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Health - AP

N.C. Approves Sterilization Compensation

Sun Sep 28, 1:44 PM ET

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WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. - Survivors from among the thousands of North Carolina residents who were involuntarily sterilized by the state over five decades will be compensated in the form of health care and education.

Gov. Mike Easley quietly approved a list of recommendations last month, including education benefits through the University of North Carolina and access to a health care fund.

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Easley also approved a plan to help those who were sterilized negotiate the maze of medical records needed to confirm their stories.

The cost of the measures hasn't been determined.

Easley apologized in December for the actions of the Eugenics Board of North Carolina, which ordered sterilizations of about 7,600 people from 1929 through 1974.

Most of the victims were poor women who were often talked into sterilization by social workers. Inaccurate labels of "feeble-mindedness" were often used as justification based on eugenics, the movement to solve social problems by preventing the "unfit" from having children.

Easley established a committee which recommended the programs and other concessions.

Several victims say they are not happy with the way Easley handled the process, making the compensation decision without notifying the public or the victims.

Several victims and the members of the study committee continue to push for financial reparations.

State Rep. Larry Womble has introduced a bill that would create a legislative study commission to consider reparations.

Some people say reparations are unrealistic in a time when the state is dealing with falling revenues, climbing unemployment and the recovery from Hurricane Isabel.

But Womble said he is "keeping hope alive."

"I'm not so naive as to not realize that there are other priorities, but at the same time this should take top priority."

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