

# Jesse Jackson to decide on presidential run after Christmas

**By Jennifer Loven**  
 WASHINGTON (AP) — The Rev. Jesse Jackson will decide "sometime after Christmas" whether to make a third run for the White House, but in the meantime he will try to ensure that issues affecting the poor are part of the message of any Democratic presidential hopeful.

Speaking to a National Press Club audience last Friday, the civil rights leader said he has a litmus test for Democratic candidates and

declared himself just the sort of leader who would meet its demands.

Jackson's test is whether the presidential contender would improve the lives of poor Americans like those in Appalachia. Jackson spent two days in the poor region in April, partly to gauge the appeal of his message.

"Do you matter to Mud Creek, Kentucky? Do you have anything to say that is relevant to the people of eastern Kentucky and central West Virginia and



**JESSE JACKSON**

Appalachian Ohio, where good people, working hard, have tried to break the cycle of poverty?" Jackson asked.

Issues on which Jackson said America needs leadership include a universal health care system, the gap in education for rich and poor, access to capital — even a meeting between a U.S. president and Cuban President Fidel Castro.

"The great movements to expand the American dream have been led by ... fearless, patriotic, pacesetters who established a moral litmus test beyond the conventional politics and popularity," Jackson said.

"I'm blazing a trail, and they'll follow a path. That's the stuff of which leadership is made."

Jackson, 57, would not say whether he would run if others failed his test. But the man who serves as President Clinton's envoy for democracy in Africa and leads the Chicago-based Rainbow/PUSH Coalition hinted that his White House ambitions were not squelched by his 1984 and 1988 campaigns.

For example:

— Jackson said he is not unhappy with front-runner Vice President Al Gore and potential Democratic rival Rep. Dick Gephardt of Missouri, the House minority leader, but thinks "they should keep their jobs."

— Told that Democratic Sen. Bob Kerrey of Nebraska, who also is considering a presidential bid, had said Congress should "dare to privatize Social Security," Jackson quipped: "I dare him to join the primary with that position."



LV Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy

Presidential candidates Louis Overstreet, left, and Gene Collins, right, speak with NAACP Regional Director Frank Berry during the nominating meeting.

## NAACP

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Running for the top post are Louis Overstreet, a writer and member of the Clark County School District's Bond Oversight Committee; the Rev. Jesse Scott, local NAACP chapter



LV Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy  
 Suspended branch officer Kawiim Kawee, left, congratulates former branch president Jesse Scott on his nomination to return as president of the local branch.

president (late 1980s to 1993), and Gene Collins, a businessman and former state assemblyman (1982 to 1986).

Overstreet handed out a package detailing his history and plan of action for the branch which includes a 100-day, 10-point action plan with initiatives to restore the group's image and raise funds to build an NAACP office.

Overstreet's supporters include Rogers, ex-1st vice president Kawiim Kawee and Hannah Brown.

"Their combined experience is invaluable," he said. "I believe that if someone has something positive to contribute, regardless of their history, they should be given a chance."

Scott said the Las Vegas NAACP has made strides, helping people get jobs at the Hoover Dam, opening up the Strip to blacks and other groups, enabling African-Americans to buy Cadillacs and homes and getting black people appointed to important boards.

As president he wants to help add minority representation to the all-white city council, address lagging reading skills of black and Hispanic, decrease the dropout rates and teen pregnancies among black youth, among other things.

"We're going to get people involved," Scott said. "By talking to people and encouraging them to speak out, we're going to make change."

Collins' plans include forming an exploratory committee of past presidents to "pick their brains." He will extend a hand to young college graduates to take part in the organization and

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## Mfume considering running for mayor

BALTIMORE (AP) — NAACP President Kweisi Mfume says he may consider a run for mayor of Baltimore, but won't announce his decision until early next year.

Mfume said there is still a great deal of work he wants to do as president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, which he has headed since 1996. His name came up as a possible candidate for the mayor's job after Kurt Schmoke announced last week that he would not seek a fourth four-year term next year.

"I am flattered that anyone would express confidence in me running for mayor, but I am not actively considering anything but the work before me with the NAACP," Mfume told *The Baltimore Sun*.

Mfume, who represented

Baltimore's 7th district in the House of Representatives for nine years before taking over as head of the NAACP, said he will consider his options after the civil rights organization's February board meeting. He said he may endorse someone else for mayor.

"The work I'm doing to create a better atmosphere for all Americans is more important than me posturing about whether or not to run" for mayor, he told *The Sun*. "I believe in completing jobs."

"I don't rule anything out and I don't rule anything in," Mfume added.

Besides Mfume, seven other people reportedly are considering seeking the top job in the city government.

State Delegate Howard Rawlings, City Council President Lawrence Bell—a cousin of Mfume, city

Housing Commissioner Daniel Henson, city Comptroller Joan Pratt, city Councilwoman Sheila Dixon and Baltimore State's Attorney Patricia Jessamy are among possible candidates.

City school board member Carl Stokes has already told Schmoke and Gov. Parris Glendening he will run for mayor. Council President Bell announced his decision to run for mayor after Monday's council meeting.

But some already consider Mfume the top prospect.

"If Mfume decides to run, he'd be the immediate front-runner," said state Sen. Barbara Hoffman, D-Baltimore.

"He's the full package," said Herbert C. Smith, a political science professor at Western Maryland College. "He's a brilliant speaker with

good credentials who, like Schmoke, transcends race."

However, questions arose about Mfume's residency and whether his home outside the city in Catonsville may disqualify him.

The city charter requires a mayoral candidate to be a resident of the city for at least one year prior to an election. The deadline for the 1999 election passed last month.

Mfume told *The Sun* that he recently sold a city house bequeathed to him by his aunt and that he is buying another piece of property in the city.

The nation's oldest civil rights organization was tarnished by debt and scandals over the financial improprieties of some prominent members.

Since Mfume took over, the NAACP has become financially solvent and has increased its membership.

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