

GOP failing to make grade with Blacks

By Hazel Trice Edney
Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA) — Although the head of the Republican National Committee and President George W. Bush have pledged to make a more concentrated effort to win over Black voters, 98 percent of Republicans in the House and Senate earned an F on the latest NAACP Civil Rights Report Card, compared to only 2 percent of Democrats receiving failing grades.

"[Republican Party Chairman Ken] Mehlman has been out beating the bushes and saying that the Republican Party was appealing for the Black vote, but this is the most powerful evidence and continuing evidence that the Republicans have not realigned their public policy approaches to attract the Black vote," said University of Maryland Political Scientist Ronald Walters.

According to the NAACP'S mid-term report for the 109th Congress, all but one of the 231 Republicans in the U.S. House of Representatives got an F. The exception was Rep. Christopher Shays of Connecticut, who earned a D. No House Republicans got B's or C's.

In the Senate, 51 of the 55 Republicans earned F's. Lincoln Chafee of Rhode Island



Rep. Sanford Bishop, D-Ga., Congressional Black Caucus member, got a C on the NAACP's Civil Rights Report Card.

was the only one to get a C, the top grade among GOP members. Olympia J. Snowe and Susan Collins, both of Maine, and Mike DeWine of Ohio, all received D's. Sen. Jim Jeffords of Vermont, an Independent, got a C.

Of the 201 House Democrats, 123 earned A's, 38 got B's, 29 received C's, six were awarded D's and five flunked with F's. That's a decline from the 108th Congress, when no Democrat received an F. The five House Democrats who earned F's this time were Rep. Leonard Boswell of Iowa, Rodney Alexander of Louisiana, Collin Peterson of Minnesota, Dan Boren of Oklahoma, and Gene Taylor of Mississippi. An Incomplete was given to Doris Matsui of California, who

got a late start after her predecessor, Robert T. Matsui, died in office. Bernard Sanders, an Independent from Vermont, received an A.

Among the 44 Senate Democrats, 29 earned A's, 12 received B's, two got C's and one — Ben Nelson of Nebraska — got an F.

Overall, the 41 voting members of the Congressional Black Caucus showed overwhelming allegiance to the NAACP-backed issues. All earned A's except for the B's earned by Artur Davis of Alabama, Kendrick Meek of Florida and Adolphus Towns of New York and the C's received by Sanford Bishop of Georgia and Harold Ford Jr. of Tennessee. (Delegates Donna Christian-Christensen and Eleanor Holmes Norton are not voting members.)

At the close of the last Congress, all Republicans got F's except one, Rep. Jim Leach of Iowa, who earned a C. This time, he got an F. On this report card, five Republican lawmakers scored higher than F.

NAACP Washington Bureau Director Hilary Shelton said the GOP improvement may be misleading because there were few major civil rights issues facing the Congress during the last session.

"There has been some improvement, but that is only within the context of the limited issues," said Shelton.



Rep. Harold Ford, Jr., D-Tenn., was one of only two CBC members to receive a C grade on the NAACP's Civil Rights Report Card.

"There are a significant number of crucial, more contentious issues that haven't made it to the floor for a vote."

Those issues include the Hate Crimes Protection Amendment that passed in the House and is awaiting action in the Senate, and anti-police brutality and anti-profiling legislation, both of which are still stuck in committee.

Overall, voting on civil rights has not changed much in recent years. Fifty-three percent of the lawmakers voted against the NAACP position in the last session;

more than half of the two legislative bodies have voted against NAACP-backed legislation for the past three sessions of Congress.

The NAACP graded members based on the percentage of times they voted in agreement with the 97-year-old civil rights organization. An A was awarded for a 90 percent to 100 percent approval; B for 80 percent to 89 percent; C for 70 percent to 79 percent; D for 60 percent to 69 percent and an F for 59 percent and below.

In the Senate, those issues include the passage of a bill (See Republicans, Page 14)

Brown shooting 'out of policy'

By Gene Johnson Jr.
Special to Sentinel-Voice

LOS ANGELES (NNPA) — Going against the police chief for the first time in recent memory, the Police Commission recently voted by 4-1 that last year's shooting death of 13-year-old boy by a police officer was "out of policy."

"It is a very tragic chapter in the history of the city of Los Angeles and of the LAPD," commission President John Mack said. "We have learned from this tragedy, and we will seek new policies, procedures and practices designed to prevent another heartbreaking similar incident."

Mack, the retired president of the Los Angeles Urban League, said: "This has not been an easy task by any stretch of the imagination for anyone, the commission, our staff, Chief Bratton, LAPD, the African-American community and the entire city."

The commission's deci-

sion overruled the recommendation by Police Chief William J. Bratton that Officer Steve Garcia complied with department rules during last year's Feb. 6 shooting death of teenager Devin Brown.

Brown, driving a stolen car, was shot and killed after leading officers on a brief car chase in South Los Angeles. Garcia said he fired at Brown's car after the teenager accelerated the vehicle in reverse toward the officer, making him fear for his life.

A department investigation backed Garcia's account and the district attorney's office in December decided not to file charges against him.

The matter will now go before an LAPD Board of Rights, which will decide on discipline for the officer, said Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa during a late Tuesday afternoon news conference in front of the Getty House.

The Board of Rights, said Los Angeles Police Commis-

sion spokeswoman Tami Catania, consists of two Los Angeles Police Department commanding officers and a civilian.

It was unclear when the Board of Rights would hear the officer's case, Catania said.

"I'm satisfied that the commission made its determination after a careful consideration of the available information," said Villaraigosa, who appointed each commissioner. "I have the utmost trust and confidence in each commissioner's ability and their sense of fairness."

The commission includes two former federal prosecutors — Anthony Pacheco and Andrea Ordin; bank executive and civil rights activist Shelley Freeman, and San Fernando Valley auto dealer/attorney Alan J. Skobin, who cast the lone dissenting vote.

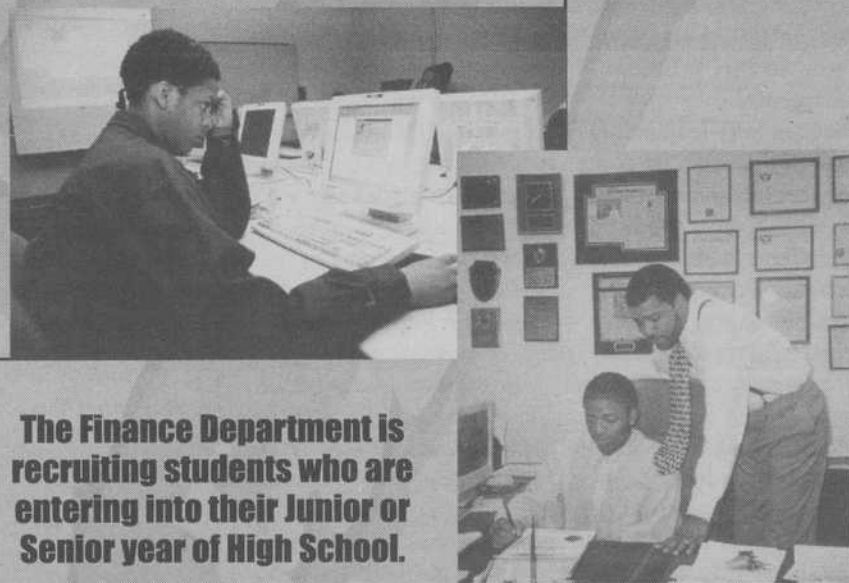
"The Los Angeles Police Commission is unanimous in (See Shooting, Page 16)



County Commissioner Yvonne Atkinson Gates

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