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Opinion

Black Voters Must Hold All Politicians Accountable

It's that time again. It occurs every year around the same time like clockwork. It's election season.

Political signs infiltrate Black neighborhoods, placed by campaign operatives hoping you remember their respective political candidate come election time. More importantly, these political operatives are hoping your familiarity with their respective candidate will drive you to the polls with the belief that their efforts will translate into a vote for them at the ballot box.

Establishing familiarity is quite an effective tool, especially when it comes to creating a sense of connection with people. Now be honest. If connecting with people through establishing a sense of familiarity weren't so effective, why would radio stations play the same song over and over again, or why would major companies spend an inordinate amount of money to consistently and strategically advertise their product or service to consumers on a regular basis?

Seeking to connect with people by establishing a sense of familiarity is one of the first things any campaign team tries to do to help get their respective candidate elected.

Have you ever noticed that



Jeffrey L. Boney

NNPA
Columnist

during every election season, radio ads become more frequent, print mailers get sent out in bulk quantities and television ads get placed on any given network during key television shows in an effort to try and reach registered voters?

Politicians have long been staples in our community.

Many of them visit a church here, walk the block and knock on doors over there; kiss babies, shake hands and even give the Black community 'stuff' to get them to come out to the polls and vote. It is fascinating the way some political candidates scurry around during election season trying to solicit the Black vote so that they can get elected to a certain office or retain their current seat. It's an art. Many of these campaign operatives and elected officials have it down to a science.

However, when it comes to developing key, solid policies that will help the Black community, many of these same candidates disappear—never

to be heard from again—until the next election cycle rolls around. Interestingly, many of these elected officials get a pass for doing nothing.

Now, if members of the Black community would be completely honest, they would admit that a lot of these elected officials are often treated like high-profile celebrities, rather than public servants who

“ You know what I'm talking about; offering the Black community chicken dinners, BBQ cookouts, fish plates...

have the power to advocate for substantive policies that can literally change the economic landscape and quality of life of their communities.

One act of familiarity that has been a go-to-approach to reach the Black community has been the tactic of political candidates using certain gimmicks to solicit votes.

You know what I'm talking about; offering the Black community chicken dinners, BBQ cookouts, fish plates, steak

days, gift cards, air conditioners for senior citizens, etc. Many of these politically-motivated gimmicks have and continue to be used to get Black people to vote for a particular candidate.

You know the routine. Black voters get out to vote, then there is very little reciprocity from many of the candidates towards the Black community, if they are elected.

Think about it for a moment and ask yourself some questions.

What evidence do you have to prove that any of your elected officials have actually advocated for you? Ask yourself, when it comes to developing sound policies and legislation for the Black community, when was the last time your elected officials drafted any policy or advocated for any legislation at the local, state and/or federal level that has positively impacted you?

Now, you may have been invited to a fish fry, steak dinner or community social event, but ask yourself when was the first or last time any of your elected officials educated, equipped and informed your community about any key issues that is impacting them or will affect them?

Read the rest of this commentary at TheSkanner.com

Black Mamas Are Dying. We Can Stop It.

Black mothers are dying and it's time to do something about it.

Every year, more than 700 American mothers lose their lives to pregnancy or birth-related complications. Some medical professionals estimate that at least half, if not more, of these deaths are entirely preventable.

While the deaths of 700-plus American mothers should shock us all, the statistics are much worse for African American mothers. We are three-to-four times more likely to die during pregnancy or childbirth than our White counterparts. A 2010-2011 survey of maternal deaths in Philadelphia found that three-quarters of those deaths were Black mothers.

These shocking statistics cut across class, education level, and socio-economic status. Earlier this year, Serena Williams shared her own story of nearly losing her life.

She, like too many other women, was ignored when she raised concerns about her own health and body. If this tragedy can befall a wealthy, world-class athlete who's deeply in tuned with her own body, it could, and does, happen to anyone.

Sadly, the situation is getting worse, not better. Amer-



Robin Kelly

U.S. Rep.
(D-11)

ican mothers are dying at higher rates every year.

Globally, we've had real success in pushing down the rates of mothers needlessly dying, especially in Africa and the Caribbean. Yet at the same time, the U.S. is one of a handful of nations where the number of mothers dying is increasing.

We can and must do better. All mamas deserve the chance to be mamas.

That's why I've introduced the "Mothers and Offspring Mortality and Morbidity Awareness Act" or the MOMMA Act, for short. This comprehensive legislation takes a multi-pronged approach to ending maternal mortality through increased access to care, expanded culturally-competent training and standardized data collection.

Currently, one of our greatest challenges in addressing the rising rate of maternal mortality is a lack of good data. We need to standardize data to find trends and proto-

cols that work to save lives.

The MOMMA Act also establishes and enforces national emergency obstetric protocols and ensures the sharing of best practices between practitioners and hospital systems because, if it's working, we want every doctor to know about it.

“ The MOMMA Act would improve access to culturally-competent care

Additionally, the MOMMA Act would expand access to care by ensuring that mothers retain their Medicaid coverage for one year after giving birth, the entire postpartum period. Right now, mothers lose their coverage just two months after giving birth.

However, many women face significant health challenges, often weeks and months, after giving birth. One mom who spoke at my press conference unveiling the bill suffered a childbirth-related stroke 20 days after giving birth. Furthermore, we know that postpartum depression and other health challenges face new mothers; expanding access to

care will ensure that moms remain healthy as they raise their families.

Finally, the MOMMA Act would improve access to culturally-competent care throughout the care continuum. For decades, we've known that culturally-incompetent care has had massive and negative impacts on our community and our health. In 2018, it's time to train health professionals to give appropriate care to all patients, regardless of their race.

I could not be prouder to have introduced the MOMMA Act or to have worked with the amazing women and men who helped us craft this important legislation to save mothers' lives.

It's the product of months of work with families, mothers, doctors, nurses, midwives, doulas and policy advocates. I'm deeply humbled to have the support of Black Women's Health Imperative, the Black Mamas Matter Alliance, the National Urban League, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and many others.

As a mother, I was lucky enough to experience two happy, healthy pregnancies. I want the same thing for every mother and family: a healthy, happy pregnancy and child.