

June 2009

# NomineeAlert

## Spriggs' Background

Chairman, Howard University  
Department of Economics

Senior Fellow, Economic Policy  
Institute

Director, National Urban League  
Institute for Opportunity and  
Equality

Chair, Independent Health Care  
Trust for UAW Retirees of Ford  
Motor Company

Board Member, Retiree Health  
Administration Corporation

Editor, State of Black America

Economist and Special Advisor in  
the Office of the Under Secretary  
for Economic Affairs, Department of  
Commerce

Senior Advisor to the Associate  
Deputy Administrator for  
Government Contracting and 8(a)  
Business Development, Small  
Business  
Administration

Senior Democrat Economist, Joint  
Economic Committee of the U.S.  
Congress

Chair, UAW Retirees of the Dana  
Corporation Health and Welfare  
Trust

Vice Chairman, Board of the  
Congressional Black Caucus Political  
Education and Leadership  
Institute

Board Member, Black Enterprise  
Magazine Board of Economists

Assistant Professor, Norfolk State  
University

Professor, North Carolina A & T  
State University

## EDUCATION

B.A., Williams  
Ph.D., University of Wisconsin-  
Madison



## this issue:

William E. Spriggs, Nominee for  
Assistant Secretary of Labor  
for Policy

## Who is William E. Spriggs? Racism causes every problem...

On June 9, 2009, President Obama nominated William E. Spriggs to be Assistant Secretary of Labor for Policy.

The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Policy (ASP as it is known in-house) within the Labor Department is responsible for clearing every regulation that the Department promulgates. As such the views of the person heading this office have a tremendous affect on the nation's workforce.

Though he is an economist, Spriggs seems to have little faith in the market or free trade.

"Opinions expressed by the [National Black

Peoples Unity Convention] panel of Anderson, Malveaux and economists William Spriggs and Maya Rockey Moore would roll back a great deal of the market-based reforms that have led to two decades of unfettered globalization and stagnation of American wages. Anderson suggested a constitutional amendment guaranteeing full employment at a living wage. Spriggs suggested that globalization be rolled back to protect American jobs." Fn.2. In April of 2008, as the recession was tightening its grip on

the economy, Spriggs co-authored a report urging a substantial increase in the minimum wage. Specifically, Spriggs advocated "increasing the minimum wage so that it regains the value that it

had in the late 1960s and then indexing the minimum wage so that it rises as prices rise would provide a safety net for those workers who do not have bargaining power with their employers." This would raise the minimum wage to over \$9 an hour. Fn.3.

Spriggs disrespects the rights of states and thinks the government in general is too small. "We all understand that there is a certain size government," Dr. Spriggs told the crowd of appreciative activists at

the Campaign for America's Future "Failure of Conservatism" conference. "We are below what it takes to run our government. . . . Unfortunately, one of the things that conservatives have sold us on is states' rights," Dr. Spriggs avers. "**States generate the worst economic policies. . . . The red states are dictating policy to the rest of us.**" Fn.4.

**"In the United States,  
everything is racial."**

*-William Spriggs, Fn.1.*

**"The Labor Department doesn't  
need a blatant racist running its  
policy shop. President Obama  
should withdraw Spriggs'  
nomination and replace him  
with someone who looks for real  
solutions and doesn't blame  
every economic problem in the  
U.S. on racism."**

*-Bill Wilson, President, Americans  
for Limited Government*

Continued next page...

## Sources for further reading:

**Fn.1.** *Roundtable on Constructing and Coping with Incarceration and Family Re-Entry: Perspectives from the Field*, National Center on Fathers and Families, November 2001. Available online at: <http://www.ncoff.qse.upenn.edu/roundtable/incarcerated-rt.pdf>. (Accessed June 26, 2009.)

**Fn.2.** Equal Results Needs to be Goal: Panelist: Blacks should capitalize on opportunities secured during civil rights era, *The Post-Tribune* (Merrillville, IN), March 10, 2006 at A4.

**Fn.3.** Steven C. Pitts, Ph.D., and William E. Spriggs, Ph.D., *Beyond the Mountaintop: King's Prescription for Poverty*, U.C. Berkeley Labor Center, April 4, 2008. Available online at: [http://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/blackworkers/mountaintop\\_report.pdf](http://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/blackworkers/mountaintop_report.pdf). (Accessed June 26, 2009.)

**Fn.4.** *Reparations Now In Our Lifetime!*, Newsletter #21, August 2001. Available online at: <http://www.thelawkeepers.org/replet106d.htm>. (Accessed June 26, 2009.)

**Fn.5.** Steve Miller, *Black leaders say rift exists with immigrants*, *THE WASHINGTON TIMES*, May 9, 2003, at A01. Available online at: <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2003/may/09/20030509-083413-9343r/>. (Accessed June 26, 2009.)

**Fn.6.** Deborah Kong, *Recession Toughest for Minorities*, *ASSOCIATED PRESS*, January 9, 2002.

**Fn.7.** Hazel Trice Edney, *Poor Economy Turns Tables on African-Americans*, *MISSISSIPPI LINK*, January 30, 2003, online edition.

**Fn.8.** Alfred Lubrano, *The black perspective: Polls show that African Americans are far more likely to oppose the war in Iraq than are white Americans. The question is, why?*, *THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER*, April 6, 2003, at C01.

# What you really need to know about Spriggs

*Continued from first page...*

## **Spriggs appears to view everything from a race, gender, and class perspective.**

"In the United States, *everything* is racial. The reason that racist policies have continued to exist is that racism involves an unexamined set of assumptions." (Emphasis in original.) See Fn.1.

In 2001, Spriggs supported paying reparations to African countries. "Dr. William Spriggs, an economist at the National Urban League, said it was disingenuous for the U.S. to justify its refusal to address reparations by maintaining that the conference needs to 'move forward'." Spriggs asked, "How can we 'move forward' if we can't look back?" Fn.4.

## **Spriggs is disappointed that black immigrants often do not feel sufficiently victimized.**

"When we talk of housing disparities, education problems...many [immigrants] don't think that affects them," said William Spriggs, executive director of the National Urban League Institute for Opportunity and Equality. "Black politicians . . . haven't been able to get [black immigrants] to buy into what white America is all about, about what white privilege is. Immigrants don't come here with that understanding. We have to change our language to let them know that these are their problems." Fn.5.

## **Spriggs prefers to blame discrimination rather than other plausible causes for racial differences.**

"Bill Spriggs, director of the National Urban League's Institute for Opportunity and Equality, believes there is something else behind the disparities: discrimination. That becomes especially apparent in a downturn, he claims. "

"It's harder to discriminate when the labor market is tight," Spriggs said. "When the economy slows down, suddenly, from an employer's perspective, there are enough white applicants. They never have to get to black or Hispanic applicants." Fn.6.

## **Spriggs believes employers don't want to hire minorities and only do so when there are not enough whites to go around.**

"Overall, as jobs are lost, new jobs are not being generated. It's like an extreme game of musical chairs, said Bill Spriggs, executive director of the National Urban League Institute for Opportunity and Equality, a Washington-based research institution that focuses on social and economic issues."

"Imagine there's a keeper on the line of chairs," he said. "The idea is that the rule of the line is that white folks get to sit down first. So, it's really employer preference. There are enough employers that it slows down the job search for African-Americans. We have to do more interviews to land a job than white folks do, which means we're unemployed for a longer period of time, which gets us the higher unemployment rate." Fn.7.

## **Spriggs has a record of ill-considered and reckless comments, such as these about affirmative action and the war in Iraq.**

"Nobody minds us fighting and dying," says William Spriggs, executive director of the National Urban League Institute for Opportunity and Equality in Washington. "But everyone is up in arms about our going to college." He was referring to those opposed to affirmative action at the University of Michigan, whose entrance policy is part of the Supreme Court case. Fn.8.

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