

# National

## Black Politicos Upset Over Guinier Flap

WASHINGTON (AP) — In a move that enraged the civil-rights community, President Clinton withdrew the nomination of Lani Guinier, a friend of two decades, as his civil rights enforcer.

Clinton said some of her controversial views would have been "very difficult to defend" against Senate critics.

Rep. Kweisi Mfume, chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus, called the move "a giant step backward."

"Fairness and due process were abandoned for political expediency," the Maryland Democrat said.

Clinton announced his decision after a 75-minute Oval Office meeting with Guinier, who he said was "surprised that I felt the way I did." Attorney General Janet Reno, who had staunchly supported Guinier, attended the meeting briefly.

Guinier made no immediate statement. Her husband, Temple University communications Professor Nolan Bowie, said Guinier remained in Washington, but she checked out of her hotel.

Clinton said he understood the anger civil rights leaders would feel and vowed to consult them as he sought a new nominee, saying he hoped to make a decision within several days. But civil rights activists who lambasted Clinton said they had no candidates.

Clinton's announcement ended days of news reports that he was going to abandon Guinier. The speculation became so intense that Guinier even made an extraordinary televised plea for a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing that would let her defend herself against critics who she said "distorted" her academic writings to make her views appear radical.

At the same time, civil rights leaders escalated their campaign to



President Clinton



Lani Guinier

save the nomination. Mfume publicly warned Clinton that dropping Guinier would cost him the caucus' political support on a number of issues, and noted that the president will need their votes to pass his programs. The caucus has 40 members, 39 of them in the House that passed Clinton's budget package last week by just six votes.

After Clinton announced his decision in a brief, televised news conference, Mfume said in an interview that the Black Caucus "must now reassess and reevaluate its relationship and role with this administration into the future."

Clinton has been trying to move to a more centrist position after sliding to a 36 percent approval rating in some polls, but he maintained that he abandoned the nomination over principle, not politics.

Guinier, he said, had views that "clearly lend themselves to interpretations that do not represent the views that I expressed on civil rights during my campaign."

He singled out her article in the March 1991 Michigan Law Review as unacceptable, saying it "seemed to be arguing for principles of proportional representation in minority veto as general remedies that I think are inappropriate as general remedies and anti-democratic — very difficult to defend."

Guinier, a 43-year-old University of Pennsylvania law professor who attended Yale University Law School with the Clintons, was attacked as a "quota queen" with far-out views about the federal Voting Rights Act. The initial criticism came from conservative activists but it spread to the centrist Democratic Leadership Council and a number of Senate Democrats.

Roger Wilkins, a close friend of Guinier's and a former Justice Department official, said: "Lani Guinier ... was nibbled to death by cowardly, anonymous White House aides."

Patricia Ireland, president of the National Organization for Women, told a Bloomington, Ind., audience that the nomination was blocked because Guinier was "willing to speak out articulately, persuasively and effectively against the exclusion of African Americans and women from the position of power."

When Clinton nominated her in late April, he said, he knew her work as a civil rights litigator — including her 7 1/2 years leading the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund's voting rights project in the 1980s. However, he said, he was not familiar with her academic writings of the past five years.

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