

Kerry drawing fire over lack of diverse cabinet

WASHINGTON (AP) - A lack of minority representation at the upper levels of John Kerry's presidential campaign threatens to weaken enthusiasm among Black and Hispanic voters, two core constituencies, some Democrats and advocacy groups say.

Kerry's inner circle - the dozen or so advisers who participate in the campaign's most important decisions - is mostly White.

Senior political adviser Paul Rivera said a core group of seven high-ranking staffers participate in a daily, morning conference call to talk strategy and make key decisions. The group includes campaign manager Mary Beth Cahill; deputy campaign managers Steve Elmendorf and Marcus Jardotte; communications director Stephanie Cutter; general election strategist Jill Alper; and senior advisers Art Collins and Rivera. Jardotte and Collins are Black; Rivera is Hispanic.

Campaign officials say media consultants, pollsters and other top aides are often on the call, including chief

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speechwriter Bob Shrum, and Tad Devine, an architect of Kerry's general election planning.

Shrum and Devine are White, as is John Marttila, a longtime Kerry ally from Massachusetts who spent a lot of time at campaign headquarters during the Iowa and New Hampshire races and is considered part of the brain trust.

Some Black officials and independent analysts expressed concern about the campaign's lack of racial diversity. Campaign officials and the leader of the Congressional Black Caucus said the criticism was unfounded.

"I am concerned about diversity, but more importantly I am concerned about the experience in that diversity - senior policy people who know people from one end of the country to the other," said Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr., D-Ill., a caucus mem-

ber. He said the issue may dampen voter enthusiasm. "The senator should remedy this very quickly," Jackson said.

Added Ron Walters, who worked on the presidential campaigns of Jesse Jackson Sr. and runs the African-American Leadership Institute at the University of Maryland: "There is a sense that Kerry's people don't get it." Campaign officials dispute the criticism, saying too much of the focus has been on the influence of Shrum, Devine and other consultants.

"It really is odd to read any suggestion that a national campaign is being run by the media consultants and the pollsters and excluding the other folks," Jardotte said while traveling to Philadelphia, where Kerry was addressing the National Conference of Black Mayors conference of Black Mayors conference. (See Kerry, Page 13)

Cummings: Blacks ready to end Republican dominance

By Hazel Trice Edney
Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - Black voters will have an opportunity in November to play a major role in ending the Republican stranglehold on every branch of the federal government, Congressional Black Caucus Chairman Elijah Cummings says.

"Most of our constituents quite accurately understand that one-party Republican rule in Washington is not going to effectively address the concerns that are central to their everyday lives," says the Baltimore Democrat. "There is no check nor balance in Washington today - and that must change."

He explains, "This year's House and Senate elections are at least as important in restoring our country to what I would term a more balanced course as is the presidential race that is receiving most of the journalistic attention these days."

Cummings made his comments in a speech last week at the National Press Club.

"This is a goal well within

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our power to achieve," he says. "Bill Clinton won the 1996 presidential race with 84 percent of the Black vote. Four years later, Al Gore received an even larger percentage of African-American votes and won the popular vote for president by 500,000 votes...If the demographic trends and voting patterns remain the same as in the 2000 election - the presumptive Democratic nominee will win by at least 3 million votes."

Currently, the House of Representatives is composed of 228 Republicans, 205 Democrats, and one vacancy. In the Senate, there are 51 Republicans, 48 Democrats and one Independent. This means Democrats must gain at least 12 members in the House and two in the Senate in order to win control.

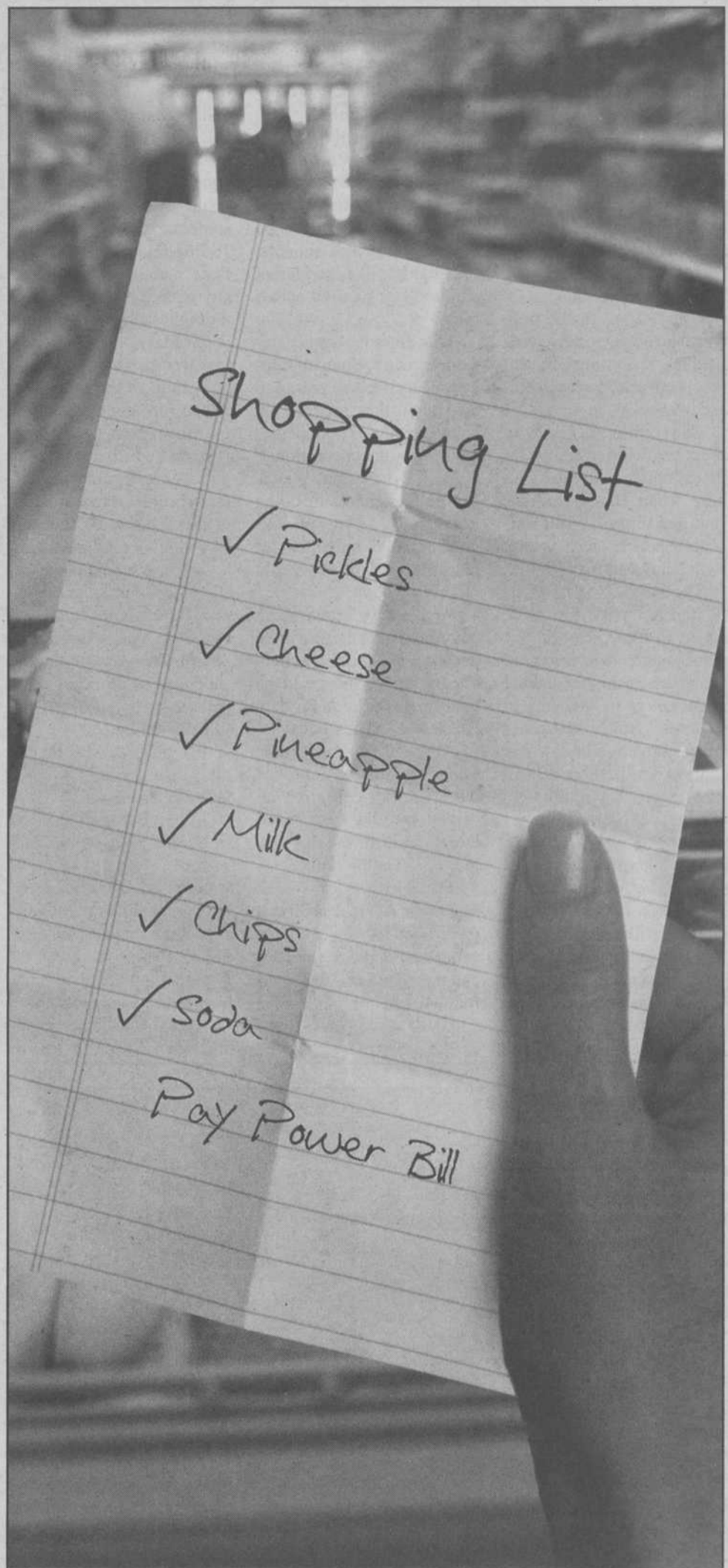
In either chamber a Democratic win could mean sig-

nificant political gains for Black people. A majority Democratic House could mean first-time chairmanships for two veteran CBC members and at least 12 Black chairs of subcommittees. Currently there are none.

Charles Rangel (D-N.Y.) is in line to chair the House Ways and Means Committee, which deals with issues such as tax breaks, unemployment compensation, Social Security, Medicare, pension benefits, international trade agreements and economic development incentives.

John Conyers (D-Mich.) is in line to chair the House Judiciary Committee, which oversees such matters as voting rights, equal opportunity as well as criminal justice and police issues.

Of course, Democrats (See Cummings, Page 13)



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