

Voters

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nation with 10,702 observers deployed from 1995-2012,” the report said.

Kengle said that federal election observers serve multiple purposes and one of the most important purposes doesn’t result in litigation.

Election officials often request federal election observers from the Justice Department to calm tense situations when there have been concerns about claims of voter intimidation or other misconduct at the polls.

Election observers monitor the polls “not so much with an eye toward bringing a lawsuit, but rather allowing people to vote without concerns for intimidation,” said Kengle, adding that, in recent years, observers have documented compliance with the language minority provisions of the Voting Rights Act.

Federal observers also keep an eye on the voting process on the ground and take notes in a way that attorneys or other election

observers are not able to do, said Kengle, who worked in the Voting Section at the Justice Department for about 20 years and supervised election coverage.

Losing that monitoring power will be a huge loss for minority voters, said Kengle. “Blacks are conscious of the history that produced the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and all the sacrifices that people made so that act could become law,” said Arnwine.

Arnwine disagreed with the majority decision in the Supreme Court Shelby County case that concluded that the rise in Black voter turnout and the number of minority elected officials signaled that the Section 4 pre-clearance formula in the VRA was outdated and that voter disenfranchisement was largely a problem of the past.

Arnwine sees it differently, noting that increased Black voter turnout doesn’t mean that it’s easier to vote, “it means that people are more determined to vote.”

CBC

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sistently been twice as high as for Whites over the past 50 years and

- For every \$100 in wealth of a White household, the Black household only has \$6 in wealth.

In an interview on January 9, with Crewof42.com, Butterfield addressed legislative strategy.

“I think we can negotiate with the Democratic Caucus or the Republican conference or both, right now. I’m not ruling out working out any bi-partisan deals with the majority. John Boehner’s in charge. And he has 246 members,” he said.

The Black Caucus has a block 42 voting Democrats in the House, the most in history. But of the 48 African Americans who will serve in the 114th Congress over the next two years, 45 of them will be serving in the minority Democratic Party. Though there is talk of being more aggressive, legislative wins will require loads of backdoor negotiation. It will also require President Obama to be more aggressive in his negotiations with the GOP before legislation is brought to Congress for consideration. Unfortunately for Democrats, tough negotiation is not something President Obama is known for.

As Chairman Butterfield deals with the known and the unknown, he’s focused on what he can control.

“He’s indicated that he wants to be the conductor of the orchestra and

give each person an individual opportunity to shine. He also wants to connect every Black organization across the country with the CBC,” noted Rep. Gregory Meeks (D-N.Y.)

“A plan is put in place where the previous chair [Rep. Marcia Fudge] will take some responsibility when

What the New CBC Chair said on January 6 was pointed and reflective.

“In my hometown of Wilson, North Carolina, the railroad tracks divided our town; a town where 23 miles of unpaved streets greeted Black citizens every day. They were relegated to second class citizenship. Our mothers

‘We, as the Congressional Black Caucus, have an obligation to fight harder and smarter in the next Congress to help repair the damage’

dealing with the White House. As is widely known, she takes no prisoners, so that will be a help to him and he can spend time dealing with them on legislation and initiatives that they need us to support,” said Rep Emanuel Cleaver (D-Mo.).

Joy Reid, host of The Reid Report, was the master of ceremonies at the Congressional Black Caucus’ ceremonial swearing-in where Butterfield spoke as CBC chair for the first time.

“I though Congressman Butterfield made it really clear that the CBC is going to be really aggressive about pushing their agenda,” Reid said.

“They’re definitely not backing down in the face of the larger Republicans majority. He came out swinging.”

and fathers; grandmothers and fathers; our aunts and uncles worked every day to support the Jim Crow economy,” Butterfield said.

“The CBC was formed in 1971 because its founders understood that Black lives matter. Black boys matter. Black girls matter. The Black family matters. The Black church matters. Black America in its totality matters. In 2015, we are still fighting generations of discrimination. We are fighting generations of indifference on the part of those in power.”

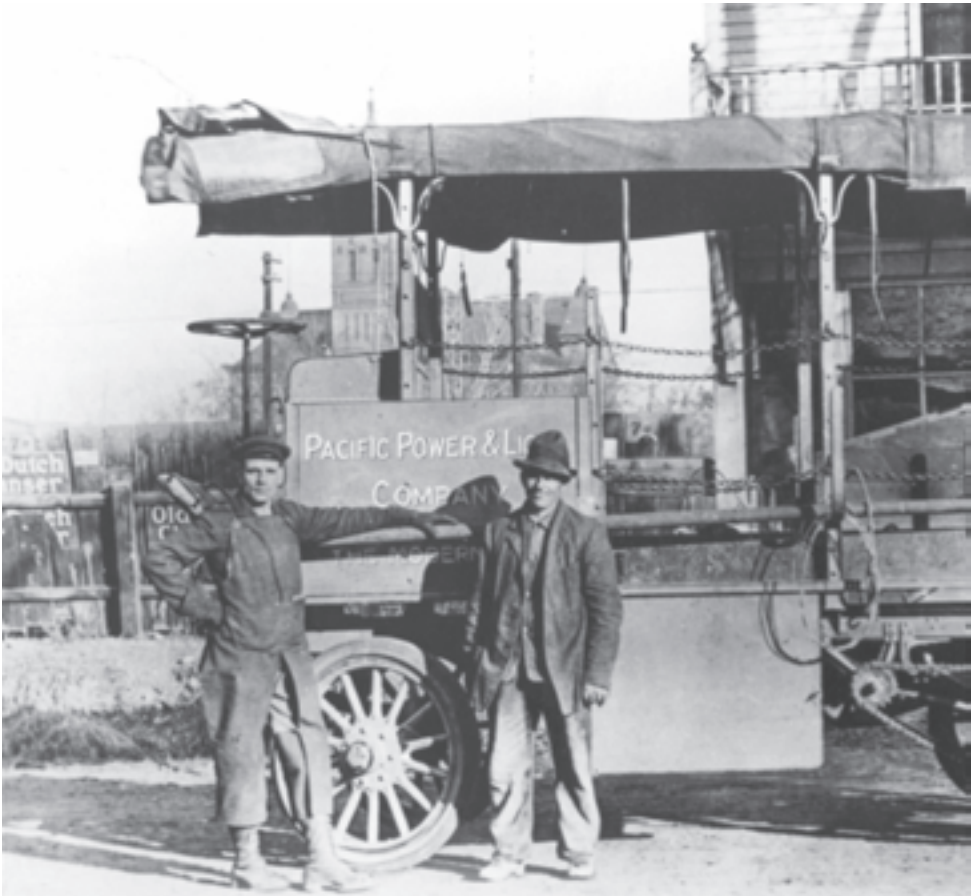
Cleaver said of the new CBC chairman: “He is methodical and does not tend to act impetuously – whether we planned it or not – he’s the right one for the season.”

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