

Message from President Barack Obama - The War is Over

Good afternoon,

After nearly nine years, our war in Iraq is ending.

In recent days, many of our troops have come home and been reunited with their families for the holidays. Over the next few days, a small group of American soldiers will begin the final march out of Iraq.

This moment of success is because of their sacrifice. More than 1.5 million Americans have served in Iraq. More than 30,000 of these brave men and women were wounded. Nearly 4,500 gave their lives. America's military families have borne a heavy burden.

As we mark the end of this war, we need to show our veterans and their families that they have the thanks of a grateful nation.



Part of ending a war responsibly is standing by those who have fought it. It's not enough to honor our heroes with words; we must do so with deeds.

That's why we've worked to send 600,000 veterans and family members back to school on the Post-9/11 GI Bill. That's why one of Michelle's top priorities as First Lady has been to support military families and why she's worked with the private sector to get commitments to create 100,000 jobs for those who've served and their spouses. That's why we worked with Congress to pass a tax credit so that companies have an incentive to hire vets and have taken steps to help veterans translate military experience to the private sector job market.

In America, our commitment to those who fight for our freedom and our ideals doesn't end when our troops take off the uniform.

You can be a part of this effort to honor our heroes.

Help mark this moment. Write a quick note that troops and veterans all over the world will be able to see: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/iraq>

Thank you,

President Barack Obama

American Express OPEN Recognizes The Hester Group as Woman Government Contractor of the Year

Recently, at the Victory in Procurement (VIP) event in Dallas, American Express OPEN®, the small business division of the financial services company, recognized The Hester Group as Woman Contractor of the Year.

Through government contracting, The Hester Group has grown to become one of the largest African-American, woman-owned strategic communications and program management agencies in Northeast Florida.

Hester Taylor Clark started the company in her Jacksonville home in 1998. The business also has a satellite office in

Alexandria, VA.

Nominees for the VIP awards were selected in collaboration with partners, Business Matchmaking (www.businessmatchmaking.com), Women Impacting Public Policy (WIPP) (www.giveme5.com) and SCORE "Counselors to America's Small Business" (<http://www.score.org>).

Candidates provided details about their work and success in government contracting via a detailed application which were then deliberated over by a panel of judges.

The VIP awards are part of American Express OPEN's Victory in Procurement™ (VIP) for Small Business initiative. Launched in 2009, VIP is a national program designed to help small business owners capitalize on the enormous growth opportunity provided through government contracts.

Congresswoman Brown Thrilled Congressional Gold Medal for Montford Point Marines Becomes Law

Washington, DC - Congresswoman Corrine Brown was elated that the bill to grant a Congressional Gold Medal to the Montford Point Marines was signed into law by President Obama.

"This is a great day for the Marines and for all Americans!" exclaimed the Congresswoman. "In a wonderful display of bipartisanship, this bipartisan bill to grant the Montford Point Marines a Congressional Gold Medal has now been officially signed into law by President Barack Obama! The bill passed under Unanimous Consent in the Senate, with 83 cosponsors, and with 308 cosponsors in the House, on a 422-0 vote, and serves as a perfect example of what can be achieved when both parties work together."

General James F. Amos, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, a strong supporter of the Montford Point Marines, said that "this Resolution is of extreme importance to all Marines today. Their actions reflected the finest attributes of the 'leatherneck' fighting spirit and blazed the trail for generations of African-Americans in the Marine Corps."

"Indeed," continued Congresswoman Brown, "this Resolution recognizes the service and sacrifice of the Montford Point Marines, and clearly demonstrates that today's United States Marine Corps is an excellent opportunity for advancement for persons of all races. Clearly, the original Montford Point Marines serve as a prime example of this, and set the bar very high for future Marines."

On June 25, 1941, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802, opening the doors for the very first African Americans to enlist in the United States Marines," said the Congresswoman. "From 1942 to 1949, 20,000 African Americans enlisted in the Marine Corps in a time of war when the military services were resistant to integration."

These African Americans, from all States, were not sent to the traditional boot camps in Parris Island, South Carolina and San Diego, California. Instead, African American Marines were segregated, and went through basic training at Camp Montford Point near the New River in Jacksonville, North Carolina. Years before Jackie Robinson and decades before Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, Jr., these heroes joined the Marines to defend our country.

"As a key Member of the Congressional Black Caucus and House Committee on



Congresswoman Corrine Brown

Veterans' Affairs, I am thrilled to see this piece of legislation has become law. On the House side, we worked extraordinarily hard with Financial Services Chairman Spencer Baucus (AL-6), Congressman Ander Crenshaw (FL-4), Congressman Allen West (FL-22), as well as Congressman Barney Frank (MA-4), and Congressman Sanford Bishop (GA-2) to obtain the necessary support of Members on both sides of the aisle to move this Resolution forward. On the Senate side, Senators Kay Hagan of North Carolina and Bill Nelson of Florida also did tremendous work to be able to get enough Senate cosponsors on the legislation pass the measure unanimously," said the Congresswoman.

"Certainly," continued Congresswoman Brown, "it is necessary to honor all of America's war heroes' selfless service and sacrifice, and in particular, those who served at Montford Point, who are about to be officially recognized as a rich legacy of our Marine Corps. They answered our nation's call at a time when our society was deeply divided along racial lines. As such, many of their contributions went unrecognized and many times they were not given the respect and recognition they deserved as Marines, as Americans, and as patriots. To correct this past injustice, this Resolution was introduced on their behalf, and I wholeheartedly believe that it is necessary to confer the Congressional Gold Medal on the Montford Point Marines for their Service to the United States, from WWII to the Vietnam era. This is a proud victory for the Montford Point Marines, as this Gold Medal will forever anchor their role in the history of our nation's great military."

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Congresswoman Brown Announces DOT Grant for Jacksonville's Transit Authority

(Washington, DC) Congresswoman Corrine Brown is extremely pleased to announce a \$2,384,244.00 Department of Transportation Federal Transit Administration grant for Jacksonville Transit Authority's "State of Good Repair Project." The grant will allow the Jacksonville Transportation Authority to perform a full structure inspection every two years as a part of DOT's Asset Management and Safety programs. Specifically, this project involves a repair of the guide way and related structures for the Skyway and the Bus Hubs within the Jacksonville Downtown area. "This funding is a win-win for those using public transit in the city of Jacksonville, and will also increase the safety and structure of JTA's bus system."

W.K. Kellogg Foundation's Dr. Gail Christopher Wins Distinguished Award From The Schott Foundation For Public Education



Dr. Gail Christopher

Washington, DC - Dr. Gail C. Christopher, vice president for program strategy for the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, today was awarded the 2011 "Change Agent Award" by the Schott Foundation for Public Education. Dr. Christopher was honored for her work in addressing structural racism in America, including efforts to improve education and reduce health inequities for children of color.

"We are celebrating Dr. Christopher's commitment to ending structural inequities and improving education for our children," said Dr. John H. Jackson, president and CEO of the Schott Foundation for Public Education. "She is dedicated to improving the quality of life for our children and ensuring they have opportunities to succeed. Her work is impacting communities across the country."

Dr. Christopher is a nationally-recognized leader in health policy, with particular expertise and experience in the issues related to social determinants of health, health disparities and public policy issues of concern to the future of our nation.

"I'm truly honored by this recognition from the Schott Foundation," said Dr. Christopher. "Their organization is playing a significant role in working to improve education and supporting equitable opportunities so all children receive a quality education."

At the Kellogg Foundation, Dr. Christopher leads the foundation's groundbreaking racial equity approach, which includes the America Healing initiative - a \$75 million,

five-year program that supports racial healing in communities and works to dismantle structural racism. Launched in 2010, more than 120 organizations across the country are leading community-based healing efforts among racial and ethnic groups to address historic burdens and remove barriers to opportunity. Their efforts focus on increasing opportunities for children in education, health and economic security.

"Our mission at the W. K. Kellogg Foundation is to help communities create conditions that propel vulnerable children to success," said Dr. Christopher. "Because children of color are so disproportionately represented in low-income families and impoverished communities, realizing our mission requires addressing historic and current structural barriers to opportunity, such as exposure to environmental toxins and enrollment in under-resourced schools, which are a direct result of past policies and practices of racialization and privilege."

Prior to joining the Kellogg Foundation, Dr. Christopher was vice president of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies' Office of Health, Women and Families in Washington, D.C.

asking if they have donated money to a charity, volunteered time to an organization, and/or helped a stranger. CAFAmerica will supplement the survey data with information for Americans who want to know more about investing on a global basis, including tips on how to do so safely and effectively.

Individuals agreeing to respect a 7 p.m. EST Monday (December 19, 2011) embargo will be allowed to join this live, phone-based news conference (with full, two-way Q&A) by dialing 1 (800) 860-2442 at 1:30 p.m. EST on December 19, 2011. Ask for the "global charitable giving survey" news event. A streaming audio replay of the news event will be available on the Web at <http://www.CAFAmerica.org> as of 7 p.m. EST on December 19, 2011.

For more information, please call Leslie Anderson, for CAFAmerica, (703) 276-3256 or landerson@hastingsgroup.com.

Founded in 1992, CAFAmerica (<http://www.CAFAmerica.org>) is a member organization of the United Kingdom based Charities Aid Foundation International Network of Offices, which provides charitable financial services to individuals, global corporations, charities, and foundations. CAFAmerica is dedicated to expanding borderless charitable giving by providing guidance and international grant making solutions for donors and charities. CAFAmerica makes over \$40 million in grants annually to charities in more than 75 countries around the world. CAFAmerica's range of charitable solutions include: Donor Advised Gifts, Donor Advised Funds, Matching Donor Advised Funds, Designated Funds, bequest planning and 'Friends of' Charity Funds.

NOAA Awards FAMU \$15 Million to Train a New Generation of Scientists

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. - Florida A&M University (FAMU) has been awarded an education and research grant totaling \$15 million from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to meet the agency's workforce needs in areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) that support NOAA's mission. This is the largest single grant awarded in the history of the University.

"One of the highest criteria used to determine the quality of a university is the level of extramural funding and quality of research taking place by faculty and the funding obtained for them to conduct research on a regular basis," said FAMU President James H. Ammons. "This announcement proves that Florida A&M University meets that standard of excellence."

With 30 percent of the grant designated for scholarships, FAMU has partnered with Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, Delaware State University, Jackson State University, University of Texas at Brownsville, and Creighton University as well as three National Estuarine Research Reserves; Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary; the Gulf of Mexico Alliance; and, the Gulf of Mexico Coastal Ocean Observing System. The grant will provide funds to support students as they pursue NOAA-relevant education, research, and training in environmental science. This grant supports enhancing environmental literacy from K-12 to the doctorate level.

"Our education efforts will focus on training and graduating under-represented minorities and utilize research as a vehicle to educate students, and develop skills relevant to the new economy," said Michael Abazinge, professor and interim director of the School of the Environment who also serves as the principal investigator for this significant award.

The award will support the NOAA Environmental Cooperative Science Center (ECSC), FAMU as the lead institution with its partners to focus on the following goals:

- Increasing the number of well-trained and highly qualified scientists and managers, particularly from under-represented minority groups entering the NOAA workforce and other resource management entities;
- Improving the scientific bases for coastal resource management and to develop tools and research products to characterize, evaluate, and forecast coastal and marine ecosystem responses to natural and human induced stressors; and,
- Facilitating community engagement related to the function and relevance of coastal ecosystems and the services they provide to society.

"The magnitude of this environmentally-focused research and training award is critical

to our region, nation and to the world, as we develop best practices to govern us in all areas of our existence," said K. Ken Redda, professor and acting vice president for research.

The ECSC was established in 2001 at FAMU through a national competitive process. This five-year award was made to a team of academic institutions led by FAMU. Through this award, ECSC will increase the number of scientists, particularly from under-represented minority groups in environmental, coastal, and oceanic sciences. Of the over 180 postsecondary student

participants, ECSC has graduated 19 Ph.D. degree recipients, 41 master's degree holders, and 56 bachelor's degree recipients, since 2006. Graduates of ECSC, a part of FAMU's School of the Environment, has a 100 percent placement rate. Eight are working as employees of NOAA, while



(From left to right) LaTrisha Allen, a second-year Ph.D. research student, and Kali Farris, a third-year master's degree student majoring in environmental science marine toxicology, are examining several fish species to determine their exposure to the oil released in the BP Oil Spill.

others are employed by state or other governmental employees or as researchers in university settings.

"We're committed to developing problem-solving skills as we engage undergraduate majors and graduate students from varied disciplines, including biology, chemistry, physics, math and other STEM areas needed to address and resolve environmental issues," said Charles H. Jagoe, distinguished professor in the School of the Environment.

Those problem-solving skills are being put to use in the laboratories in the School of the Environment.

Currently, two students, LaTrisha Allen and Kali Farris, are conducting research under the leadership of Jagoe. Allen, a second-year Ph.D. research student, and Kali Farris, a third-year master's degree student majoring in environmental science marine toxicology, are examining and conducting different analysis of several fish species to determine their exposure to the oil released in the BP Oil Spill.

This grant will also provide educational opportunities for students and teachers in the local K-12 school districts through summer workshops, Brain Bowl competitions and others enrichment activities. K-12 student participants will learn how environmental decisions impact the social and economic structure of their communities.

The Environmental Sciences Institute, which is currently referred to as the School of the Environment, was established in 1995 and became a school in 2011. It is one of several new innovative programs at Florida A&M University. The FAMU School of the Environment is a multidisciplinary unit that offers a wide range of services to students, governmental agencies, private sector companies, communities and other organizations.

The grant awarded to the School of the Environment is budgeted over the next five years, ending on June 30, 2016. For more information on NOAA's Environmental Cooperative Science Center at Florida A&M University visit <http://www.ecsc.famu.edu>.

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Charity in the U.S.: Survey to Show Nations Rise in Ranking Among More Than 150 Countries

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The second edition of a major global survey of charitable giving in more than 150 nations will show that the United States has moved up in the rankings, according to Gallup polling data that will be released in this nation by CAFAmerica (<http://www.CAFAmerica.org>) on Monday, December 19, 2011.

CAFAmerica is a member organization of the United Kingdom-based Charities Aid Foundation international network of offices, providing charitable financial services to individuals, global corporations, charities, and foundations. The news event will release the survey findings and also focus on the emerging opportunities for Americans in charitable giving on an international scale. News event speakers will be: CAFAmerica Interim CEO & Director of Finance David Venne; and Richard Harrison, director of research, Charities Aid Foundation, United Kingdom.

The first edition of the "World Giving Index" (WGI) released in 2010 ranked the U.S. fifth among all nations. The new 2011 WGI report is based on 150,000 Gallup polling interviews with members of the public in 153 countries. The 2011 report looks at three aspects of giving behavior of individuals in the preceding month,

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