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### Voter ID law assailed at NAACP banquet

**TAMMY LLOYD CLABBY**

The Rev. Nelson B. Rivers, chief operating officer of the NAACP, calls Georgia's new photo identification law "one of the worst anti-voting-rights laws in modern times."

The law would require voters to show one of a selected list of photo IDs before casting a ballot. Now that a three-judge panel of the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals has declined to lift an injunction barring enforcement of the law, Rivers hopes the state will drop its appeal.

Rivers was the keynote speaker Friday night at the 24th annual Freedom Fund Awards Banquet, for the Cobb branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, held at the Marietta Conference Center.

"We hope the state will drop this deceitful, devious plan to deny votes to hundreds of thousands of Georgians," Rivers said. "Georgia has a history of denying voting rights."

He called the photo ID law a "bold action" to deny people of color and the elderly the right to vote.

Rivers said the Georgia case, in particular, is an example of why the 1965 Voting Rights Act must be extended. Under the act, Georgia must prove to the U.S. Department of Justice that it does not discriminate against minorities when changing voting procedures. Portions of the law are up for reauthorization before Congress.

Rivers, who has harshly criticized the federal government for its response to Gulf Coast victims of Hurricane Katrina, many of whom were poor and black, said that while the Federal Emergency Management Agency was slow to act in the beginning, it has recently done better.

"We must be sure we have access to these communities. People have been overlooked and bypassed in the past. Black folk in particular have been left behind in storms. We have a partnership with the Red Cross, we knew what could happen," Rivers said.

Rivers, born in Bennett's Point, S.C., has been with the NAACP for 26 years and was one of the key organizers of the march that brought some 50,000 protesters to South Carolina in January 2000 to protest the flying of the Confederate battle flag over the South Carolina Statehouse, according to the organization's Web site.

More than 300 people attended this year's banquet. Cobb NAACP President Deane Bonner called the organization "the conscience of Cobb County."

"Now we want to expand our conscience in Cobb," she said, because the county has gone from 7 percent to 22 percent minority population.

"We want to be at that economic table," Bonner said. "When we talk about contracts and money going outside of Cobb, we should instead direct that revenue to those minorities in Cobb County."

Photo

WILLIE DAVIS / Special

The Rev. Nelson B. Rivers, with Cobb NAACP President Deane Bonner, spoke at the branch's 24th annual Freedom Fund Awards Banquet.