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Best Headlines Honorees At Black Press Breakfast

In honor of Black Press Month and Women's History Month, The Seattle Medium Newspaper Group and the Z-Twins Radio Stations (1420 KRIZ, 1560 KZIZ, and 1620 KYIZ) will honor 50 Women from the community as trailblazers and role models at their Annual Black Press Breakfast this Fri., Mar. 20 at Mt. Zion Baptist Church in Seattle.

The sold out event will not only honor the legacy of the Black Press, but it will also highlight the achievements and trailblazing efforts of the honorees who come from diverse industries including media, education, health, civic engagement, community service, business, government and law enforcement.

"Since its inception in 1970, The Seattle Medium has been a partner with freedom fighters, equal and civil rights activists, and people who just make a difference in the lives of others," said Chris H.



Seattle Police Deputy Chief Carmen Best

Bennett, chairman of The Seattle Medium and Kris Bennett Broadcasting. "The inalienable rights that we enjoy today are a direct result of community organizations and people working collectively for the greater good of our community, so it is only fitting that we honor 50 women from all walks of life and professions that have and will continue to have a positive impact on our community."

"All of these women are remarkable as individuals, and collectively they are very powerful," continued Bennett. "I'm excited to see all of these women in the same room at one time. This is going to be a very engaging and powerful event."

This year's Black Press Newsmaker of the Year award will be presented to Seattle Police Deputy Chief Carmen Best. Best, who has worked for the Seattle Police Department since 1992, currently oversees patrol operations, criminal

investigations, special operations bureaus, and the community outreach section with the department.

"This is the first time that we've honored this many women from our community at one time," says Bennett. "But when you look at people and organizations that are making a difference in our community, you will find, more often than not, that women are the backbone of these efforts. And the fact that this event sold out so fast is a testament to honorees, the work that they do in the community, and the connection that the Black Press has with our community."

A complete list of bios of all recipients is available in a Special Black Press Supplement inside this week's edition of The Seattle Medium and Tacoma True Citizen newspapers. The information will also be available online at seattlemedium.com.

Major Data Breach Of Premera Blue Cross Affects Millions In Washington, Oregon And Alaska

OLYMPIA — On Tuesday, Premera/Blue Cross announced it has been the target of a major data breach.

The breach affected Premera Blue Cross, Premera Blue Cross Blue Shield of Alaska, and its affiliated companies, Vivacity and Connexion Insurance Solutions, Inc. It impacts millions of individuals in Washington, Oregon and Alaska.

According to Premera Blue Cross, it is unclear at this time what information was taken, but it may have included Social Security numbers, dates of birth, mailing and email addresses, telephone numbers, member identification numbers, bank account information and claims information (which includes medical information). The Federal Bureau of Investigation is working with Mandiant, a cybersecurity firm, to find out more about the attack and who was behind it.

"I'm very concerned about this and other data breaches that put Washingtonians at risk," Attorney General Bob Ferguson said. "My team is looking into what happened, and we will do everything we can to protect consumers."

The breach was discovered Jan. 29, 2015 and Premera has determined that the breach was the result of a May 5, 2014 cyberattack. The source of the attack is not yet known.

The company is offering two years of credit monitoring to all customers, ID theft restoration services and ID insurance through Experian. Customers can visit www.Premeraupdate.com to sign up for the services.

Premera/Blue Cross reports it is in the process of setting up a dedicated call center to handle breach-related questions. Affected consumers will also receive notices.

For more information, visit www.Premeraupdate.com.

Record Number Of Former Workers Without Benefits

By Freddie Allen
NNPA Senior Washington
Correspondent

WASHINGTON (NNPA) — With no federal unemployment insurance and rapidly disappearing state coverage, the percentage of people benefiting from unemployment insurance is at its lowest level in more than three decades, according to a report by the Economic Policy Institute (EPI), a Washington, D.C.-based think tank focused on low- and middle-income families.

EPI said the unemployment insurance reciprocity rate tumbled to 23.1 percent in December 2014, beating the previous record low of 25 percent set in September 1984.

State lawmakers continue to slash jobless benefits, enacting policies that make it harder for the programs to work effectively. The policies have a disproportionate impact on unemployed Blacks who often face greater challenges than Whites, as they struggle to

stay connected to the labor market and make ends meet while they search for jobs.

"Many critics of UI programs wrongly assume that the lion's share of jobless workers get benefits," stated the report. "This is plainly wrong over the history of UI and especially in the more restrictive states. The U.S. short-term reciprocity rate was 34.7 percent in 2014, meaning that over 65 percent of short-term jobless workers did not get state UI benefits."

The report continued: "Some of the difference may be due to workers' choices or preferences, but some may reflect discrimination in hiring and the reported reasons for separation from those jobs, both of which can affect eligibility."

Even though unemployment rates are higher for Blacks than Whites, Blacks are less likely to receive unemployment benefits even when compared to workers with similar characteristics.

"One in 4 unemployed

non-Hispanic white workers with less than a high school education receive UI, while 1 in 8 unemployed non-Hispanic black workers with less than a high school education receive UI," the Urban Institute report explained. "This means many low-wage unemployed African American workers are likely suffering more economic hardship than their white counterparts—an especially adverse outcome given that African Americans likely have fewer assets to fall back on."

In a press release about the report, Rick McHugh, an attorney and policy advocate who works on UI issues, said that a smaller percentage of jobless workers is receiving unemployment benefits than ever before.

"Because there were no federal benefit extensions in 2014, workers who exhausted state benefits had less protection from the harm caused by unemployment than any similar cohort of jobless

workers since the late 1950s—when Congress first began benefit extensions," said McHugh.

And according to a 2012 report by the Urban Institute, an independent public policy and research group, "Black unemployed workers have the lowest receipt of unemployment insurance, 23.8 percent compared to whites' 33.2 percent."

Since 2011, the states that cut how long workers could receive unemployment benefits were primarily in the South where most Blacks live. Excluding Oklahoma, Arizona and South Dakota, 7 out of 10 states with the lowest short-term UI reciprocity rates in 2014 have higher percentages of Black residents than the national average.

"In 21 states, 70 percent or more of short-term jobless workers did not get UI benefits in 2014," stated the EPI report.

The report said that jobless workers in Louisiana (32.4 percent Black population), Georgia (Cont'd. On Page 2)

Bill Would Require Post-conviction Preservation Of DNA

By Rachel La Corte
Associated Press

OLYMPIA (AP) — DNA evidence can be the turning point for a post-conviction appeal, but whether or not it still exists years later is often no guarantee.

A bill that has passed the House and is awaiting action in the Senate would require DNA collected in any felony case charged as a violent or sex offense to be

preserved through the length of the offender's sentence, including post-prison community custody. In cold cases, where no one has been charged or convicted, the DNA would have to be maintained throughout the statute of limitations for the crime.

Under current law, there is no requirement to preserve DNA evidence after a conviction, though defense attorneys can

seek a court order to do so.

"People find it astonishing that this evidence can just be thrown away," said Lara Zarowsky, policy director for the Innocence Project Northwest at the University of Washington's Law School.

Rep. Tina Orwall, the sponsor of House Bill 1069, said she was indeed surprised to learn

there weren't standard protocols across the state. Orwall, a Democrat from Des Moines had previously sought an 18-month moratorium on the destruction of DNA evidence in some criminal cases. The measure she introduced last year would have also created a work group to recommend permanent, statewide standards for preserving DNA material. It was later

amended to remove the moratorium but still never came up for a vote in the House. Orwall said that she and other lawmakers and others met four times for work groups on the issue between June and January to discuss this year's approach.

"At the end of the day, we do want justice," she said. "We don't want innocent people in prison and we don't want

violent offenders on the street."

Zarowsky said most states have varying laws on how long to preserve biological evidence and that Washington is one of several that don't automatically preserve DNA for serious felonies. In Washington, once convicted, defendants must file motions to have evidence preserved for use during possible (Cont'd. On Page 2)