

Ex-NBA star in runoff for Sacramento mayor

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — Former NBA All-Star Kevin Johnson survived his first political test, forcing a runoff election for mayor against the two-term incumbent in California's capital.

Neither candidate secured enough votes to win outright Tuesday in a race that drew national attention and claims of dirty politics after sexual misconduct accusations surfaced against the challenger.

Johnson won 47 percent of the vote, compared with Heather Fargo's 40 percent, while five lesser-known challengers split the rest of the vote.

The candidates needed more than 50 percent to win the contest outright.

Three-time NBA All-Star Kevin Johnson is finding out that politics can be every bit as rough as life on the court.

Johnson's campaign to unseat two-term incumbent Heather Fargo in Tuesday's mayoral election has been dogged by old sexual abuse allegations, complaints about his nonprofit development agency and criticism from gay activists over a remark about gay marriage.

It has been a rude awakening for the 42-year-old hometown hero who had hoped to talk more about his success in turning around the academic fortunes of his old high school and rebuilding

the economy of the tough Oak Park neighborhood where he grew up.

Johnson has canceled three scheduled interviews with The Associated Press but said during a debate last month: "I would stand my character up against anybody. It's unfortunate that when you decide to run for public office, there are going to be a lot of allegations and mudslinging and things that aren't true."

Johnson, who earned a political science degree while playing basketball at California, became an NBA star during his 12 seasons as a point guard with the Phoenix Suns.

The Suns retired his No. 7 jersey when he left the team in 2000 and he returned to Sacramento, focusing on rebuilding his boyhood neighborhood. Through his development organization, St. HOPE, Johnson transformed his failing alma mater, Sacramento High School, into a charter school that now sends most of its graduates to college.

Johnson launched his campaign in March shortly after the city announced a \$58 million budget deficit. He said Fargo has not moved fast enough on several major redevelopment projects, has been nonchalant about the city's homeless problem and has presided over a spike in

crime.

But from the beginning, Johnson has been haunted by two previous investigations into whether he behaved inappropriately with teenage girls.

Phoenix police investigated an allegation that Johnson, then 29, molested a 16-year-old girl in 1995. No charges were filed. The *Sacramento Bee* obtained a draft legal document that showed Johnson paid the girl

\$230,000 in a confidential settlement.

In 2007, a student at the school Johnson helped develop, Sacramento Charter High School, accused him of touching her inappropriately. Police investigated after a teacher reported the allegation and found the claims to be without merit. As in Phoenix, no charges were filed.

Johnson has refused to address the accusations in detail, citing confidentiality.

He also emphasizes that he was not charged in either case.

Federal authorities are investigating whether St. HOPE followed proper procedure in reporting the California girl's allegations. The nonprofit has received \$807,000 from the federal AmeriCorps program since 2004.

In addition, Johnson was forced to apologize after the *Bee* reported that half of St.

HOPE's 37 properties had been cited for code violations over a 10-year period. Vacant lots were left barren and sometimes filled with garbage.

Johnson has since moved to clean up the properties.

Johnson upset local gay and lesbian activists recently when he said marriage should remain restricted to a man and a woman.

Activist Steve Hansen (See Johnson, Page 11)

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Former Phoenix Suns point guard Kevin Johnson shakes hands with a well-wisher after announcing during a March news conference in Sacramento, Calif., that he would challenge incumbent Sacramento Mayor Heather Fargo in the June election. Johnson made it to the runoff election.