

President Trump Makes a Big Move for Historically Black Colleges

Contrary to what Senate Democrats wanted to project during debate over Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos' confirmation, President Donald Trump meant every word when he said he thinks education is vital to the success of African-Americans living in inner cities.

And while DeVos' reforms of the Department of Education are likely to go a long way toward helping children, the president has taken it upon himself to help those who are already seeking higher education through one of the nation's historically black colleges and universities. Meeting with the leaders of those colleges, he took action not even the nation's first African-American president, Barack Obama, was willing to take.

The president was reportedly expected to sign a new executive order Tuesday to boost HBCUs by moving the office responsible for working directly with them to the White House. The leaders of those institutions will also serve as ad hoc advisers to his urban renewal agenda.

Dr. Leonard L. Haynes III, who served as Obama's executive director of the White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities, which was housed in the Department of Education, hailed the move:

"It would be truly, truly historic. It's part of a long-time dream ... none of (the other presidents) had the courage to do it."

Vice President Mike Pence and DeVos also held a listening session with the HBCU leaders during their visit to the White

House. Both pledged to help the colleges, which suffered financial hardship and declining enrollments under the Obama administration's policies on college loan debt.

"Our administration, at the president's direction, is working to find new ways to expand your impact so that more students, especially in the underserved communities in this country, have the chance at a quality education," Pence said at the meeting. "We want to partner with you. We want to partner with you to help train the students of today to face the challenges and to lead in America tomorrow."

The White House issued the following readout of the meeting:

The White House Domestic Policy Council hosted a listening session today with over 60 presidents and chancellors of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Before the listening session, all of the HBCU leaders were invited to meet President Trump and Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos in the Oval Office.

In the listening session, Vice President Mike Pence, along with Secretary DeVos, addressed the HBCU leaders. The HBCU listening session also included representatives from several executive departments and agencies, such as the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and White House offices such as the Office of Management and Budget and the Office of Legislative Affairs. The HBCU leaders discussed ways they could improve education and enhance the infrastructure of their schools. Participants shared expert insights on policy issues impacting their individual campuses.

Vice President Pence emphasized President Trump's commitment to making HBCUs a priority again. Participants shared best practices and ideas on how to create a better partnership between the Trump Administration and HBCUs.

The listening session also included representatives from leading HBCU organizations: Thurgood Marshall College Fund,

United Negro College Fund and National Association for Equal
Opportunity in Higher Education. {eoa}