

DETROIT CHAPTER



National Association of Black Journalists

October 17, 2003

Darren A. Nichols, DC-NABJ President
(313) 222-2396

DETROIT NABJ DISMAYED OVER DECISION, CALLS FOR REFORM

DETROIT – The decision by the National Association of Black Journalists to not hold the convention in Detroit is “a huge disappointment,” DC-NABJ President Darren Nichols said Friday. NABJ President Herbert Lowe said Friday that the group would not hold its annual gathering here in 2006, despite naming Detroit in 2002 as the host city.

“We truly believe that Detroit would have been the ideal site for the convention, and we are dismayed that the country’s largest journalist organization of color will not be here in 2006,” Nichols said. “This experience clearly demonstrates a need to develop a site selection process, so that other cities and chapters don’t undergo this type of tumult.”

During an Oct. 10 conference call with the national board, the local chapter addressed all of the group’s concerns over space, sponsorship and transportation. On Tuesday, the Detroit Metro Convention & Visitors Bureau also submitted a new bid package with \$128,000 worth of incentives to NABJ’s national board.

The Detroit chapter is asking local chapter presidents to join in its call for an overhaul of the convention site selection process, which should include:

- A formal request for proposals and bid process to host a convention. Chapters, in concert with the local convention bureau, would be allowed to make a formal bid. A selection committee that would include at least one board member, a regional director and two personnel from the national office would choose three finalists. A site visit by that committee – again engaging the local chapter – would be mandatory before any selection is made. A formal presentation of the bid by the local chapter would be permitted at the national board’s meeting before the vote.
- A written policy stating that the local chapter must be informed every step of the way before, during and after the bid process, and must be alerted of its loss or win of the convention before any announcement is made. The policy would also state that a contract must be signed with that city before the announcement.

Nichols also thanked the countless residents, local chapter members, business, community and political leaders who lobbied on the city’s behalf, following the national board’s Oct. 4 vote to strip Detroit of the convention and award it to Indianapolis. More

than two dozen letters were also forwarded to the national organization, along with more than 100 emails sent directly to Lowe.

The following individuals, groups and companies contacted Lowe: Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick, Gov. Jennifer Granholm, U.S. Sen. Carl Levin, U.S. Sen. Debbie Stabenow, Wayne County Executive Robert Ficano, American Bar Association President and former mayor Dennis Archer, Detroit City Councilman Alonzo W. Bates, Compuware Corp., DaimlerChrysler, General Motors Corp, The Detroit Tigers, WXYZ (Channel 7), WWJ Radio (News 950), Comerica Bank, Strategic Staffing Solutions, The Detroit News, The Detroit Free Press, The Detroit Newspaper Guild, The Detroit Branch of the NAACP, Detroit Renaissance and The Detroit Regional Chamber.

“We know that this effort to keep the convention would not have received national’s ear without the incredible outpouring that came from this community,” Nichols said. “Detroiters made it clear that we will stand up for our city, because it has so much to offer.”

Despite the loss, Nichols said that the local chapter is committed to NABJ’s core mission of the retention and promotion of black journalists and encouraging diversity in media coverage.

DC-NABJ, one of the national organization’s oldest affiliates, has more than 80 members in Southeast Michigan. Besides serving as a sentry post on issues of diversity in hiring and coverage, the group awards annual college scholarships, has provided training to high school teachers and helps educate community groups about accessing the media.