

Unity

(Continued from Page 4) that, if you are now under investigation, asks you to step aside. Suppose — if they're not smart — the whole Black Caucus was under investigation. Are they going to be asked to step aside?" Sharpton asked. "I think it raises a very serious legal precedent ...we should fight and we should resist."

The Jefferson debacle threatens Democratic harmony between Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), who supported the ouster, and members of the Congressional Black Caucus as they struggle for at least 15 seats to win control of the House in November elections.

Pelosi has said she is not considering guilt or innocence in the Jefferson case, but the appearance of ethics violations. However the Ethics Committee of the House has not investigated Jefferson. Pelosi says some members of the CBC are supporting her.

The Jefferson controversy stems from a May 20 raid on his congressional office by 15 FBI agents looking for evidence of bribes in exchange for his influence in private dealings with high-tech businesses in Africa. The House office raid sparked criticism of the FBI from both Democratic and Republican leadership who said the raid from an execu-

tive entity on a legislative office was unprecedented.

Pelosi has said the FBI raid was wrong, but tension rose between her and the CBC when she increasingly insisted that Jefferson step down from the Ways and Means Committee, which deals with public financial matters. She said FBI reports of finding \$90,000 of their money in Jefferson's home freezer last August and alleged confessions by two of his associates, gives the appearance of ethics violations.

On June 16, the morning after the Democratic Caucus voted 99-58 on Lewis' motion to suspend Jefferson from the committee, the full House agreed "without objection" That means there was no roll call vote, simply a passage with no opposition.

"Neither side objects and automatically the chairman just rules that it has been done. That is the custom," said Rep. Maxine Waters, who has strongly opposed Pelosi's move.

"It appears that the leader is establishing a precedent here," she said. "Never before in the history of the Congress of the United States has a member of Congress who is not a committee chairman, who is not a ranking member, been removed from their membership while under investigation."

Jefferson, who adamantly

fought the ouster, decrying it as a double standard, has agreed to step down under the conditions that White Rep. Charlie Melancon (D-La.) be temporarily appointed to replace him, an appointment that must be made by the Democratic Caucus.

"I stand firm in my position that this move is unprecedented, unfair in process and most importantly, it unjustly punishes my constituents," Jefferson said in a statement.

In a letter to Pelosi, he also requested that Rep. Allen Mollohan (D-W.Va.) be asked to step down from the Appropriations Committee. Mollohan, under suspicion that he used his influence on the House Appropriations Committee to funnel money to non-profit groups and family members, recently resigned from the Ethics Committee, but remains on Appropriations, which also deals with finan-

cial matters.

Pelosi has said the case against Mollohan is much cloudier than Jefferson's and has refused to ask Mollohan to step down. Mollohan has said the problems in his financial reporting were unintentional.

Jefferson stated: "When an African-American member of an exclusive committee is asked to resign his committee because of news reports or allegations of wrongdoing, it gives the appearance of unfairness and even racial discrimination if another member continues serving on an exclusive committee under Justice Department investigation as well, particularly if the other member is White, and is not subject to the same treatment."

Pelosi could become speaker of the House if the Democrats win a majority in the fall. CBC Chairman Mel Watt, apparently elevating the fairness principle above the quest to win the House,

has consistently questioned the fairness of the Pelosi move.

Watt says after the full House passage. "Without a standard, you just don't know how it's going to be applied. And our history is that when there's not a standard, we get shortchanged."

Democratic Caucus Leader Jim Clyburn, a CBC member with 159 Whites and 41 Blacks under his leadership, is trying to quell the controversy and move on.

"We had two competing interests — one legal and the other political — and members had to make a difficult decision," Clyburn said in a statement after the full House vote. In an interview, Clyburn appeared to side with Pelosi: "I would like to think that it could very well be that what we did here was to elevate the standards of the House of Representatives."

Sharpton said the ramifications of Jefferson's ouster extends beyond Congress.

"Anybody can be investigated. Now that you live in a situation where investigation means you step aside, that's frightening to me. I don't know of any major — or for that matter — minor Black leader in the country that hasn't been under investigation," he said. "And so, I think that we've got to look at what does this mean."

Both Sharpton and Todd are concerned that Black voters understand the ramifications and the effect in the fall elections.

"Our constituency needs to be educated on what this means. Is the Black leadership in this country really interpreting what is happening with Jefferson in terms of what it means for the entire Black community?" Sharpton asked.

"Unless African-Americans across the nation understand what has happened, the Jefferson incident will have no affect on November's election," said Todd.

Blind

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and movement after the efforts of American Blacks for their freedom and justice and the road to first-class citizenship. The National Federation of the Blind is of, for, and by blind people," said Gilmer. "Our motto is 'Security, Equality, Opportunity.'"

Gilmer, Gittens and Richardson all stress the importance of self-organization to the blind, who have waged a lengthy struggle over the decades for organizational independence and for a decisive voice in all decisions that affect their lives.

Much of this struggle has been against government agencies and charitable organizations that speak in the name of the blind but are led by sighted people. "This is a big business," said Gilmer. "Sighted people were benevolent; they had built up charities, and who were you [as a blind person] to tell us what to do?"

Gilmer hopes that more African-Americans will avail themselves of the services and support of the local chapters of the federation.

A big part of the struggle of blind people, however, is casting off the negative self-image imposed on them by societal prejudice and ignorance and realizing that blindness is not the end of the world. "Blind people have to get rid of the stereotypes of themselves," said Gittens.

Both Gittens and young Richardson have gone a long way toward achieving this goal. They are two young, Black and blind persons who have fought for and won a healthy image of themselves. "I'm just me," said Richardson. "Part of me is Black, part is blind, and all is beautiful."

For more information on the National Federation of the Blind, go to the website at www.nfbmn.org, or call (612) 872-0100.

Chris Nisan writes for the *Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder*.

Your Horoscope Says... June 228

ARIES

They get on your nerves, but you'll profit from joining with them in a common effort. Pull close to an annoying buddy. Joint ventures will pay ten-fold. Household projects call. You and a lover can finally reach the same page.

Soul Affirmation: I am patient with all that comes my way this week.

Lucky Numbers: 18, 29, 50

TAURUS

This week begins three weeks during which success and romance are closely related. Kill two birds with one stone. Enjoy your feelings and let your brain relax. Suspend all judgments of others. Being stern won't work for you this week.

Soul Affirmation: I judge no one, especially myself, this week.

Lucky Numbers: 9, 29, 53

GEMINI

News that comes by phone, e-mail or snail mail makes it easier for you to remain upbeat. Focus on what is said. No matter what it is, find the good in it. Invite new insights. They could well come from your lover.

Soul Affirmation: I give thanks for who I am this week.

Lucky Numbers: 6, 7, 20

CANCER

Don't be dismayed if you tried to prevent it but couldn't. It was meant to happen, and you were intended to learn from it. Nothing was lost. Something was delayed. After you've learned your lesson, the chance will come again.

Soul Affirmation: Faith keeps me calm in the storms of life.

Lucky Numbers: 4, 12, 30

LEO

Your self-confidence is making you glow all over. People are attracted to your outlook this week, and you may be deluged with offers. Some may not be sincere, but trust your fabulous instincts and you'll pick and choose what's real for you.

Soul Affirmation: Clinging to the old will inhibit my growth this week.

Lucky Numbers: 1, 3, 10

VIRGO

Find motivation within yourself to complete a task that has been hanging around too long. You will want to play later in the week, and you'll feel happier then with a clear mind. Remember that you're the boss of your emotions.

Soul Affirmation: My imagination is the source of my happiness.

Lucky Numbers: 18, 27, 55

LIBRA

Remember that you are in control of your emotions this week. Things will look brighter as soon as you let yourself feel like the glowing spirit that you are. Co-create your reality this week by using positive emotions to remind yourself of how wonderful you are.

Soul Affirmation: I will ask joy to marry me.

Lucky Numbers: 14, 28, 35

SCORPIO

You are in the middle of a dream coming true. Watch for signs that your wish is about to be granted. Give yourself a chance to enjoy the truth of your deepest desires. You'll be very happy with what you've achieved.

Soul Affirmation: Love is easier than breathing.

Lucky Numbers: 12, 45, 48

SAGITTARIUS

Overall, the vibrations surrounding you this week are very good, very good indeed. Go with the best, and refuse to allow any minor inconvenience to spoil your sunny mood. You are going to have a lovely week.

Soul Affirmation: He who doesn't ask will remain a fool forever.

Lucky Numbers: 13, 19, 22

CAPRICORN

Remember that you look marvelous! Be prepared for lots of compliments this week, and plan to accept them gracefully. You may be planning a time period trip; it's going to be a nice getaway.

Soul Affirmation: Communication is a skeleton key that opens many doors.

Lucky Numbers: 11, 50, 52

AQUARIUS

A party or gathering with friends from the past gives you the opportunity to strut your stuff a bit. You've made tremendous strides and accomplished much in your life, so be pleased with yourself this week. Pass some of your wisdom along to others.

Soul Affirmation: All that I need is within me.

Lucky Numbers: 18, 42, 47

PISCES

Do not throw a wrench in someone else's plan and undermine their project to get ahead in what you are trying to do this week. Be peaceful and seek harmony in the relationships you have in your personal and professional life. You will go further than you think by helping co-workers and friends.

Soul Affirmation: I get because I give.

Lucky Numbers: 1, 16, 22