

Future for Minneapolis mayor Belton in doubt

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) - As Sharon Sayles Belton seeks a third term as mayor of Minnesota's largest city, she has some good things to show voters: low crime, growing population and a healthy economy despite slowdowns elsewhere.



Sharon Sayles Belton cent before the delegates broke without an endorsement.

But less than a year after she served as co-chair of the committee that drafted the platform for the 2000 Democratic National Convention, Democrats last weekend skipped a chance to endorse Sayles Belton.

Suddenly, the city's first black and first woman mayor appears vulnerable to challengers who complain about high housing costs, traffic congestion and a falloff in basic services.

Sayles Belton ran second in the convention balloting. Internet consultant and neighborhood activist R.T. Rybak had 49 percent to her 48 per-

cent before the delegates broke without an endorsement.

The failure to receive 60 percent approval means Sayles Belton will face a September primary fight against several opponents without the advantages of money, manpower and momentum conveyed by the endorsement. Whoever emerges from the Democratic field is likely to be the next mayor; Minneapolis hasn't had a Republi-

can mayor since 1961. Steve Schier, a political scientist at Carleton College in nearby Northfield, said Sayles Belton wasn't prepared for the convention and was hurt by activists who dominated the meeting.

"But the city is in pretty good shape, and it would be an amazing thing were she to be thrown out," Schier said.

Despite its strong points, Minneapolis is not what it used to be for some in Sayles Belton's party.

"Growing up in South Dakota, the big deal was to come to the big city - which for us was Minneapolis - and go downtown for the day," said Scott Mayer, a convention delegate. "It had something for everyone."

Mayer, who would not say who he supports in the race, has been dismayed by some projects. He points to a city-

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Net access lower for poor students

WASHINGTON (AP) - Students of all economic levels have access to computers in school, but low-income students are only about half as likely to have Internet access in their classroom, according to a survey.

The report, by Education Week, found that 39 percent of classrooms in high-poverty schools had Internet connections in 1999, compared to 74 percent in those with few poor students.

"The digital divide is reinventing itself," said Kevin Bushweller, the magazine's assistant managing editor and a project editor for the report.

Using 1999 Education Department statistics, the report found that Internet connections in school buildings are nearly universal at 95 percent, with 63 percent of classrooms online.

The report said computer access for students was nearly constant across economic lines. Using private marketing data, the report found that there were 8.8 students per computer in schools with many poor students

in 2000 - slightly higher than the eight students per computer in other schools.

In a survey also included in the report, researchers also found that half of 500 students surveyed said they use a computer at school an hour a week or less. Only 29 percent said they use a computer for two to four hours weekly at school. The telephone survey of students in seventh through 12th grade was conducted Jan. 15-28 by Harris Interactive.

An unrelated survey released last March found that, despite the Internet's near universal presence in schools, most teachers don't spend much time online and don't turn to the Web when developing lessons.

Ninety-seven percent of 600 teachers surveyed said their schools have Internet access, but 60 percent said they spend half an hour or less online at school each day. Only 6 percent said they spend an hour or more online.

Only a third said the Internet is integrated into their classrooms, with many teachers saying they just don't have enough time to go online.

Hate Crimes

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here," the mother said.

"They ... did everything to his grave. We just need something to wake them up. By passing this bill, it did," she said.

Two of the men who killed Byrd are on death row. The third was sentenced to life in prison. The act, which received final legislative approval Thursday, ended years of debate. The bill strengthens penalties for crimes motivated by a victim's race, religion, color, sex, disability, sexual preference, age or national origin.

Texas already has a hate-crimes law that increases penalties if a crime is proven to be "motivated by bias or prejudice," but it does not list specific categories of people who are protected. Some prosecutors have said it is too vague to enforce.

Two years ago, a similar bill passed the

House but was turned down by the Senate when critics complained it created unnecessary distinctions for homosexuals. Bush refused to support the measure, and Democrats later criticized him for that during the White House campaign.

As recently as Thursday, Perry said he had not decided whether he would sign the bill and was concerned it would "create new classes of citizens."

"As governor of a very large, diverse state, in all matters it is desirable to seek common ground, common ground for the common good," Perry said Friday.

Louvon Harris, one of Byrd's sisters, praised the governor for his decision.

"We're so overjoyed and grateful at this point. I have no words to describe how we feel at this point. It was a long road," Harris told American Urban Radio Networks.

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