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The Seattle Medium

A Message From The People... To The People

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AG Files \$100 Million Suit Against Comcast

By Rachel La Corte
Associated Press

OLYMPIA (AP) - Washington State Attorney General Bob Ferguson on Monday filed a \$100 million lawsuit against Comcast, saying the cable and internet giant deceived customers into paying tens of millions of dollars in fees for a "near-worthless" service protection plan.

Ferguson, who filed the lawsuit in King County Superior Court, said at a news conference that in addition to its misleading service protection plan, Philadelphia-based Comcast committed more than 1.8 million violations of the state's Consumer Protection Act by charging improper service call fees and using improper credit screening practices.

"This case is a classic example of a big corporation systematically deceiving Washington state consumers and putting profits above those consumers," said Ferguson said.

According to the lawsuit, Comcast misled 500,000 customers in Washington state by having them pay a \$4.99 monthly fee to avoid being charged if a technician visited their home to fix an issue covered by the plan. But Ferguson said the company didn't reveal that the plan didn't cover repairs to wiring inside a wall. As part of the investigation, customers contacted Comcast numerous times. Ferguson said that 75 percent of the time, Comcast representatives falsely told the customers that the plan covered all inside wiring.

More than \$73 million of the amount that Ferguson is seeking is for restitution to customers who paid for the protection plan over the past five years.

"Comcast needs to pay that money back," he said.

The remainder of the amount he is seeking is for restitution for charging improper service call fees and for penalties related to violation of the state's consumer protection act. The lawsuit says that Comcast violated that act to all of its nearly 1.2 million customers in the state because of its deception. He noted that the Washington lawsuit was the first on this issue in the country, though the company's service

protection plan is a nationwide program. Ferguson said he's not yet aware of any other states planning to sue the company.

"Over and over and over again, Comcast most certainly did not play by the rules," Ferguson said.

Ferguson said that the investigation began after an

employee of his office brought the credit screening issue to his attention. Comcast requires a deposit for equipment, but customers can have that

deposit waived if they undergo a credit check and have a high credit score. However, Ferguson said that on more than 6,000 occasions, deposits were

paid by people who still had their credit checked, meaning that either Comcast wrongfully ran a credit check in spite of the

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Clinton Asks Nation To Empathize With Victims Of 'Systemic Racism'

By Hazel Trice Edney

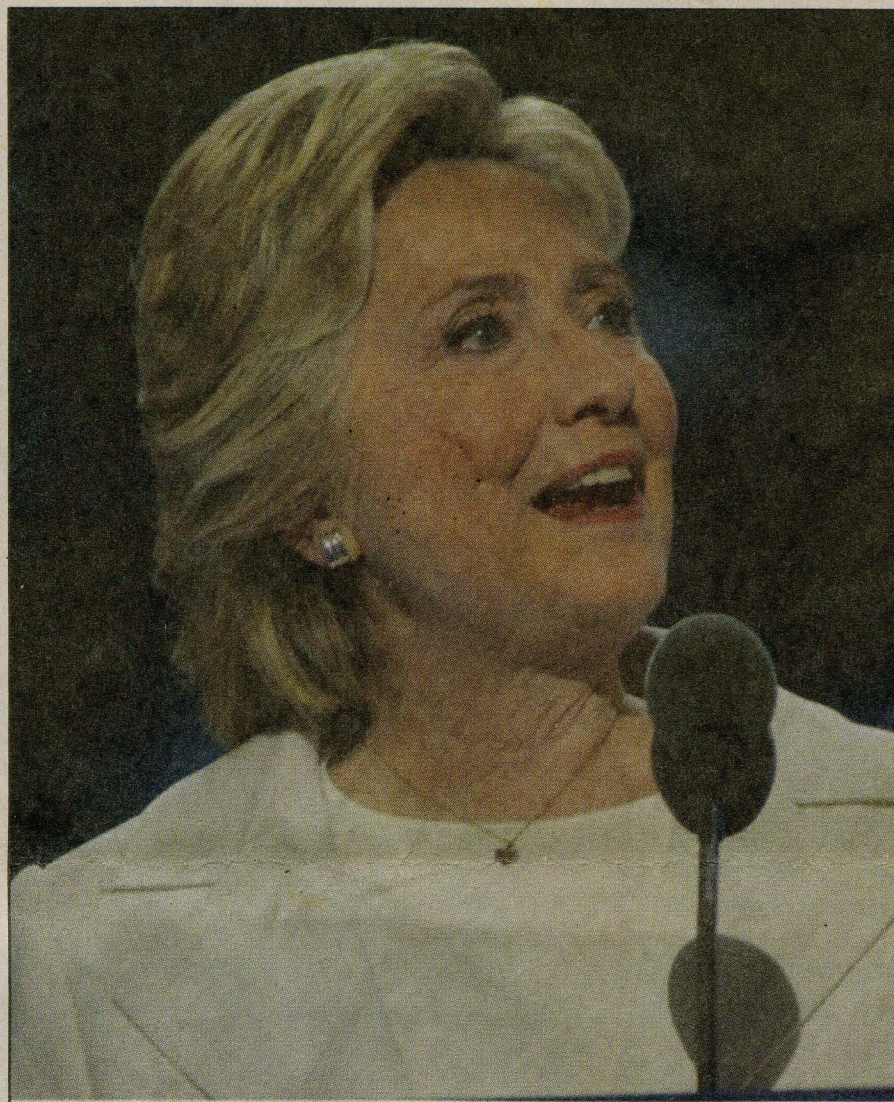
PHILADELPHIA, Pa. (Trice Edney Wire) - Hillary Clinton, in her convention speech accepting the Democratic nomination to the presidency, asked America to seek understanding of victims of "systemic racism", promised to fight gun violence, push for deep changes in the criminal justice system and jobs for inner city neighborhoods.

The four issues - touching on police killings of Black people, disparate unemployment, unequal criminal justice - are among the key bread and butter issues on the minds of African-Americans.

"We have to heal the divides in our country, not just on guns but on race, immigration, and more. And that starts with listening, listening to each other, trying as best we can to walk in each other's shoes," Clinton told the audience of thousands at the Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia and millions watching by television and online. "So let's put ourselves in the shoes of young Black and Latino men and women who face the effects of systemic racism and are made to feel like their lives are disposable. Let's put ourselves in the shoes of police officers, kissing their kids and spouses goodbye every day and heading off to do a dangerous and necessary job."

Clinton's comments accepting the nomination came on the heels of extreme racial strife across the nation. Among them are new community uprisings over the killings of Alton Sterling of Baton Rouge, La. and Philando Castile of Falcon Heights, Minn. by White police officers as well as the killings of five Dallas police officers and three Baton Rouge police officers by Black vigilantes.

The speech also came after eight years of an almost steady decrease in unemployment rates with Black rates still twice the number of Whites; thousands of African-



Democratic Presidential Nominee Hillary Clinton

Americans being killed by gun violence on an annual basis and a climate in which African-Americans are incarcerated nearly six times the rate of Whites, according to the NAACP.

In recent years, more than 90 percent of Blacks cast their voting ballots for Democrats and more than 94 percent for President Obama in his first and second elections. Clinton is clearly focusing on issues of importance to African-Americans as she angles for the Black vote which political analysts predict will be pivotal in this election.

She continued, "We will reform our criminal justice system from end to end, and rebuild trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve. And we will defend - we will defend all our rights: civil rights, human rights, and voting rights; women's rights and workers' rights; LGBT rights and the rights of people with disabilities.

And we will stand up against mean and divisive rhetoric wherever it comes from."

In the 50-minute speech, much of which responded to issues espoused by her Republican opponent Donald Trump, a key focus was on gun violence, including ways to thwart mass shootings - an issue on the minds of most Americans regardless of race. In that regard, Clinton promised to defy the National Rifle Association, which typically backs political candidates that oppose new gun laws.

"And if we're serious about keeping our country safe, we also can't afford to have a president who's in the pocket of the gun lobby. I'm not here to repeal the Second Amendment. I'm not here to take away your guns. I just don't want you to be shot by someone who shouldn't have a gun in the first place," she said. "We will work tirelessly with responsible gun owners to pass common-sense

reforms and keep guns out of the hands of criminals, terrorists, and all others who would do us harm."

Speakers at the convention gave strong endorsements of Clinton often wrapped in soaring rhetoric and even sermons.

First Lady Michelle Obama appears to have received the most applause with her electrifying speech Monday night. But the "Mothers of the Movement", including the mothers of Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner and Michael Brown, also won the hearts of the audience on Tuesday as they recalled the wrongful deaths of their sons. On Wednesday, President Bill Clinton told the story of how he met Hillary Clinton; and vice presidential candidate Tim Kaine dug into Trump, saying, "his false assurances that he will make us safer, address immigration, fix the economy, and protect small businesses, seniors, families and veterans are nothing

more than lip service."

A reflective President Obama also spoke on Wednesday, essentially outlining the issues that the next president will face.

"Yes, we've still got more work to do. More work to do for every American still in need of a good job or a raise, paid leave or a decent retirement; for every child who needs a sturdier ladder out of poverty or a world-class education; for everyone who has not yet felt the progress of these past seven and a half years. We need to keep making our streets safer and our criminal justice system fairer, our homeland more secure, our world more peaceful and sustainable for the next generation," he said to applause. "We're not done perfecting our union, or living up to our founding creed that all of us are created equal; all of us are free in the eyes of God."

Those prime time speeches by politicians were watched by millions. But civil rights leaders also brought the conventioners to their feet.

North Carolina NAACP President, the Rev. Dr. William Barber was among them. "We are being called, like our mothers and fathers, to be the moral defibrillators of our time," he said. "We will shock this nation and fight for justice for all... We will not give up on the heart of our democracy, not now, not ever!"

And the Rev. Jesse Jackson Sr. himself a two-time presidential candidate, encouraged the people to fight, seemingly wrapping up the strategy next four months in a nutshell.

"We've never lost a battle we fought. And we've never won a battle unless we fought," he said. "In 1965, we fought and won the battle for the historic Voting Rights Act. That journey continued in 1984 and 1988, when we built a winning coalition, registering and empowering millions of new voters reflecting the new America."

City Council Committee Approves Mandatory Housing Affordability Program

On Tuesday, The Seattle City Council's Planning, Land Use & Zoning committee unanimously (5-0) approved framework legislation that would require that residential developers provide for affordable housing by either including it in their development or paying into a fund used to support the development of affordable

housing in Seattle.

"This program is one of the most ambitious efforts Seattle has ever undertaken to address our growing need for affordable housing in our city," said Councilmember Rob Johnson (District 4, Northeast Seattle), the legislation's sponsor. "This bill sets the stage to create affordable housing that will stay affordable for 75 years

to serve current residents and future generations of Seattleites."

Under the program, if residential developers create rental housing, a select number of units must be made affordable to households earning up to 60% of Area Median Income (AMI), or \$43,380 annually for a 2-person household. If developers to create housing for

homeownership, a select number of units must be made affordable to households earning up to 80% of AMI, or \$55,450 annually for a 2-person household. The number of required affordable units would be established by future legislation, as would the required amount of funds to be alternatively paid into an affordable housing development fund.

The Committee also adopted a series of amendments, including prioritizing that projects using the affordable housing development fund are developed near the projects that paid into the fund; that housing units be kept affordable for a term of 75 years; that when an affordable rental unit is converted to an ownership unit, the existing tenant has

a right of first offer; and that accountability requirements be imposed to ensure that projects remain affordable. Additionally, Councilmembers took steps to address the risk of displacing low-income populations from Seattle.

"Our amendment creates consistency between our anti-displacement efforts and commits to

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