

THE SKANNER

CHALLENGING PEOPLE TO SHAPE A BETTER FUTURE NOW



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JUSTICE



Howard Noyd, 93, one of two attorneys given just 10 days to prepare the defense for all 43 Black soldiers who were wrongfully charged, stands with Ray Snow, son of Samuel Snow (who had traveled from Florida to attend the ceremony but was hospitalized and later died in a Seattle hospital) during the presentations of honorable discharges to the families of the soldiers wrongly convicted.

PHOTO BY SUSAN BREED

U.S. Army Formally Apologizes

Unprecedented event unites Fort Lawton survivors, officials

A top-ranking U.S. Army official formally delivered the government's apology on Saturday for wrongdoing in the conviction of 28 Black soldiers accused of rioting and lynching an Italian prisoner of war in Seattle during World War II.

The incident, at Fort Lawton, was the only time in U.S. history that African Americans have stood trial for a mob lynching.

"We had not done right by these soldiers," Ronald James, assistant secretary of the Army for manpower and reserve

affairs, said Saturday in front of hundreds of onlookers at the old fort in Discovery Park. "The Army is genuinely sorry. I am genuinely sorry."

King County Executive Ron Sims, Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels, and the Army's highest ranking Black officer, Assistant Secretary of the Army Ronald James, presided over the presentation, which also included survivors of the soldiers, military officers and one of the original defense lawyers.

The convictions were overturned in October 2008, after a years-long cam-

paign by Rep. Jim McDermott, D-Seattle, after he read the book "On American Soil." Published in 2005 by Jack Hamann, a CNN and PBS journalist, and his wife Leslie, the investigative work uncovered long-forgotten information about the riot on the night of Aug. 14, 1944, and subsequent events at Fort Lawton.

"The Army does not do this - the Army gets tens of thousands of appeals all the time," Hamman recently told *The*

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Feds Short Reserve Veterans

Audit: Guard, Reserve soldiers get second class services, care

By William Crane
Of The Skanner

The United States military has relied heavily on National Guard and Army Reserve units in the on-going wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

These soldiers are expected to fight equally on the battlefield, but a recent government audit by the Department of Veteran's Affairs concluded that when these veterans return home, their medical and other veteran's benefits are not handled the same as active duty personnel.

"Of the more than 800,000 Iraq and Afghan veterans that are eligible for Veteran's Administration care since 2002, fully half of them are members of the National Guard and Army Reserves," said Senator Patty Murray during a recent Senate hearing.

The hearing, held July 23 by the Senate Committee on Veteran's Affairs, discussed an audit report which found a lack in education, outreach and implementation of benefits to veterans, especially to those in the Army Reserves and National Guard.

Among its findings were that more than 65,000 veterans did not receive initial outreach letters regarding their veteran benefits because of "incorrect ineligibility determinations." Over half of these veterans were from the National Guard and Army Reserve.

Murray added that these non-active duty veterans are also "twice as likely to have their claims denied." Additionally, the report found that 76 percent of veteran's medical claims were not processed on time and that insufficient outreach was implemented for veterans without a high school diploma.

Sgt. Ash Woolson is an Iraq War veteran who served as part of the Wisconsin National Guard. While deployed, he first noticed differences between active duty soldiers and National Guard/Reserve soldiers on the combat zone.

"We didn't have enough body armor to go around so we would play almost a lottery system to see who would get to wear armor

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Council Passes Bag Tax, Polystyrene Ban

Lawmakers hope to reduce disposable, polluting items in landfill

Each paper or plastic bag the local store uses to pack your groceries will cost you 20 cents, starting on New Year's Day.

The Seattle City Council this week became the first city in the nation to exact a financial penalty on shoppers by charging a fee on disposable bags.

Another new law bans some polystyrene

food containers.

"These new laws are an integral part of the City's Zero Waste strategy - and translating Seattle's environmental values into concrete actions," said Council President Conlin in a statement. "They will help marine life, cut greenhouse gas emissions, and move our city toward a sustainable future."

One part of the new rules creates a fee of 20 cents for disposable shopping bags provided at convenience, drug, and grocery store cash registers, beginning on Jan. 1, 2009.

In response to citizen concerns, the Council amended the legislation to direct

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Veterans

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on any certain day," said Woolson. "We may be from different branches of the military but we are all getting shot at by the same people."

Woolson, who is a chapter president of the Iraq Veterans Against the War, was injured in 2004 as a result of a non-combat hernia and transferred to Walter Reed Medical Center.

He said that he was treated the same at Walter Reed and was even roomed with active duty soldiers during his stay. However, after returning back to civilian life, Woolson began to notice a difference between the benefits given to him.

"There was not any follow up care," said Woolson. "My health care was extended for two years, but I was not notified until a year into the extension."

The need for follow-up care for National Guard and Army Reserve members is urgent not only for physical injuries, like Woolson's, but also for Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome and other mental effects of war.

"Members of the national guard are 25 more likely to suffer a combat-related psychological wound than active duty members," said Murray. That Army Reserve and National Guard

soldiers are more prone to mental and stress related conditions illustrates the differences between these veterans and active duty per-

sonnel.

"Unlike our active duty troops who come home from battle to a military base and built-in support network, many guard and reserve members leave the battlefield and return home to family pressures and civilian jobs almost immediately," Murray said.

Active duty veterans have "Wounded Warrior Battalions" at their bases, which allow veterans to heal together.

Sgt. Erin Cooper, a veteran and member of the Iraq War Veterans Organization, sees the Fort Lewis' warrior battalion as "the best in the country." As a victim of PTSD,

"They are a lot better now than they used to be," said Cooper. "Ever since the Walter Reed [scandal] they had to straighten up as now they are always on the radar."

Cooper also mentioned that during his prior military service in Somalia that PTSD "wasn't even considered a serious condition" and sees a great improvement in benefits for veterans.

The Veteran's Administration Report recommended that there be a better mechanism and policies in place to ensure no one is denied benefits unfairly as well as to ensure a "smooth transition" from a soldier back to citizen at home.

Woolson personally believes that the answer to equal veteran benefits lies with not differentiating care based on a soldier's rank, branch of service, or type of soldier.

"Have the medical and veteran's administration treat all veteran's equal," said Woolson. "The best way to do this is to give the same benefits to all veterans, regardless."

76 percent of veteran's medical claims were not processed on time

More than 65,000 veterans did not receive initial outreach letters regarding their veteran benefits

Bags

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Seattle Public Utilities to help seniors and low-income households by distributing free reusable bags and working with food banks, people using food stamps, and shoppers receiving other forms of direct assistance.

The bag fee legislation helps businesses defray the cost of administering the program by allowing larger retailers to keep 5-cents of every bag to cover administrative costs. Small businesses, those grossing less than \$1 million annually, will be allowed to keep the entire 20-cent fee.

The clear plastic bags used for individual items such as fruits, vegetables, and bulk items will not be subject to the fee.

Seattle Public Utilities estimates 360 million disposable bags are used in the city every year.

Supporters said the law focused on these stores because they are the source of more than 70 percent of all disposable shopping bags in circulation.

Experts say plastic bags are one of the

largest forms of pollution in the world. An

Clear plastic bags used for individual items such as produce and bulk items will not be subject to the fee

estimated 500 billion plastic bags are thrown out globally every year, making their way into urban and rural food chains and impacting health.

Fortune magazine last year reported that Ireland instituted a "PlasTax" of around 20 cents on each plastic bag, reducing refuse by about 90 percent.

In Seattle, the charge applies to both paper and plastic, and city officials hope it will reduce use of disposable bags by more than 50 percent, or at least 184 million bags annually.

Councilmember Tim Burgess described the move as "a market-driven strategy to protect the environment."

"These laws are a great example of how government can help the market to implement necessary environmental change," he said in a statement. "I support this particular solution because it maintains the ability of consumers to choose whether to use their own reusable bags, or pay a fee for disposable bags provided by the store."

Some of the funds generated will be used

Experts say plastic bags are one of the largest forms of pollution in the world

to offset a portion of the needed solid waste rate increase associated with new garbage contracts.

Part of the funds collected will also go to support Seattle Public Utilities' waste prevention and recycling programs.

By preventing the manufacture of this number of bags each year, Seattle officials said they will cut greenhouse gas production by nearly 112,000 tons over a 30-year period, helping marine ecosystems by eliminating some of the plastic that ends up in the ocean and the Puget Sound.

Another part of the new proposal will ban expanded polystyrene food containers from restaurants and packaging from grocery stores, beginning January 1, 2009. In July of 2010, foam trays for raw meat and seafood will also be banned and replaced with compostable alternatives.

Officials said expanded polystyrene foam not only adds to the waste stream, but also presents a hazard for birds because it breaks up into indigestible pellets. There are better products that are readily available and serve the same purpose.

Mortgage Broker Charged With Deceptive Lending

State seeks full restitution from California-based company for deceived borrowers

OLYMPIA – An examination conducted by the Department of Financial Institutions (DFI) reveals that Paramount Equity Mortgage, Inc. (Paramount), a licensed mortgage broker headquartered in California, has engaged in a number of deceptive lending practices. As a result of the findings, DFI has given notice that it intends to revoke Paramount's license to do business in Washington, fine the firm \$500,000 and require restitution for Washington borrowers.

In a Statement of Charges issued July 21, 2008, Paramount is accused of charging and collecting unearned fees, charging consumers to buy down interest rates without actually reducing the rate, failing to make required disclosures and making state and federally-required disclosures in a deceptive manner.

Deb Bortner, Director of DFI's Division of Consumer Services, noted that deceptive fee disclosures are the basis for the revocation of the firm's license.

"Paramount failed to make proper disclosures in almost every loan we reviewed," Bortner said. "Washington has many licensed mortgage brokers who comply with the law. In today's market, we simply

do not need a mortgage broker engaged in deceptive conduct doing business in this state."

Paramount, which acts as both a mort-

DFI alleges Paramount Equity Mortgage made deceptive fee disclosures, collected unearned points and fees, and engaged in false advertising

gage broker and as a mortgage banker, made more than 1,700 mortgage loans to Washington borrowers in 2007, collecting more than \$8.7 million in fees.

The Statement of Charges also alleges that Paramount engaged in a deceptive advertising campaign.

"Washington residents are probably familiar with radio commercials featuring Hayes Barnard, Paramount's President," Bortner said. "Paramount advertised that their 'mortgage bank' offers consumers

low rates, free appraisals and guarantees the lowest interest rates and fees. In fact, Paramount is not a bank, the fees they charge more than covers the cost of the

DFI alleges Paramount Equity Mortgage made deceptive fee disclosures, collected unearned points and fees, and engaged in false advertising

supposedly 'free' appraisal, and their guarantee of the lowest rates and fees cannot be substantiated."

[in] Washington ... in 2007, collecting more than \$8.7 million in fees

Borrowers who believe they have been harmed through dealings with Paramount should file a complaint with DFI.

The Statement of Charges names Paramount Equity Mortgage, Inc., as well as its owners: Hayden D. "Hayes"

Barnard, president and 1/3 owner; Mathew J. "Matt" Dawson, designated broker and 1/3 owner; and John J. "Jason" Walker, chief financial officer and 1/3 owner. Paramount, with a main office located in Roseville, Calif., has Washington-licensed branch locations in Bellevue, Wash., Granite Bay, Calif. and Lake Oswego, Ore.

The Statement of Charges gives notice DFI intends to issue an order requiring:

Paramount's Mortgage Broker license, including the licenses of the three Washington-licensed branch offices, be revoked;

Matthew J. Dawson's Loan Originator license be revoked;

Respondents jointly and severally identify and pay restitution to any applicant or borrower harmed by their violations of the Mortgage Broker Practices Act;

Respondents jointly and severally pay a fine of \$500,000;

Respondents jointly and severally pay the examination costs of \$3,366.51; and

Respondents jointly and severally pay an investigation fee of at least \$6,200.

All four respondents have the right to request a hearing on the charges.