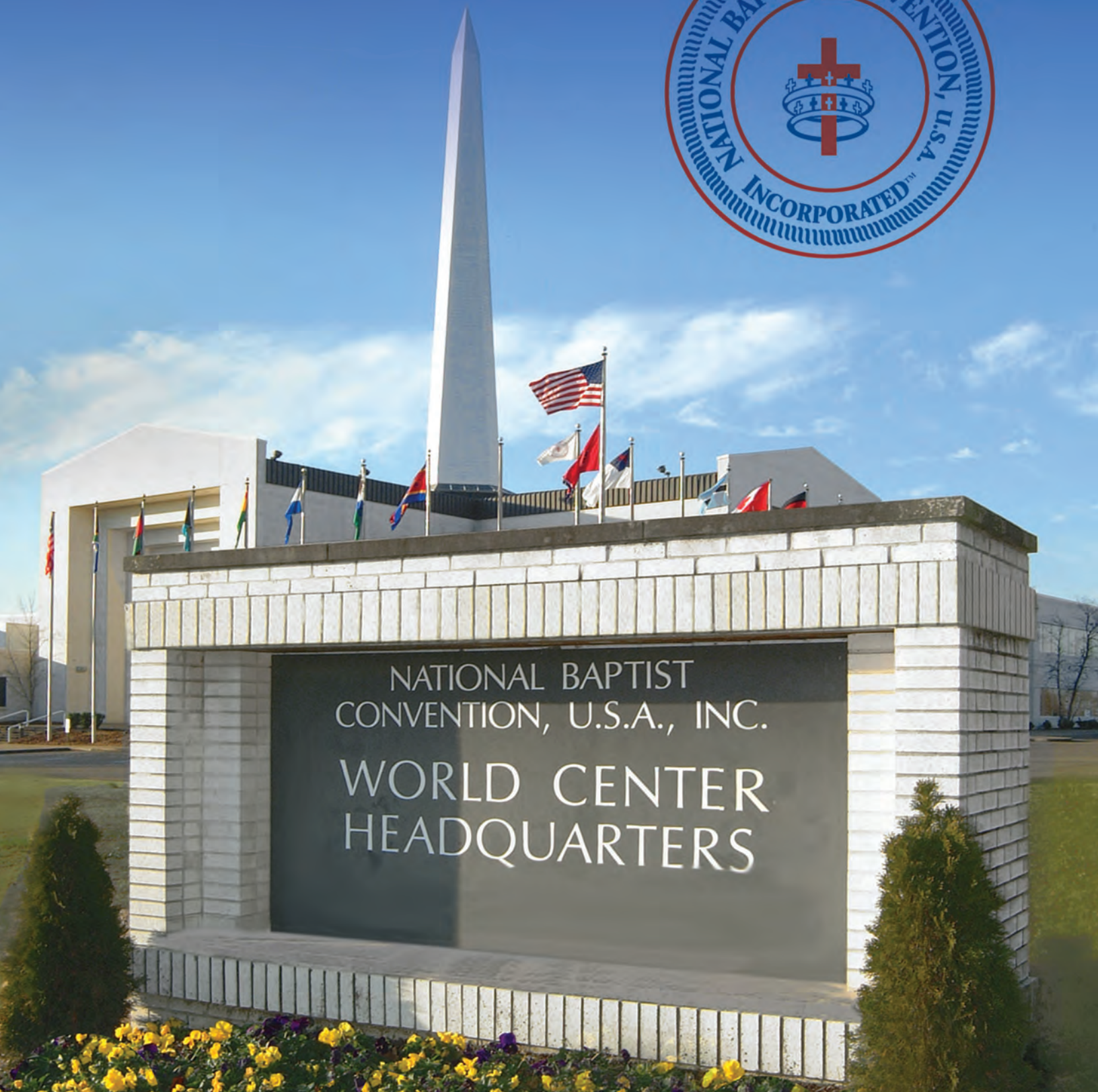


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National Baptist Convention at the White House

Overview of Challenges for the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.

History of the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.

The National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc. traces a history of significant growth and achievements, attended sometimes by periods of turbulence. For example, on Saturday, November 22, 1880, when 151 persons from eleven states met in Montgomery, Alabama, and organized the Baptist Foreign Mission Convention. The Rev. W. H. McAlpine of Alabama was elected as its first president.

By 1893, three Conventions were formed: the Baptist Foreign Mission Convention, the National Convention of America, and the National Baptist Education Convention. None of the three Conventions thrived separately, so in 1895 the three bodies effected a merger—electing the Reverend E. C. Morris as the chosen president. Prior to this merger, nine men served as president of the Conventions, and eight men have led this venerable Convention since the merger in 1985.

A full history of the achievements of the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc. can be found in the public record at the Convention's Web site at www.nationalbaptist.com. The eight men that have led the Convention from 1895 to present are Reverends L. K. Williams, D. V. Jemison, J. H. Jackson, T. J. Jemison, H. J. Lyons, S. C. Cureton, W. J. Shaw and our present president Julius R. Scruggs (who was elected in 2009).

Department of Homeland Security/FEMA

Disaster Equity

Disaster management is an \$8 billion business. The Robert T. Stafford Act declares that 26 percent of those dollars should be directed to or set aside for Minority Certified Businesses. Today, less than 7 percent of those dollars are being directed to Minority Certified Businesses.

The US Department of Transportation and the National DBE Certification Agency, currently have a listing of over 876,000 Minority Certified businesses with 76 percent of those businesses being Service Providers—53 percent Construction, and 58 percent Contractors. This is the Contractor breakdown: 2 percent prime Contractors; 10 percent tier 1 Contractors; 28 percent tier 2 Contractors; and 30 percent tier 3 Contractors.

These statistics show a large disparity between funds available and funds being dispersed to certified minority contractors. The following is being done by the NBCUSA, Inc.:

- Developing a working database that will be approved on the federal level and presented to state officials to assure that the Robert T. Stafford Act is met.

Rationale: This database is designed to help eliminate the epidemic of the underutilization of Minority Certified Businesses by our government and assist Minority Certified Businesses with obtaining federal, state and local government level contract opportunities.

Department of Education

Nationally, a third of all students who enter high school do not graduate on time (if ever). According to the Pew Foundation, almost 2500 students leave high school every day. At risk students are disproportionately from low-income and minority families. The Education Testing Services (ETS) report that there are three factors that add to this problem: socioeconomic characteristics, the number of parents living in the home; and the history of frequently changing schools. Additional factors include truancy, low test scores—causing students to fall behind grade level, and chronic misbehavior.

Children with minimal education credentials represent a community failure. The one-million-students-per-year dropout rate is not only community and state disgrace, but also a national disgrace. This is a call for action. Losing one out of three high school students is unacceptable. Having low-performing schools is unacceptable.

The state of education for African-American youth is even more abysmal. According to ETS, in a publication *One Third of a Nation*, 50 percent of African-American students graduate from high school. The rate for African-American males is lower. The results of these statistics are unemployment, crime, ill health and chronic despair. This is a call for action.

The National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc. has accepted the call for action and is poised to make its presence known in the education enterprise. There are several reasons why NBC is ready to accept the call to action.

- NBC, USA, Inc. has established educational resources among some of its member churches;
- NBC, USA, Inc. has established rapport and connections with other entities among Faith-based Partnership Initiatives; and
- NBC, USA, Inc. has the capacity to impact millions of students through its member churches.

Education Priorities

- Equitable funding
- Early childhood education
- Low-performing schools (AYP)
- HBCUs and other Institutions serving minorities
- Support for the ESEA flexibility plan

Work to be done:

- Train faith-based leaders in order to disseminate information about educational resources.
- Disseminate information about funding sources.
 - (1) Writing grants
 - (2) Completing grant applications
 - (3) Forming partnerships
- Identification of state contacts and other significant contacts that can assist in the education endeavors.
- Urge state officials to take advantage of the ESEA flexibility.
- Work with state and local officials in determining a course of action.

Department of Justice

Voter Suppression—State Voting Law Changes

Several states have enacted Voter Identification Laws such as Texas and South Carolina. In addition, some states have also mandated a change to their early voting rules curtailing Sunday voting. Important questions that need to be addressed are the following:

- How have changes in State Voting Laws affected individual voting rights in predominantly African-American communities?
- Have public assistance and disability services been curtailed in any form?
- Has absentee balloting been affected by any of the recent changes?
- Will our service men and women overseas still be able to vote while serving on the foreign battlefields?
- Does the process of registering and voting favor veterans returning from war?

The Reentry of Former Prisoners Back into Society

- Statistics show that there are disproportionate numbers of African Americans incarcerated as it relates to a percentage of the population and as compared to other ethnic groups. What steps are being taken by the administration to reduce the probability of incarceration on the front end, which further reduces the risk of reentry on the back end?
- Incarceration continues to be a method used to disenfranchise African-American men with regard to jobs, housing, and voting rights privileges. Community re-entry should be of utmost importance to all law-abiding, concerned citizens. There is a need for faith entities, community organizations and government to collaborate in an effort to provide meaningful transition.
- With only 30 percent of all high school students graduating HS which increases the probability of 70 percent getting involved in criminal activity, how is the administration addressing this alarming issue called “the school-to-prison pipeline”?

Department of Health and Human Services

While segments of the American population are living longer, more productive lives—and while it seems as if the health of the nation has improved—a tremendous number of health disparities still exist between African Americans and other ethnic groups. African Americans have the highest age-adjusted death rate for heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and HIV/AIDS.

Health Disparities

- There are many health disparities in the African-American community. What actions are being taken by the Administration to combat these debilitating diseases?
- The role of Community Wellness Centers:—What central meaning/purpose does the Administration see regarding Community Wellness Centers? Does the Administration place a priority on these centers?
- How does the Affordable Care Act end health disparities in the African-American community?

Department of Labor

With unemployment existing at an alarmingly high rate of 15 percent or more in the African-American community—and with 1.25 million African Americans out of work for more than six months—jobs and an improving economy must be the number one priority for the Administration.

Questions Regarding the American Jobs Act

- How does the American Jobs Act benefit the African-American community?
- Most African-American businesses are small businesses—what is the administration doing to get needed capital to small businesses within the African-American community?
- Are there targeted programs to retrain unemployed workers in other fields of labor?

Department of Veterans Affairs

President Obama said, “Of the 39,000 troops in Iraq, about 150, a negligible force, will remain to assist in arms sales...the rest will be out by December 31.” Additionally, as reported by the Alliance to End Homelessness, there are 24.5 million veterans already in America who are hopefully, gainfully employed. Statistics report that too many of our existing veterans are without benefits, medical treatment, and homes. A November 4 report of the Alliance also revealed the following: 35 out of every 10,000 veterans are homeless; 76,000 veterans are homeless on any given night in the USA; and 145,000 veterans use homeless housing programs every year.

- Military personnel, military families, and veterans (in particular), are living in every community across this nation.
- With thousands of churches and affiliates all across the nation, the NBC,USA, Inc. is positioned to ensure that both information and provisional resources are made available to all veterans within each of our constituent bodies.
- Our veterans need to be respected and treated like the heroes that they are.
- Many veterans still are dealing with psychological and physiological issues unique to military personnel.

U.S. Agency for International Development

The National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc. is assisting the Liberian president in reestablishing and/or increasing formal and informal educational opportunities, and creating economic and social conditions to reintegrate and rehabilitate ex-combatants and those who feel left out in society in the countries.

Destroyed during the Civil War, the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc. is returning and rebuilding its mission stations in Liberia not only to serve the spiritual needs of its Baptist members, but also to serve as regional centers of economic and educational development. The Convention is taking a holistic approach in assisting in the revitalization of Liberia. The mission stations are being rebuilt to continue to serve the community on a long-term basis. Thus, we are seeking funds to assist our Board in carrying out strategic goals that will assist Liberia in alleviating poverty and promoting reconciliation.

The National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc. is seeking funds to develop and carry out a three-year economic development plan that would bring reconciliation, employment, and education to the areas served by our Suehn and Bendoo mission stations. The NBC,USA, Inc. will partner with the Liberian government, The Mississippi Consortium for International Development (MCID), a consortium of four Historically Black universities in Mississippi, and other Liberian universities to accomplish our strategic goals.

- The National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc. is positioned to carry out such projects. The NBC,USA, Inc. has maintained missions in Liberia since 1873. Throughout its work in Liberia over the years, NBC,USA, Inc. has successfully spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ and uplifted Liberians in the areas of health and education. Prior to the Civil War, NBC,USA, Inc. developed high-quality schools and hospitals in Bendoo, Cape Mount County, Monrovia, the capital of Liberia, Suehn, Bomi County, and Fortsville, Grand Vassa County.
- The NBC,USA, Inc. will concentrate its efforts in the Suehn and Bendoo regions. The strategic goals of the Suehn and Bendoo Regional Redevelopment and Reconciliation Project are the following:
 1. The alleviation of poverty in the Suehn and the Bendoo districts, where one would see improvement in educational and economic opportunities in the regions.
 2. Promotion of self-sufficiency and sustainability, where individuals have sufficient training and education to become employed or self-employed.
 3. Reconciliation among the various ethnic groups.
 4. Promotion of economic growth in the districts associated with the National Baptist Convention's mission stations.

The major objectives of the redevelopment and reconciliation for the target areas are the following:

1. To reconstruct the primary and secondary schools that was severely damaged during the Civil War on the Convention's Suehn and Bendoo mission grounds.
2. To work toward setting up mechanisms to carry out the recommendations of the republic of Liberia Truth and Reconciliation Commission in the context of children welfare, religion, and tradition.
3. To establish and manage a planning process that includes the various ethnic groups, civic and political organizations, the religious leaders, and youths. The purpose of the planning committee is to develop short-and long-range objectives to accomplish the strategic goals of the project.
4. To develop a polytechnic school in the regions to establish vocational/technical training for it youths and adults. The establishment of these schools would improve the literacy rate and enable individuals to qualify for jobs that are opening up in the new, emerging local and national Liberian economy.
5. To improve and expand community health facilities and services in the target areas in order to improve the health of the districts' residents.
6. To establish community revitalization and reintegration programs in the target that assist in

the revitalization and reintegration of communities in post-conflict Liberia. The Project would serve as a facilitator of programs that have shown results in promoting unification, tolerance, dignity, and reconciliation.

7. To establish economically sustainable activities in the regions. They include the following: development of an agricultural extension service designed to help local farmers develop sustainable agricultural methods and attract more people to agriculture; the creation of an economic development center that would open adult literacy centers in the region (that is connected to industrial training). These centers would work in conjunction with the newly created polytechnic schools.
8. To improve the infrastructure of the region, including repairing and establishing roads to and from the project centers—the areas fit for commerce and people transportation; and repairing or installing utilities, such as, water lines.

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