

# Blacks enlist more groups to court new voters

WASHINGTON (AP) - Motivated by unpleasant memories of the 2000 Florida recount, Black leaders determined to boost voter turnout this fall are enlisting hip-hop artists and community organizations in campaigns to register millions of new voters.

"The mobilization of young voters is the revolutionary concept this year," said Maya Rockey Moore, vice president of the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation.

Rockey Moore said the foundation is reaching out to younger voters through registration and educational initiatives at historically Black colleges and inner city areas across the country.

"A lot of people think that politics is something in a box that doesn't necessarily have anything to do with them," she said. "We're trying to explain to them politics in terms of policies and why it relates to their lives."

The Hip-Hop Summit Action Network, co-founded by music and business mogul Russell Simmons in 2001, is sponsoring youth empowerment "summits" around the country, headlined by artists

such as Will Smith, LL Cool J and Beyonce, with a goal of getting 2 million young people registered to vote.

The group used the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation's legislative summit last week to kick off plans for a bus tour later this month through the South and Midwest. On Election Day, the group plans to have buses with hip-hop artists on board taking voters to the polls.

Registration and get-out-the-vote efforts topped the agenda at the foundation's annual summit. The organization is nonpartisan, but all the caucus members are Democrats. Both President Bush and Massachusetts Sen. John Kerry, his Democratic challenger, were invited to speak at the conference's final dinner Saturday night, but only Kerry accepted.

Anger over the Florida recount that gave Bush the presidency resonated throughout the conference. After Bush took office, federal civil rights monitors concluded that the ballots of Black Florida voters were disproportionately tossed out in an election plagued by faulty machinery and ballot prob-

lems. "(Florida) isn't something that needs to be talked about," said Donna Sandiford, 39, a faculty administrator from Washington. "It made all of us realize in the Black community that there had been a consensus that my vote doesn't count, when it really does count."

Rep. Kendrick Meek, D-Fla., who represents Miami-Dade and Broward counties, where many of the 2000 problems occurred, said that election "is still fresh in people's minds, and they will be motivated to do the right thing."

Rep. John Lewis, D-Ga., one of the leaders of the civil rights movement, said those struggles should rekindle a sense of social responsibility among Black voters, after what happened in Florida.

"The vote is the most powerful, nonviolent tool we have," Lewis said. During this election year, we have to send the strongest possible message and mobilize and get people out to vote like never before."

The foundation is part of the "Unity '04 Civic Engagement and Vote Empowerment Campaign," a nonpartisan network of 130 African-

American organizations aimed at increasing the Black vote this year. Unity has been around since 1998, but organizers say this is the most aggressive effort yet, with a goal of registering 1 million new voters. The campaign has highlighted Southern states, where 55 percent of the nation's Black population live.

Energizing Black voters could be beneficial for Kerry, especially in swing states like Florida, Ohio and Pennsylvania. Recent polls show Blacks preferring Kerry over Bush by an 8-to-1 margin.

Exit polls from 2000 show that 90 percent of Blacks voted for Gore, and at least 83 percent voted for President Clinton in 1992 and 1996. In 2000, 57 percent of voting-age Black citizens went to the polls, up from 53 percent in 1996.

Bush and other Republicans have questioned whether Democrats are taking Black voters for granted.

While acknowledging that attracting more Black voters will be tough, Republicans say Bush's support of school vouchers appeals to those with children who may be in

failing urban public schools. They also point to increasing levels of home and small business ownership among minorities.

At their recent convention, the GOP featured prominent Black Republicans such as Maryland Lt. Gov. Michael Steele and Education Secretary Rod Paige and said their party has become more diverse.

Republicans also dipped into their own history and reminded delegates that it was Abraham Lincoln, a Republican, who signed the Emancipation Proclamation.

## Incumbents

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racist.

She argued that she helped get the sorority's racial policy reversed. "Knock it off, Ron!" Gregoire shouted at an August speech, her voice shaking with anger.

Sims denied any role in the story. He, in turn, made news with a proposal for a state income tax, coupled with the elimination of the business and state sales tax.

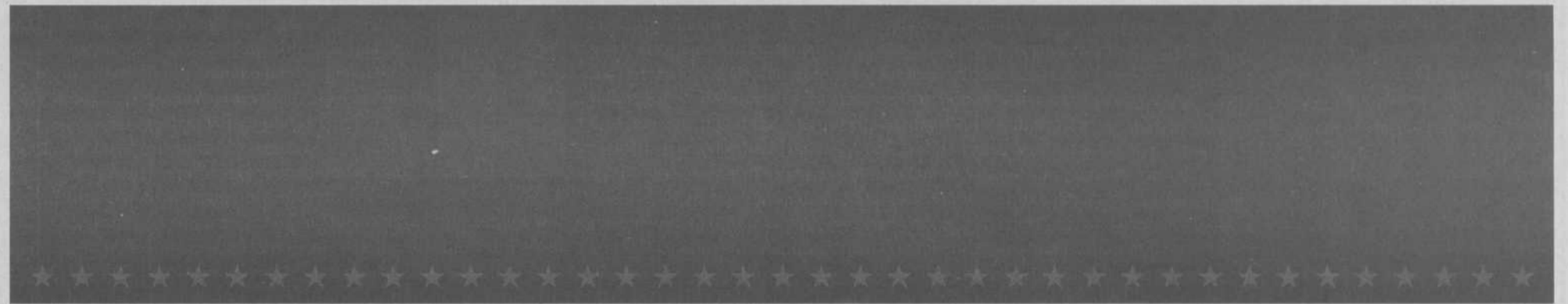
In a Democratic district in Brooklyn, Rep. Major Owens easily won a three-way primary against two well-known City Council members.

In Wisconsin, three Democrats and two Republicans vied to succeed Rep. Jerry

Kleccka, a Democrat from Milwaukee who is retiring after 20 years. Both of the primaries had Black candidates; Wisconsin has never elected a Black member of Congress.

In two states considered battlegrounds for the presidential race, Republican hopefuls competed to challenge sitting Democratic senators — contests that are receiving national attention and money because of the GOP's narrow 51-48 control of the Senate.

In Wisconsin and Washington State, Republicans made the war on terror and their support for President Bush central to their campaigns.



### THANK YOU

to all of the voters who participated in the democratic process by voting in the primary election.

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