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Inglis discusses deficit, unfair sentencing in NAACP address
Lawmaker keynote speaker at group's annual fund-raising event

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Rep. Bob Inglis, R-Greenville, the keynote at a major fund-raiser for the NAACP's annual Freedom Banquet, spoke Friday about issues ranging from the nation's \$300 billion deficit to unfair sentences for blacks using crack cocaine.

Inglis, recently re-elected to Congress, said he was thankful that NAACP has since its inception in 1909 tweaked "the conscience of a nation" to face up to tough issues with its patent gentleness.

"The NAACP brought about changes without guns and without violence," he said to a dinner audience at the Greenville Hilton.

He said the NAACP has helped America champion diversity, an issue he described as one of the nation's strengths.

Advertisement The Freedom Fund Banquet is the NAACP's signature fund-raiser. Every branch across the country holds a similar event to help operate its chapter. Inglis said he considered it an honor, as a white man who is Republican, to be invited to address the NAACP.

Inglis said one of the issues that is so perilous to America irrespective of party affiliation is the deficit, which has increased 33 percent since 2001.

"If we don't get this budget problem under control, there aren't going to be any jobs."

Dinner guest Jason Jenkins reacted to Inglis' addressing an audience that was mostly black Democrats.

"He was honest," Jenkins said. "That was a tough crowd for him."

He said Inglis meant well, but it was obvious he "didn't understand our problems."

In another instance, Inglis said he has been forced to split with some supporters -- even Republicans -- because it was simply wrong.

"People like me took a personal dislike of Bill Clinton," he said. "And it was wrong."

He said Roger Owens, president of Save Our Sons, a Greenville nonprofit that targets blacks who commit juvenile crimes, helped him understand his "blindness" when it comes to "mandatory minimum sentencing."

He said blacks using crack are given harsher five-year sentences while whites using cocaine draw one-year sentences.

"There's not a difference from powder cocaine and crack cocaine," Inglis said. "We need to correct our mistakes."
