

## Republicans Make Bid for Black Vote in Fla.

Contributed by Jason Lawrence -- Black College Wire  
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"Rejecting health care reform is three steps in the wrong direction."

Florida's 2010 mid-term election season is setting historical precedents and it's causing quite a stir in the national media.

GOP gubernatorial candidate Rick Scott appeared in Orlando on Sept. 2 for the first time with his pick for lieutenant governor -- a black woman. His running mate is Florida representative from District 13 in Jacksonville, Jennifer Carroll, a Trinidadian-American who moved to Florida in 1986. She received her B.A. in Political Science from the University of New Mexico and her M.B.A. from St. Leo University, a private catholic institution in Central Florida. She is also a decorated, 20-year Navy veteran, who touts being the only black Republican in the state House.

Scott's pick is definitely a bold one. And it's rather hard to say whether or not this is a ploy to attract Florida's staunch Democratic black voters.

"I didn't know Rick Scott. He shared his background...We connected as if we were long-lost buddies," Carroll said in an interview on "Political Connections," a Tampa Bay commentary news show which airs on Bay News 9.

During the primary, Carroll supported Scott's opponent, Bill McCollum, whose mainstream Florida GOP supporters still aren't sold on his campaign. Nonetheless, Scott is confident that Carroll's nomination will be a plus for him in November.

But Scott shouldn't be so sure that he will capture black voters just by shoving a candidate who looks like them in their faces.

If Florida's black voters examine Scott's platform, they'll find that he and his running mate are against the health care reform bill, which will benefit so many in their districts. According to his website, Rickscottforflorida.com, "Scott believes that our health care system should focus on choice, competition, accountability and personal responsibility." In other words, he supports insurance companies running rampant, charging absurd premiums for minimal coverage. Carroll also supports a health care system with little regulation. If these two have teamed up for the sole purpose of reaching across ethnic lines this election, rejecting health care reform is three steps in the wrong direction.

Scott also supports teacher merit pay and says that he would have signed SB-6 this past legislative session if he'd been governor. Voting for a candidate who supports a measure that would keep experienced teachers at high-performing schools and newer teachers in underfunded, low-performing schools would be a mistake for black voters. Furthermore, if this duo's intentions are indeed to cross racial and socio-economic barriers with this union, then backing laws to protect and improve low-performing school districts should be a platform point, even if the backing is moderate.

Carroll's lifetime membership and service to the NAACP may also help round up black votes. Her association is a bit ironic in this election since the NAACP is known for gathering black votes for Democratic candidates. Nonetheless, this just might help her cause, granted she has at least some support from NAACP chapters across the state, over Democratic gubernatorial candidate Alex Sink.

Sink, though unfazed by Scott's choice, does not think voters will be influenced by Carroll's presence. "I think people when they go to vote, they're past all these gender and racial issues. They're really looking at the candidates and the messages and the commitments that the candidates have to changing the future of Florida," Sink told the Miami Herald.

As the race to Tallahassee bolts toward November, we can expect campaigns on both sides to become more devious. And all the mudslinging could end up denying the Scott-Carroll ticket admission into the Capitol.

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Jason Lawrence writes for The Famuan, the Florida A&M University student newspaper, which originally published this article.

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