

# Public Policy Perspectives

## The Buy 90 Campaign

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**D**uring the past biennium, the Grand Public Policy Committee emphasized the development and dissemination of policy research and analysis that would provide Archons with information they can use in public discussions of issues affecting the African American community. We commend the committee's efforts and work in educating Archons in the area of economic empowerment. It is now time to forge into the future with action.

The Grand Public Policy Committee continues to recognize that economic empowerment is one of the many issues affecting the African American community. The committee acknowledges one such action plan to economically empower the African American community, the Buy 90 Campaign. The committee endorses the Buy 90 Campaign and urges other member boudés to implement the Buy 90 Campaign or other similar programs that might encourage support of black-owned businesses in their communities.

A ninety-day grassroots campaign in Southeast Texas encouraging consumers to patronize African American-owned businesses has rendered astounding results. Economist Dr. Dwight Steward conducted the economic impact analysis. Businesses selected to participate in the campaign presented data showing that their expected growth for 2005 was 3.78 percent. However, as a result of the Buy 90 Campaign, these businesses saw a 2005 actual growth of 315.47%.

Our activist forefathers fought a great fight for social reform. We applaud their dedication and success in the social changes they wrought, and now we must marshal that same spirit and tenacity to fight for economic reform. While we realize pushing for economic reform will cause confrontation, this generation has a responsibility to our forefathers, ourselves and our children to sacrifice our time, talent and resources to economically empower our community.

It is time to plug the hole in our boat on the economic front. As a people, we have made great strides in various areas; however, without economic strength, every gain made will be lost. Historically, we have tried broad, shotgun-style approaches to empower African American businesses. For example, we have tried

“black dollar days” to remind America of the strength of our money, we have published black business directories to help people find black businesses and we have aggressively campaigned for blacks to do business with blacks throughout the years. We recognize the results of those and other shotgun-style efforts, but it is now time to add the “rifle” approach.

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One rifle approach to the economic battlefield is called the Buy 90 Campaign. This concept identified and promoted five black-operated businesses (BOBs) in southeast Texas for ninety days. A gas station, a restaurant, a bookstore, a car-washing facility and a hair/beauty product supplier were promoted for ninety days in a community-wide publicity campaign. The five targeted BOBs all experienced significant growth in

the months following the Christmas season – traditionally a difficult quarter economically. What is more remarkable is that other BOBs not specifically targeted also saw significant growth. While the Buy 90 Campaign focused on very specific businesses, the community’s mindset began to change. Non-targeted BOBs who shared their earnings information brought equally good or better news than those specifically targeted.

There are many plans and discussions on how to economically empower our community, but there are very few that give a step-by-step roadmap for implementation. The Buy 90 Campaign not only gives a blueprint, but also a statistical analysis of its success.

The white man’s ice is not colder, his water is not wetter and his gas does not make your car drive faster. If one black business fails us, we have a tendency to mark every black business off our list. We don’t apply the same principal to other businesses owned by non-African Americans. We have got to get out of that mode of thinking or our entire race will succumb in our leaking economic boat. It will not be the white man’s fault, the President’s fault or anyone else’s fault. It will be our own fault for not supporting one another.

Some people will suggest that when we fight to economically empower the African American community, we are being racist, promoting segregation, or practicing reverse discrimination. Banks, Jackson and Hampton wrote a song entitled “If Loving You is Wrong, (I Don’t Want to be Right).” I support BOBs because of my love for my people and my desire to see them prosper. If that love is wrong, then I don’t want to be right. When all of America’s people can sit at the table of economic prosperity, then we will have a better America.

