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14-01 (62)

14-02 (43)

14-03 (84)

14-04 (67)

14-05 (77)

14-06 (87)

14-07 (65)

14-08 (56)

14-09 (44)

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"Parties Court Black Voters" Article and Suggested Urban League/GOP Relationship Inaccurate

Patrick Graham [pgraham@urbanleaguecc.org]

Sent: Saturday, September 20, 2014 12:41 PM**To:** rschoof@mclatchydc.com

Dear Renee Schoof,

I read your article this morning, "Parties Court Black Voters," in the Charlotte Observer with much interest. As I read through the article, I noticed the use of my beloved organization's name, Urban League. It suggested the GOP was working with us and others to "build and earn trust" across African American communities. Your article reports that Orlando Watson, Communications Director for Black Media at the Republican National Committee said: "Republicans also were working with church leaders, as well as members of black chambers of commerce, historically black colleges and universities, the **Urban League**, and others."

Our local Urban League, nor the National Urban League, involves itself with partisan politics. Thus, since the article appears to focus on local politics, I was confused by Mr. Watson's use of our name (the only organization actually called by name) as a partner in any of his endeavors. In fact, we do not have a current "working" relationship with the GOP, Democrats, or any other party. Our organization has a strong history of advocacy for economic and social inclusion that is broader than any one party.

The Urban League's policy agendas are targeted to increase awareness of disparities and develop direct actions that help local communities and our nation become more globally competitive. Most important, we provide direct workforce development, entrepreneur training, financial literacy, and education services with proven success. This is what is important to African Americans and many Americans.

It is interesting that the African American community and other communities of color always draw so much attention during election time. Many of these communities are forgotten when discussions of economic mobility, education, and sharing of America's wealth are decided.

Recently, our community finished last in a national Economic Mobility study for America's top cities. One of the primary reasons for our placement was the disparities that are faced by communities of color, who's members could be valuable sources of human capital for this region. It is unfortunate I have not heard much about these issues in our political discourses.

If you want well thought out policy agendas and direct programs to address disparities and economic mobility for all, we are an organization to consider. If you want us to align in partisan politics that too often statistically fails to bring about opportunity for the people we serve, you may want to consider another organization. The one thing you can never consider about the Urban League is that we will be partisan.

I hope the Charlotte Observer will clarify Mr. Watson's statement.

Thank you.

Patrick

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