
Interview: Sen. Daryl L. Jones



Gov. Jeb Bush's policy is 'my way or the highway'

On Jan. 17, two African-American Florida state legislators, Sen. Kendrick Meek of Miami and Rep. Tony Hill of Jacksonville, both Democrats, began a sit-in in the state Capitol office of Republican Lt. Gov. Frank Brogan, protesting Gov. Jeb Bush's "One Florida" program, an executive order issued in November 1999 which would ban affirmative action in state contracts and university admissions.

The next day, infuriated by the protest, Bush, brother of GOP Presidential candidate Texas Gov. George W. Bush, ordered his staff to "Get their asses outta here. . . . We're going to make their lives hell for this." The remarks were recorded by a video crew, and the film was aired the next morning, making the national news. By mid-day, as 20 state legislators and about 200 protesters joined the sit-in, the governor's offices were closed and locked to anyone not having an appointment.

At a news conference later that day, Bush apologized for the remark, claiming that he was referring only to the media, and apologizing to his mother for using the "A" word.

The protest was ended after Bush agreed to delay implementation of the executive order so that public hearings could be held on the issue, and delayed a Jan. 21 Board of Regents vote on the program until Feb. 17.

But the fight against Bush's policy has really just begun. On Feb. 2, EIR interviewed one of the leaders of the protest, Sen. Daryl L. Jones, discussed the incident in the broader context of Presidential campaign politics.

Senator Jones (D-40/Monroe-Dade County) was elected to the Florida State Senate in 1992. He is Chairman of the Florida Conference of Black State Legislators, and was Democratic Senate President Designate during 1995-96. A Lieutenant Colonel in the U.S. Air Force Reserve, he served in the Air Force during 1977-89, and is a practicing attorney. Jones was President Clinton's nominee to head the U.S. Air Force, but his nomination was blocked in the U.S. Senate. Senator Jones was interviewed on Feb. 1 by Marianna Wertz.

EIR: In last week's *EIR*, we covered the altercation and sit-in with Governor Bush in Florida. In that coverage, we wrote that "Sen. Daryl Jones, head of the Black State Legislators Caucus, is speaking out against Bush's arrogant actions

preceding the sit-in." Is that true, and if so, could you tell me what you're saying?

Jones: Well, you guys published it, so it should be true, right?

EIR: Yes. I just wanted to make sure.

Jones: I don't quite put it in those kinds of terms, but I think the fundamental problem with the way Jeb Bush is handling things is that he's not inclusive enough. He's used to operating in a corporate world and not a political world, where you need to develop consensus. So, the concept of developing consensus is not a broad concept for him; it's a very narrow concept.

EIR: Could you say more about what you mean by that?

Jones: He thinks that if you talk to three or four leaders of an organization, that that's all that's necessary. He doesn't recognize, I don't think—I could be wrong, I don't want to say I can read his mind—but he doesn't recognize that people who are in politics are generally independent thinkers. While some do follow the crowd, a lot of them do not. I'm not suggesting that he needs to talk to every single person, but whenever you have major changes in policy, in this state, we have traditionally, and certainly did during the last administration, the last eight years under [Gov. Lawton] Chiles, we certainly had public hearings, to allow people to give their input, so that they would at least feel that they had an opportunity to have their say. And if you went against them, then, they would think, well, perhaps the majority did not agree with me. But they would at least feel that they had the opportunity.

The way that the Governor has now conducted these public hearings, he's preceding every public hearing by saying it doesn't matter what you say in the hearing, I'm going to do what I want to anyway. That came out in this morning's *Miami Herald*.

EIR: Was there a hearing yesterday?

Jones: No, there is one on Thursday [Feb. 3]. That is the second. The first was in Tampa, last Friday [Jan. 28], and prior to that hearing, he said again, as well as the other

chancellor, who heads our state university system here, that, regardless of what comes out of the hearing, we're moving forward.

EIR: With eliminating affirmative action in the school system?

Jones: Right.

EIR: That sounds to me like the word "arrogant" is not wrongly applied.

Jones: It's certainly not conducive to developing consensus, I will tell you that! I think that either they're totally naive about the entire situation, or don't care. I'm not sure which one it is.

EIR: To go beyond the situation in Florida itself, which I think is pretty straightforward, our article covered both Bush brothers. One is running for President and the other is your Governor. They have some similarities. One of them is the sense of arrogance, or, "It's gonna be my way or nobody's."

Jones: "Either my way or the highway!"

EIR: This is coming out in the New York primary, in George Bush's approach to who's going to be on the Republican ballot. I mention this because it fits a pattern that we're seeing in this election campaign, which we've also seen associated with the Bush family's history, of—you call it lack of inclusiveness, we have called it throwing away some of the victories won by the Civil Rights movement, including the Voting Rights Act. Do you see that happening?

Jones: On this particular issue, yes. Absolutely. But that goes to more than one issue. For example, Florida leads the nation in former felons who cannot vote. About a third of the state's population meet that criterion in Florida.

EIR: It's about 400,000 people, is that right?

Jones: Six hundred thousand.

EIR: Right, and Texas is 400,000, and those two states lead the nation.

You know that Lyndon LaRouche is the founder of our publication, and you may have followed his Voting Rights Act fight. Did you hear him when he spoke at the National Black Caucus of State Legislators conference [in January]?

Jones: Yes.

EIR: In many states he is not being allowed on the ballot by the Democratic Party. The Democratic National Committee has said that the Voting Rights Act does not apply to the question of who can run as a Democrat for President. The question I have for you is, given numerous voting rights questions, including all of those, how do you think this can be changed? What kind of mobilization are you involved in

to try to reverse these kinds of things in Florida?

Jones: We're looking at lawsuits. In fact, I spoke with attorneys yesterday, for the purposes of filing against the state either under the Voting Rights Act or some other theory of law that will permit us to take on this unpopular issue. But I think it's very important.

In addition, we're going to have a march the first day of the session, in Tallahassee, which is March 7, one of those old '60s-style marches. We're lining up national speakers. It's going to be a great event. We expect to have something in the neighborhood of 20,000 people there.

EIR: Maybe you'll be surprised like they were in South Carolina, when they marched against the Confederate flag.

Jones: Right, it will be a similar event. I think it will be one that will catch the nation's attention. We're kind of excited about that, because we think it will have an impact.

EIR: On March 7, there are primaries in Maine, California, Connecticut, Georgia, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, Vermont, Ohio, Rhode Island, Missouri, and Hawaii. It's a big day.

Before that, what is going to happen on this issue in the state? There's been one hearing, there will be another hearing on Feb. 3.

Jones: And then there's one more in Tallahassee next week.

EIR: Then you expect that the governor will simply implement the policy?

Jones: On Feb. 17, the Board of Regents will vote, and I can tell you with absolute certainty, that if the Board of Regents votes on Feb. 17, to do exactly what they were planning on doing before, and they do not make a substantive change to their policies, of major significance, it's going to be all we can do to keep that place from rioting on the 17th. Those folks are going to be fired up. They're going to be very upset.

EIR: Why do you think Jeb Bush is pushing to end affirmative action now?

Jones: All the papers around here are saying that it's because Ward Connelly was in Florida, and Bush was trying to stave off Ward Connelly, in an effort to prevent a large Democratic and/or black turnout in the 2000 elections, which could, if motivated, jeopardize the outcome of his brother's election in the state of Florida. What more embarrassing thing could you have happen to you than if you can't deliver your state to your brother?

Ward Connelly is a member of the Board of Regents in California, who has successfully passed ballot initiatives in both California and the State of Washington, to get rid of affirmative action. So, he's doing that in Florida now, too. He's trying to accumulate the signatures necessary to do so.

We have a different process in Florida. You have to take your ballot language in Florida through the State Supreme Court. You didn't have to do that in those other two states. So he was trying to stave off that effort, to keep that initiative off the ballot, so that he wouldn't have a large turnout to vote against it.

I'd try to create the environment that would help my brother get elected if I were in his position. But by taking this "my way or the highway" approach to his "One Florida" initiative, he's actually doing just the opposite. If he really wanted to win for his brother, instead of keeping the people from eating who were involved in the sit-in, he should have served them, personally! Instead of refusing to talk to people, he should have gone out and said, "Look, I understand you've got a problem. I'll cancel all my appointments. Let's talk."

If he had taken those kinds of actions, gotten out breakfast, said, "Look, I know you guys haven't had much to eat, come in the Lieutenant Governor's office or my office. There's a spare office bed, you can lay down a little bit better, here's some blankets. We've got a couple of pillows for you. I'll come in the morning, serve you breakfast and we'll talk," he could have disarmed the entire situation with a response like that.

EIR: Instead, he just shut the door.

Jones: He shut the door and he exacerbated it every way possible, including using foul language on TV.

EIR: He denied that he was speaking about the legislators. He said he was speaking of the press.

Jones: They were all in the same room. They were all in the Lieutenant Governor's office together. So, how can you say you're talking about one and not the other? You're talking about both.

EIR: Anything else you'd like to say on this?

Jones: I know you've got a concern as to whether or not this is reflective of what George W. would do and how he would react. Neither one of them held office before becoming Governor. Both are lacking in political experience and, probably, good instincts. I think there's a meteoric rise, no question about it, for both of them.

I would say that, and you can investigate this on your own, people I know in Texas, when I tell them about what's going on in Florida, tell me, "Well, this is a re-run of what happened to Texas." They view their Governor as having the same heavy-handed policies and attitude toward dealing with people in general.

EIR: Jeb Bush said that he was modelling his death penalty policy on his brother's policy.

Jones: He was a little tougher than his brother was. His

brother requires a unanimous vote in order to send somebody to death. Jeb Bush only requires seven out of 12 on a jury.

EIR: His brother, however, has executed more people than any governor in the history of the United States.

Jones: Yes. And that's what happens when you have certainty in the jury. In our state, there's no certainty. You only need seven votes, and 75% of the verdicts are split, and 76% of all verdicts come back on appeal, with appellate court reversal. Because they are very wary of split-jury verdicts.

EIR: That doesn't happen in Texas.

Jones: No, they're unanimous.

EIR: You've seen Mr. LaRouche in action, you saw what he did at the National Black Caucus of State Legislators meeting. What's your thinking about his campaign and his Presidential qualifications?

Jones: Well, I don't know about his qualifications, I can't really speak to that. But I would say that he's fighting an uphill battle, no question about that. I think that he's got a message that he's clearly trying to get out, and that it is an attractive message for those of us who have been shut down in various ways.

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e-mail: larouche@larouchepub.com