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The monthly magazine of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies

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King's Dream for the Millennium

This year, Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday coincides with the dawning of a new century and a new millennium. This coincidence challenges us to address the future and to consider where we stand as a society and as a community as we enter a new era. It is fitting to personify this process by looking at the life of King, who was so instrumental in shaping the society we live in today.

King devoted his life to the establishment of social justice everywhere in America. He fought his greatest battles in the South at a time when African Americans living in that region of the country struggled under a system of officially sanctioned racism.

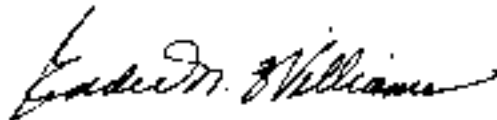
To fully understand the significance of King's contribution, it's necessary to have a grasp of conditions in the South in the mid-1950s before he took on the mantle of drum major for justice. At that time, African Americans were turned away from white-owned restaurants, lunch counters, motels, and public swimming pools simply on the basis of their skin color. Most other facilities were segregated—schools, buses, movie houses, parks, even drinking fountains. Jim Crow laws barred all but a small fraction of black people from voting. They were excluded from juries and elected office, as well as any position having to do with law enforcement or the administration of justice. Those who even questioned these conditions literally put their lives on the line.

In 1955, when King became pastor of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, he was 26. Within months of taking that pulpit, he was called to lead the Montgomery Improvement Association's boycott of the city's segregated bus system. During a year-long mass protest, he was tempered by adversity. He was jailed, his home was bombed, death threats were constant. King's courage and gift of oratory inspired the black citizens of Montgomery not to surrender to fatigue and inconvenience. When the White Citizen's Council harassed the boycotters, King preached that love would prevail over bigotry and hatred. By December 1956, the perseverance of those who shunned the buses did prevail. The U.S. Supreme Court ordered the desegregation of the Montgomery buses and the modern civil rights movement was launched.

King became emblematic of the thousands of Americans of all colors who marched, demonstrated, and even died to secure social justice and human dignity for all. He dedicated his life to a great dream that America would one day fulfill its promise of equality. He also dreamed of a society that acts with more compassion toward its least fortunate citizens. These ennobling principles of justice, equality, and compassion are as relevant today as when Dr. King spoke of them so eloquently more than three decades ago.

His life was ended by a man who finally made good on the many death threats King lived with. But the

assassin's bullet could not snuff out the dream King had for our society especially to bring all people together. At the March on Washington in 1963, King expressed the hope that one day we would "transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood." We're not there yet, to be sure, but remembering King's dream, not just on his birthday, but throughout the year and this century, will help us keep our eyes on the prize and measure our progress. ■



PRESIDENT



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conducts research on public policy issues of special concern to black Americans and promotes informed and effective involvement of blacks in the governmental process. Founded in 1970, the Joint Center provides independent and nonpartisan analyses through research, publication, and outreach programs. Opinions expressed in signed FOCUS articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies. FOCUS is published monthly by JCPES, Inc. Subscription price: U.S. \$15.00 per year.

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A Pivotal Election Year

Citizens Will Choose a New President and Members of Congress in Races That Will Decide the Course of the Nation in the 21st Century

by David C. Ruffin

With the Iowa caucuses and the New Hampshire primary upon us, the 2000 presidential campaign has commenced in earnest. This election year is a pivotal one for the political future of the nation, and much is at stake. The next president will bring to the White House his own set of policy priorities and appoint between 3,500 and 4,000 officials to cabinet departments, independent agencies, and regulatory commissions. Each year, the president will preside over a federal budget of nearly \$2 trillion and pick 200 or more federal judges for each term he serves. Perhaps most important, the next president will fill at least one and possibly three Supreme Court vacancies, thereby determining the character of American justice for a generation.

Not only will voters select a new occupant of the White House, but 33 U.S. Senate and all 435 U.S. House seats will be contested (as well as the five delegates from U.S. territories and the District of Columbia). The new administration and the 107th Congress will face an array of issues. Among these are ensuring a quality education for all children, extending health care to all families, addressing ongoing racial discrimination, stimulating minority business development, ending racial profiling, and ensuring the solvency of the social security system.

At the state level, 11 gubernatorial and hundreds of state legislative races will be decided. These contests will determine party majorities in state senates and houses of representatives. The party that captures the governor's mansion and the state legislature in any given state will have the biggest say in how congressional and state legislative district boundaries are drawn. Reapportionment of congressional districts will take place in 2001 using the results of this year's census. Whether states will lose representatives or gain them will be based on population shifts. Reapportionment in turn will trigger a redistricting process within the states which will determine how many legislative districts are created where African Americans can have a reasonable chance to be elected.

In accordance with the Voting Rights Act as amended in 1982, 13 new majority- or near-majority-black congressional districts were formed following the 1990 Census, all but one in states of the Old Confederacy. But more than half of those districts have been challenged in federal courts by right-wing groups, and in several cases the outcome has been that the percentages of the black voters in the districts have been dramatically reduced. In future

court battles over redistricting, the makeup of the U.S. Supreme Court will play a decisive role. Appointments to top positions in the Justice Department are also crucial because the department, through its Civil Rights Division, pre-clears all state redistricting plans.

What Government Should Do

The most important race this election year is the race for the White House. In addition to assessing presidential aspirants' competence, experience, integrity, and compassion, minority and low-income voters will take a hard look at the candidates' philosophies on government. As in other election years, underlying the campaign rhetoric are two fundamental questions: What should the government do? And how much should be spent on government programs? We have seen over the last three and a half decades—from the presidency of Lyndon Johnson to that of George Bush—how widely the answers to these questions can differ from one administration to another.

The strong activist presidency of Lyndon Johnson fostered some of the most dramatic social changes in this society since President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal in the 1930s. A southerner who embraced the civil rights movement, Johnson was instrumental in securing passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. He made first-time appointments of African Americans to the U.S. Supreme Court, the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve, and the Cabinet. He also pushed through Congress legislation establishing major social programs as part of his plans to usher in what he called a Great Society: Medicare, Medicaid, Head Start, the Job Corps, Food Stamps, and financial aid programs for college students.

The record of Richard Nixon, who followed Johnson into the White House, was a mixed one. While Nixon presided over the codification of affirmative action, he was less zealous in the enforcement of civil rights laws and statutes than Johnson. With a focus on "black capitalism," he formed the Office of Minority Business Enterprise. He also funded sickle cell research and minority health programs. But Nixon tried to repeal much of Johnson's Great Society legislation and succeeded in killing the Office of Economic Opportunity, which funded community-based programs.

Black voters provided the margin of victory to Jimmy Carter in key states during the 1976 election. Carter returned the favor by expanding the number of black

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officials managing federal agencies and by naming more African Americans to federal judgeships than in all previous administrations combined. During his one term, he also worked to fully fund Head Start and many of the other social programs that provide a hand up to the poor.

During Ronald Reagan's administration, from 1981 to 1989, African Americans lost ground in the area of civil rights for the first time since the 1920s. Not since Woodrow Wilson had a presidential administration been as hostile to the interests of minority and low-income Americans. Reagan applied a meat cleaver to funding for social programs across the board. He delayed financing for emergency AIDS research after the disease was discovered in the early 1980s. He failed to vigorously enforce civil rights laws and attempted to end affirmative action. Reagan said that constitutionally elected black members of Congress were not legitimate black leaders and refused to meet with them. He even vetoed a bill to impose economic sanctions against South Africa's apartheid regime (the veto was overridden by Congress).

George Bush campaigned on the theme of a "kinder and gentler" government. However, Bush refused to restore funds to programs that had suffered from Reagan's budget cuts. He also used Willie Horton, a black prison inmate who committed a violent crime while on a furlough, as a poster boy for his "tough on crime" approach to the administration of justice. In what many African Americans viewed as an affront, Bush appointed Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Justice Thurgood Marshall. For his opposition to affirmative action, support for limiting the rights of the accused, and support for the death penalty, Justice Thomas has been condemned by a broad spectrum of black leadership and many others.

Locking Up Children

How the next administration addresses national issues going into the new century will depend on who is elected president in November. High on the list of issues of special concern to African Americans is juvenile justice. A bellwether of any society's greatness is how it treats children, its most vulnerable citizens, and it is clear that too many American children are not faring well. According to a 1998 report by the Children's Defense Fund, that year 5,753 children were arrested every day in America. This statistic is indicative of an alarming policy trend. Elected officials seeing the political benefits of being "tough on crime" have enacted measures, including racially disparate drug laws requiring mandatory minimum-term sentences, that have increased youth incarcerations. Policy makers have moved away from proven approaches to intervention and crime prevention. Many states are on an upward spiral of spending for prisons. Minority youth have been disproportionately burdened by these policies.

Most young people behind bars today are convicted of nonviolent drug possession offenses. Few policy makers, however, are advocating alternatives to incarceration that could be humane and effective and still ensure public safety. In many cases, residential drug treatment coupled with counseling and remedial education should be substituted for imprisonment. Such approaches foster rehabilitation and are cost effective. The average cost of incarcerating a juvenile for one year is between \$35,000 and \$64,000. Even the low figure of \$35,000 is many times higher than the cost of residential drug treatment. Juvenile incarceration is also more expensive than America's most expensive colleges, Harvard University for example costing \$34,340 a year. And the current cost of Head Start, a successful early intervention program, is only \$4,300 per child per year. The question is: will the next president permit the "lock 'em up" approach to juvenile justice to continue, or will he support programs designed to reclaim at risk youth?

Racial Profiling

Another major racial justice issue that the next occupant of the White House should address is racial profiling. African Americans, Latinos, and people who appear to be from the Middle East are often singled out, searched, and detained by law enforcement officials on the nation's highways, at airports, and at ports of entry because they are perceived to fit a "criminal profile." This racial profiling is widespread and affects men and women of all ages and incomes.

Among the victims of "driving while black or brown" or DWB, the most common form of profiling, have been actor Wesley Snipes, former NFL football star Marcus Allen, California Assemblyman Kevin Murray of Los Angeles, and Christopher Darden, prosecutor in the O.J. Simpson murder trial. On many occasions, excessive and unnecessary police force has resulted in injury or death. In 1998, state troopers on the New Jersey Turnpike shot and wounded two African Americans and a Hispanic youth in a van the officers had pulled over for speeding. The young men were unarmed and were on their way to basketball tryouts at North Carolina Central State University. In 1995, businessman Jonny Gammage died after sustaining compression wounds to the neck and chest inflicted by police officers who stopped him for "erratic driving" in a suburb outside of Pittsburgh. Racial profiling has been going on for years, but while it has received some press attention, little has been done at the federal, state, or local level to curb this form of police abuse.

Addressing Continuing Discrimination

Racial discrimination is deeply rooted in our culture and institutions. From the Emancipation Proclamation to the passage of the Voting Rights Act, the greatest progress in arresting the effects of discrimination has come about through the actions of the federal government. There is overwhelming evidence that racial and gender discrimination remains a barrier to education and employment for a

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Rising Black Leaders

With the Graying of Black Leadership, the Baton Is Being Passed to A New Generation With New Skills and Styles

by David C. Ruffin

A new generation of black elected leadership is rising. In Washington, where African Americans had virtually no lawmaking leverage before the mid-1960s, those who founded the Congressional Black Caucus are now retired or retiring. The still expanding ranks of that group are increasingly dominated by young and newly elected black representatives, a contrast to their longer serving predecessors whose seniority accrued them many pivotal subcommittee and committee chairmanships.

For the newer black members of Congress, as well as newly elected leaders in other offices around the country, the challenges are twofold: to address the often technical policy issues of the new millennium with the right tools, and to leverage their influence without the advantages of long incumbency. Black members of Congress (except Republican J.C. Watts of Oklahoma) have the added challenge of trying to be effective as members of a minority party. The four black elected officials featured here, Jesse Jackson, Jr., Harold Ford, Jr., Joe Rogers, and Carl Washington, seem well equipped to succeed in a changing political environment.

Jesse L. Jackson, Jr.

As the son of Jesse L. Jackson, Sr., the famed two-time presidential candidate and human rights leader, Jesse Jackson, Jr., represents at once both the past and the future of black leadership. He considers his March 11, 1965, birth to be auspicious since it came in the midst of the Selma march for voting rights led by Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., John Lewis (now a Democratic congressman from Georgia), and Jackson's father. The younger Jackson believes himself destined to carry on the work of that generation. A child of his father's struggles and causes, Jesse Jackson, Jr., spent his 21st birthday in jail after being arrested for protesting the system of apartheid at the South African Embassy in Washington, D.C. He continued in his father's footsteps, serving as vice president at-large of Operation PUSH (People United to Serve Humanity) and as national field director for the Rainbow Coalition, an activist multiracial coalition.

But unlike his father, Jesse Jr. has sought political influence through a traditional path. On December 12, 1995, at the age of 30, he was elected as a Democrat to the U.S. House of Representative from Illinois's 2nd congressional district in a special election to succeed Democratic Rep. Mel Reynolds, who had resigned from Congress after

an August conviction on charges of sexual misconduct. In the short campaign, Jackson's famous name and the fact that Chicago has been the home base for Operation PUSH and the National Rainbow Coalition contributed to an easy victory. Jackson currently sits on the powerful House Appropriations Committee, serving on the Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education as well as the Subcommittee on Foreign Operations and Export Financing. He has aligned himself with the power structure of the national Democratic party organization, serving as secretary of the Democratic National Committee's Black Caucus.

Despite differences in political methods, the father and son are ideologically similar. On House floor votes, Jackson is a reliable backer of labor, reproductive rights, environmental protection, and gun control. He was one of 98 Democrats who refused to support the compromise welfare overhaul bill that President Clinton signed into law in 1996. Jackson also tried to eliminate a directive that would permit housing authorities to evict indigent tenants who failed to perform community service, and he sought to exempt senior citizens, the disabled, and people who care for young children. Jesse Jackson, Jr., is a graduate of Washington's prestigious St. Albans School for Boys, he earned a bachelors degree from North Carolina A & T State University, and he holds a master of arts in theology from the Chicago Theological Seminary and a law degree from the University of Illinois College of Law.

Harold E. Ford, Jr.

Like Jesse Jr., Democrat Harold Ford, Jr., follows in the footsteps of his father—in this case quite literally. When his father, Harold Ford, Sr., retired in 1996 after 22 years in the U.S. House of Representatives, the younger Ford ran for his Memphis-based 9th Tennessee congressional district seat and won easily. The Fords of Memphis are a politically powerful family, and Harold, Jr., had the advantage of running in a 60 percent black district and having uncles on the city council and county council and in the state senate. Only 26 years old when he was elected, Ford was the youngest freshman in his class. A graduate of the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Michigan Law School, his position as a congressman is Ford's first real job. Prior to his election, he had been a special assistant at the Department of Commerce, a summer aide to then Senator James Sasser (D-Tenn.), and part of the Clinton 1992 transition team.

Rising Leaders...

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Ideologically, the younger Ford differs considerably from his liberal father. One indicator of this is that, this summer, he joined the House “Blue Dogs,” a coalition of 30 conservatives to moderates who make up the right wing of the Democratic party. Ford is one of only two African Americans in the group, which has only three women, one of them a Latina. Ford sees his ability to cross color and political lines as an advantage and eschews the politics of protest. While he won his first election easily with 61 percent of the vote, he tripled his support among white voters and garnered an even more impressive 79 percent of the vote.

Joe Rogers

When he was sworn in on January 12, 1999, Joe Rogers, age 34, became the nation’s youngest lieutenant governor. Rogers is a very different type of up-and-coming young black leader on several counts: First, he is a Republican. Second, he holds statewide office in Colorado, a western state whose black population is quite small. And third, his mother received public assistance when he was a child, so he did not have a privileged background like Jesse Jackson, Jr., or Harold Ford, Jr. Rogers grew up in a black and Hispanic working-class neighborhood in the northeast part of Denver. His family received food stamps and welfare benefits for eight years. An outstanding student, he worked his way through Colorado State University and went on to graduate from Arizona State University College of Law. While in law school, Rogers held a clerk position under U.S. District Court Judge Robert Broomfield. Rogers was recognized for his legal skills when he won Arizona State’s first national championship in the American Bar Association Negotiation Competition, a contest involving some 80 U.S. law schools.

Rogers’ run for lieutenant governor was not his first attempt at elected office. In 1996, he ran unsuccessfully for Congress from Denver’s 1st district after liberal Democratic Rep. Patricia Schroeder announced her retirement from the House. He ran on a platform of “family values” and business development, job creation, and reducing taxes. Despite the fact that his family once needed welfare assistance, Rogers said, “the future isn’t about the next social program.”

As lieutenant governor, he heads the Colorado Commission on Indian Affairs, which addresses Native American issues in the state. He also serves as the state’s representative to its high technology industries, such as aerospace, telecommunications, biotechnology, and environmental education. His advocacy of “personal responsibility” rather than welfare and of keeping taxes down, as well as his anti-gun control stance, places him squarely in line with Republican conservatives and at odds with many other black leaders.

Before running for elected office, Rogers served as staff counsel to Colorado’s former U.S. Senator Hank

Brown in Washington, D.C. In 1989, he joined the law firm of Davis, Graham & Stubbs, one of the oldest and largest firms in Colorado. During his nearly four-year tenure at the firm, Rogers devoted 25 percent of his time to community service and represented the firm on a six-month assignment to the Colorado Bar Association’s Lend-A-Lawyer program, where he provided no-cost legal services to the poor in rural southeastern part of the state.

Carl Washington

Another emerging black leader is Democratic California Assemblyman Carl Washington, a street leader. At his election in November 1996, Washington, 31, became the youngest member of the California legislature. A life-long resident of southeast Los Angeles, he represents the state’s 52nd Assembly District, which includes some of the L.A. area’s most economically depressed and gang-ridden communities, such as Compton and Watts. An ordained minister, Washington gained fame when he brokered a truce between gang factions in Los Angeles in 1992, a period of severe neighborhood unrest. Before running for the legislature, he was the senior deputy for Los Angeles County Supervisor Yvonne Burke.

In the legislature, Washington serves on the powerful Rules and Appropriations committees as well as on the Labor and Employment, Public Safety, and Education committees. He has authored, sponsored, and supported legislation addressing such issues as education, recidivism in California’s prisons, crime and violence, employment, and economic growth. But he has been particularly focused in his fight against school violence. The state legislature recently enacted a bill named for him—the Carl Washington School Safety and Violence Prevention Act—which allocates \$100 million to school districts and county offices of education for school safety and violence prevention programs. Washington began his fight to include counseling, violence prevention, and school safety as components of comprehensive educational services during a special legislative session addressing education in January. He authored the legislation well before the tragic incidents at Columbine High School in Colorado, based on his personal experience as a gang counselor and his work to broker a truce between warring South L.A. street gangs.

He chairs the select committee on Compton Unified School District and is a member of the select committees on Aging, Corridors of Economic Significance, Prison Construction, and Capitol Security. Washington also is a member of the National Council of State Legislators, the California Legislative Black Caucus, the National Black Caucus of State Legislators, and the NAACP. He also serves as a member of the American Philanthropic Association and the National Young American Awareness Campaign. Locally, he is an active member of Lynwood’s Community Violence Task Force, Compton’s Public Safety Committee, and the Gardena Valley and New Frontier Democratic Clubs. ■

FOCUS Essay: The Struggle Goes Online

African Americans Will Face a New Form of Disenfranchisement If They Don't Embrace the Technological Revolution

by Karen DeWitt

Despite dire predictions, doomsayers, and apocalyptic seers, the world as we know it did not crash and burn at midnight on January 1st. Computers blinked on. E-mail arrived. The coffee maker brewed coffee. Traffic lights, airlines, clock radios, ATMs, gas stations, and elevators—all continued to work in 2000 as they did in 1999. Through ingenuity and preventative measures, we survived what might have been a technological catastrophe.

But compared to the challenges that have confronted African Americans, the threat of the Y2K bug was nothing. We are old hands at survival. We've triumphed over slavery, segregation, and discrimination. The negative images the media often convey to characterize our communities haven't kept the majority of us from holding down jobs, raising decent families, educating children, and maintaining a rich spiritual and community life.

We have made immeasurable contributions to the cultural wealth and social advancement of this nation as well as to peoples in other parts of the world. From the hip hop rhythms borrowed for a Madison Avenue commercial to the cutting-edge styles transformed for the fashion runways of Paris and Milan, black creativity permeates and defines much of American culture.

Our continued fight for equality established a momentum that has driven people everywhere to demand equal rights. Black South Africans took a few pages from the civil rights struggles in Montgomery and Selma as they developed their own strategies to end apartheid. As Eastern Europeans were finally severing their oppressive bonds with the Soviet Union in the twilight of the Cold War, they sang "We Shall Overcome."

The potential power and impact of our reach is increased by the technological revolution that is now sweeping over borders and shattering language and cultural barriers around the world. This revolution has indeed changed the world. During the conflict in Kosovo, it enabled journalists to report what was happening to the outside world via cell phones even while it was happening. It has powered the Dow Jones to new heights, fueled not by the traditional manufacturing industries of the past but by billion-dollar e-commerce companies that were unheard of 10 years ago. It has placed Gates and Dell before Rockefeller and Ford in the pantheon of industrial giants.

Even more important, the technological revolution has empowered millions of individuals who have used the

Internet as a venue for start-up businesses and online classrooms. Need to find out about the effect of a new medicine for diabetes? Search the net for a diabetes group and join an online chat. Looking for a new job? Find out about a company on the net before you apply or create and send a resume enhanced by an audio narrative and a photo. Wonder whether you'd like to attend a particular university or college? Check out their website and take a virtual tour of the campus, then apply online. Does your child need to find out what Martin Luther King said at the March on Washington or when he accepted the Nobel Peace Prize? Click on the Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project at Stanford University. Want to contact your senator about a position he's taken or a judicial nomination you support? Do it by e-mail.

The technological revolution offers African Americans a unique opportunity. Computers, Internet, the World Wide Web are connective tools that erase many of the past hurdles to power. The Internet allows millions of people to go around, under, or over the opposition that stands in the way of their dreams and desires. And it is truly colorblind.

But African Americans have got to be connected to join this revolution, a revolution that many of us are coming to late. We lag behind in computer literacy as well as connectivity to the Internet in what has been dubbed the "digital divide." Inner-city schools and libraries are the last to get wired. Far too many poor people and people of color are ill-equipped to prosper from the global economy. This amounts to technological disenfranchisement.

Until the 1960s, we were kept out of political power because Jim Crow laws denied us the ballot. Today we may be excluding ourselves from the economic mainstream because of technophobia or that all too common excuse: it costs too much. Except for the poorest of the poor, a computer and Internet connectivity are within the reach of anyone who can afford a VCR, a cell phone, or certainly a big-screen television. If you belong to a church—the bedrock of our communities and mother to many of our economic, civil rights, and political gains—buy a computer and an Internet connection and provide access to the congregation. Now is not the time to falter. We must respond to this new technological challenge to our survival. While holding on to the gains of the past, we must launch a new struggle for social and economic empowerment—this time online. ■

A Pivotal Election...

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large segment of the population. Discrimination continues to be a widespread and serious problem. In 1999, almost 55,000 race and gender discrimination cases were filed with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). One of the most useful remedies to discrimination available to government and the private sector is affirmative action. Through numerical remedies and goals and timetables, affirmative action has been a potent strategy for providing opportunities to minorities and white women who are equally qualified with white men.

The common myths—that affirmative action gives women and minorities unfair preferences, imposes quotas on employers, or requires them to hire unqualified people—are untrue. Less than two percent of all discrimination claims before the EEOC are for “reverse discrimination,” and the EEOC has found that only 0.2 percent of these complaints have merit.

Affirmative action has been under attack from many quarters, threatening to reverse the progress America has made in ending discrimination. The Supreme Court’s *Croson* and *Adarand* rulings against minority business set-asides have been devastating. Referenda have struck down affirmative action in state employment, education, and contracting in California and Washington State. Conservative members of Congress have introduced legislation that would eliminate affirmative action in all federal programs. And Florida Republican Governor Jeb Bush plans to issue an executive order eliminating affirmative action in his state. In the absence of a better method of addressing ongoing discrimination,

the next president should back affirmative action as a policy and seek ways to improve its effectiveness.

Judicial Appointments

Finally, each president makes a lasting mark on American justice by filling vacancies on the federal bench. Through his judicial appointments, a president extends his influence on public policy well beyond his tenure in office. Federal district and appeals court judges and Supreme Court justices serve life terms and make major rulings on issues such as affirmative action, privacy, free speech, the separation of church and state, and reproductive rights. They not only interpret the Constitution, they often make law. Supreme Court rulings like the landmark *Brown* school desegregation case and the *Miranda* case protecting the rights of the accused are two important examples. Since the mid-1980s, however, decisions by the High Court’s conservative majority have eroded statutes and legal precedents protecting rights in both areas of the law. Affirmative action policies in particular have been savaged by the Court.

To get a sense of black participation on the federal bench, a look at the records of President Clinton and the three presidents who preceded him is instructive. In seven years, Clinton has appointed 56 black judges out of a total of 338, about 17 percent. Carter, who served only one term named 38 black judges to the federal bench among his 265 appointments, more than 14 percent. By contrast, only seven (2 percent) of Reagan’s 385 appointments were African Americans. Bush did a little better at 13 of 195 (7 percent). Clinton’s appointments of women to federal judgeships of all racial and ethnic backgrounds, at 100, is nearly equal to the combined total of his three predecessors (Bush appointed 37, Reagan 32, and Carter 41). ■

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TRENDLETTER

POLITICAL REPORT

by David C. Ruffin

Senate Races that Blacks Could Decide

This year, a great deal of attention is focused on the House of Representatives, where the GOP holds a slim five-vote majority. However, 33 U.S. Senate seats are up for election, and several are likely to be won by small vote margins. In a number of these close senate races, African Americans could cast the votes that will decide the outcomes. Profiles of some of these key elections follow.

New York

When four-term Democratic Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan announced his retirement last year, the path to his open seat was clear for the high visibility non-candidates of Democratic First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton and New York Republican Mayor Rudolph Giuliani. Serving his second term in Gracie Mansion, Giuliani had served earlier as U.S. attorney for Southern New York. Rodham Clinton, who recently established a residence with her husband in Chappaqua, New York, has never held elected office, but she has extensive political experience as the First Lady of Arkansas and the United States, and is one of the President's chief advisors. She will

use her credentials as an advocate for children and healthcare to appeal to a Democratic base.

This personality-driven race will attract all the media attention befitting the Empire State. And next to the presidential election, it will probably be the nation's most expensive. Projections are that the two sides will spend between 30 and 40 million dollars.

Giuliani caught flak for being too slow to recognize the seriousness of the police brutality cases involving Abner Louima and Amadou Diallo, immigrants from Haiti and Senegal respectively. Giuliani was rebuked for his policy of arresting unemployed homeless people as well. But Rodham Clinton has made missteps too, notably in her decision to step away from her husband's offer of presidential clemency to imprisoned Puerto Rican nationalists. She has also been criticized for not having the campaign organization to reach out to core groups in the state: African Americans, Latinos, and working people.

Missouri

The race between Republican Senator John Ashcroft and Democratic Governor Mel Carnahan is already shaping up to be one of the nastiest this year. The fight will be over many of the hot button issues in politics today: race, the death penalty, and abortion. In October, Ashcroft led Senate Republicans in rejecting the nomination of black

state supreme court judge Ronnie White for a federal district judgeship, citing one of White's votes on a death penalty case. Since the case involved the murder of a sheriff, Ashcroft charged that White was "pro-criminal," and had "a serious bias against the death penalty" (see the December 1999 Political Report). Some believe the senator's real motive in opposing White was to curry the favor of sheriffs' groups.

In any event, Ashcroft certainly incurred the wrath of the NAACP and other civil rights organizations. The death penalty issue surfaced last January during Pope John Paul II's visit to St. Louis. The day after the Pontiff condemned capital punishment, Carnahan honored the Pope's request to commute the death sentence of triple murderer Darrel Mease. For this, Ashcroft tarred Carnahan with the "soft on crime" brush too. Ashcroft also criticized the governor for his veto of legislation banning partial-birth abortions. Carnahan has labeled Ashcroft a far-right radical and the senator has done little to neutralize that image.

Florida

The retirement of Florida Republican Senator Connie Mack has created an open seat in which the Democrats have one of their best chances to win. But the fall-out from a Democratic Party move against one black Democratic leader there may foil their hopes. The Democrats are backing moderate Bill Nelson, a state insurance commissioner and former congressman. However, Nelson's election

hopes may be dashed if black former Democrat Willie Logan follows through on his threat to enter the race and make it a three-way contest.

In April 1997 Logan was selected by the Democratic members of the Florida House of Representatives to be Speaker Designate if the Democrats won a majority in that body. In July 1998 the party stripped Logan of the post, alienating black Democratic politicians throughout the state and drawing the anger of black leaders from across the nation. Logan left the party in September to become an Independent and run for the state senate. Nelson fears that in a close race, Logan's candidacy could siphon off enough black votes to cost him the election.

The GOP nominee will be the winner of the September primary race between Congressman Bill McCollum and State Education Commissioner Tom Gallagher. McCollum has the inside track, with endorsements from half a dozen members of Florida's GOP congressional delegation and more than \$2 million in campaign funds. McCollum has been a strident proponent of expanded prison construction and mandatory-minimum prison sentences for nonviolent drug-possession offenses that have resulted in a significant increase in incarcerations of African Americans and Latinos.

Virginia

The most vulnerable Democratic senator facing election this year is Chuck Robb. Robb, who barely squeaked by in his 1994 reelection bid, will face popular former Republican governor George Allen, who is leading Robb in the polls and in fundraising.

Robb supporters say it would be a mistake to count him out, and note that he's won four statewide elections (lieutenant governor, governor,

and two senate races). They also note that he has been outspent before. In 1994, Republican challenger Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North raised four times as much money as Robb.

But Robb had help in that election. Marshall Coleman, the third-party Republican-turned-Independent candidate, won 11 percent of the vote that year, draining off some Republican support that otherwise would have gone to North. Robb won with 46 percent to North's 42 percent. The black vote was critical to Robb's victory since just 56,163 votes separated him from North's total. This time, Robb faces a candidate who has the backing of a united Republican Party.

Michigan

One of the GOP's most vulnerable senators is conservative Spencer Abraham, the former deputy chief of staff to Vice President Dan Quayle and one-time chairman of the Michigan Republican Party. Abraham won his senate seat with only 52 percent of the vote in 1994, and he has done little to increase his name recognition in his state.

State Democrats have recruited second-term Congresswoman Debbie Stabenow from Lansing to take Abraham on. Stabenow served four years as a state senator and 12 as a state representative. No stranger to statewide races, she ran for governor in 1994. In addition to her party's backing, she can count on support from EMILY's List and other women's groups. In a campaign that is expected to turn negative, Stabenow plans to expose her opponent's poor voting record on such issues as education, patients' rights, and providing prescription drugs for seniors.

The two candidates are dead-even in the polls, but with \$3 million in the bank, Abraham has three times the campaign war chest of Stabenow. African Americans make up 14 percent of Michigan's

population, so a strong showing from that segment of the state's voters could be decisive.

California

First-term Democratic incumbent Dianne Feinstein leads all of her potential opponents both in the polls and in fundraising. She raised almost \$2.7 million by mid-1999 to add to the \$1.8 million she had on hand. She also led all candidates with 55 percent support among likely voters in an October poll. Feinstein, who also served two terms as mayor of San Francisco, has a liberal voting record in Congress.

Three GOP candidates will slug it out in the March 7 primary to face Feinstein in November: state senate Republican Whip Ray Haynes, San Diego County Supervisor Bill Horn, and moderate Congressman Tom Campbell from the Santa Clara-Santa Cruz area. Campbell is given the best chance to win the Republican nomination. After losing a 1992 Senate primary bid, he left the House of Representatives but returned in 1995 when he won a special election. In this campaign, he leads his opponents for the Republican nomination in raising money. His June 30 Federal Election Commission filing showed he had \$1.1 million. Horn had \$314,000.

While Feinstein is favored to win reelection, minorities, who make up a large part of California's population, in conjunction with women, will be essential to her victory. That was certainly true in the 1998 election of Governor Gray Davis and that year's reelection of Senator Barbara Boxer. ■

ECONOMIC REPORT

by Margaret C. Simms

Race and Opportunity in the U.S. Armed Forces

The Department of Defense (DoD) has prided itself on its programs for creating equal opportunity within the Armed Forces. Indeed, the military has been cited by many in both the public and private sectors as a model that should be followed by corporations, civilian government agencies, and the nonprofit sector. Given this reputation, a great deal of attention was paid to the department's Equal Opportunity Survey released in November 1999. Perhaps the findings that most surprised members of the general public related to incidents of racism and perceptions of advancement opportunities.

Three-quarters of junior enlisted personnel, two-thirds of senior enlisted personnel, and close to one-half of all officers reported that they had experienced an offensive incident related to their race or ethnicity within the year prior to the survey. Many of these incidents involved other members of the military, often someone of higher rank. In spite of this high level of incidence, nearly one-half of the respondents indicated that race relations in the military had gotten better over the past five years and two-thirds said that they felt comfortable around military personnel of other racial and ethnic groups.

According to the DoD report, while a majority within all racial and ethnic groups thought that race relations were better in the military than they were for society as a

whole, on the question of whether race plays a factor in military career opportunities there were significant racial differences. Minorities were much more likely than others to indicate that race or ethnicity had an impact on an assignment or on evaluation, or punishment or training opportunities. (See table below). There were also differing perceptions of whether opportunities in the military are better than they were five years ago, with whites more likely to think that opportunities are better for blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans than members of the specific race/ethnic group believe.

In general, African Americans and Hispanics were less likely to think things had gotten better for any minority group than were whites or members of other minority groups (Asian/Pacific Islanders and Native Americans). This divergence of views on race relations and economic advancement is similar to the divergence found in the general population, as indicated in several Joint Center opinion polls. Having this baseline survey information on the military will facilitate civilian/military comparisons in the future.

New Definition of Minority Business

When government minority business development programs were first developed in the early 1970s, an issue of concern was determining the true ownership of participating businesses. When government agencies made special efforts to provide opportunities for minority companies to win government contracts by restricting competition to minority firms (set-asides) or by giving bonus points to minority vendors, some nonminority contractors entered into arrangements that are called "front" companies. In these arrangements, a minority person would be named as head of the business, even though he or she did not have a majority financial position in the company and often did not make the major management decisions. Over time, both government and private companies developed certification processes and standards to prevent these front companies from competing for business as minority-owned companies. The rule most commonly

Military Personnel Experiencing a Negative Incident Because of their Race/Ethnicity (Percent)

Lifecycle Category	Total	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian/Pacific Islander	Native American/Alaska Native
Assignment/Career	8	4	18	13	10	17
Evaluation	8	4	19	13	13	8
Punishment	4	2	9	6	4	5
Training/Test Scores	3	2	6	5	4	3

SOURCE: Defense Manpower Data Center, *Armed Forces Equal Opportunity Survey*

used now is “51% minority-owned and controlled,” meaning that minorities hold the majority equity position and a minority person controls the day-to-day operations (as either chief executive officer or chair).

In late 1999, the National Minority Supplier Development Council (NMSDC), a network of major companies that seek to provide increased procurement and business opportunities for minority business enterprises, put forth a proposal that critics say undermines this definition. The NMSDC Growth Initiative would make very specific exceptions to the regular certification standards, so that some minority businesses could continue to be certified by NMSDC as minority-owned even if they no longer met the minority ownership rule. Firms would still have to meet certain criteria to qualify for this special classification. (See box.)

While certification of minority businesses is usually done by the regional councils of the organization, only the national office could grant certification for this special class of firms. The certification would be done by a special review panel that would include input from the National Association of Investment Companies. The national office would also monitor these firms closely for a period of time after certification was granted.

The rationale for the new category of minority certification is the competitive nature of today’s business. The amount of capital needed to compete for markets in this global economy exceeds that available to virtually all minority-owned companies. For many of these companies, the opportunity to obtain an infusion of equity capital through a program such as the one proposed by NMSDC is attractive. For example, the National Association of Black Automotive Suppli-

ers notes that an initiative of this type is essential if its members are to compete for the larger minimum contracts that auto companies are requiring of their suppliers.

While this proposal was supported by many minority organizations, critics such as *Black Enterprise* magazine publisher Earl Graves view the Growth Initiative as a threat to the strong 51 percent rule that took years to develop as an effective standard. According to the *Black Enterprise* analysis, the proposal is not as clear cut as it seems. The analysis points out that many major operating companies have financial investment arms and they see a danger that those companies will, in effect, take over a minority company while it maintains its “minority” status. If this should happen, the majority company could get credit for doing business with a minority firm while actually contracting with its own subsidiary.

The controversy generated by the exchange of views in October led NMSDC to postpone a board vote on

the Growth Initiative until January 2000. During this time period, NMSDC reached out to key groups concerned with the issue to provide a clear understanding of the proposal’s purpose and value. For its own part, the Council feels very comfortable with its proposal, which has been under review for some time. Regardless of the outcome when the board votes on the issue, the controversy has led to some creative thinking about innovative ways of increasing access to capital for growing minority companies. ■



For more information on this and related topics, visit our website.

Criteria of the NMSDC Growth Initiative

- Minority owners must own at least 30% of the economic equity of the firm.
- The nonminority investor must be a professional institutional investor (in the business of making equity investments and managing more than \$25 million in capital).
- Minority management/owners control the day-to-day operations of the firm.
- Minority management/owners retain a majority (at least 51%) of the firm’s voting equity.
- Minority owners operationally control the board of directors.