

THE ~~S~~ ELECTED PRESIDENT

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By now, everyone knows the story.

Texas Gov. George W. Bush defeated sitting Vice-President Al Gore in a hotly contested election that had more twists and turns than your average roller coaster.

After six weeks of fierce disputes, fueled by allegations of possible voter fraud in the election-clenching state of Florida, Bush was finally declared the winner on Dec. 13. The son of a former president, Bush took the oath of office on Jan. 20 to begin his term as our 43rd president.

As the nation waits for the initiatives President Bush will propose during his first few months in office, many are left with mixed tastes in their mouths about his time as president-elect. Bush's first actions were to designate cabinet appointees, including nominees retired General Colin Powell and Condoleeza Rice as secretary of state and national security advisor, respectively.

The Bush Administration includes three blacks, two Asian-Americans and four women serving in top-level positions.

However, while political analysts praised Bush for creating one of the most diverse cab-

inets in presidential history, the political beliefs of several nominees – namely Attorney General pick John Ashcroft – have left many wondering what the next four years have in store for America.

In an interview two days before Bush was inaugurated, U.S. House Representative Eva Clayton, D-N.C., said she felt anxious about the new president and the issues he will promote during his administration.

"I think my reaction to the presidency is nervousness and anxiousness. My reservation is he has not spoken up on many of the issues that affect people in my district," Clayton said.

Clayton, the chairwoman of the Congressional Black Caucus, said strengthening public schools and working to increase the minimum wage are two concerns of her constituents in eastern North Carolina.

An issue that was not raised along the campaign trail, but one that is sure to be among the first challenges Bush faces is the allegation of voter irregularities in Florida.

On Election night, late results showed that Bush had narrowly beaten Gore by fewer than one thousand votes resulting in an automatic recount.

As lawyers for Gore and Bush fought for and against the recounts to the Florida Supreme Court, they encountered a mixed set of victories as the Court decided to permit, and then disallow the recounting of votes. Ultimately, the parties took their cases to the U.S. Supreme Court.

On Dec. 12, the Court ended all recounts. The 5-4 ruling decided the election and allowed Florida Secretary of State Katherine Harris to declare Bush the winner of the state's 25 electoral votes.

Several black leaders, including civil rights activists: the Rev. Jesse Jackson and the Rev. Al Sharpton, became concerned when allegations of voter irregularities and a possible infringement of the Voter Rights Act of 1965 surfaced in Florida.

The focus of irregularities centered on the heavily Democratic Miami-Dade County. In a Dec. 16 interview on NBC's "Meet the Press," Jackson told moderator Tim Russert that news-organizations were in a rush to examine over 10,000 allegedly uncounted ballots in Miami-Dade that he believed would provide proof that black voters were disenfranchised during the election.

"You can afford to lose an