

Frederick Gregory becomes NASA's first black deputy administrator

Frederick D. Gregory, a veteran space shuttle commander and retired U.S. Air Force colonel, has been named deputy administrator at NASA, the first African-American to hold the position.

As deputy administrator, Gregory is chief operating officer for the agency, which includes directing and managing NASA's programs and day-to-day operations.

"His considerable experience as an astronaut and aviator, and his leadership in space flight safety are needed at this critical time for the agency," said NASA Administrator Sean O'Keefe.

In December 2001, Gregory was named associate administrator for space flight, after serving as associate administrator for safety and mission assurance. He became an astronaut in 1978, and logged more than 455 hours during three missions aboard the Challenger shuttle, where he was mission commander in 1989 and 1991. In the Air Force, he logged more than 7,000 hours in 50 types of aircraft and flew 500 missions in Vietnam, retiring in 1993.

Gregory's nomination to the position was confirmed by the Senate, and he will be sworn into office by President Bush.

"This is an incredible opportunity," said Gregory. "I appreciate the president's confidence, and I'm thankful for the Senate's speedy consideration. We have lots of work to do and I'm confident we'll be able to continue NASA's historic legacy of accomplishment."



Gregory

Miami-Dade County agrees to settle NAACP lawsuit over 2000 election

MIAMI - Miami-Dade County has agreed to change the way it conducts elections to settle a voting-rights lawsuit stemming from the 2000 presidential election, when problems allegedly kept blacks from casting ballots in Florida.

The deal, reached last week, comes less than three weeks before the scheduled start of a federal trial on the lawsuit, filed by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and other civil rights groups.

Under the agreement in Miami-Dade County, election officials will modify voter registration, voter-roll maintenance and polling practices, all of which plaintiffs claim disenfranchised minority voters on Nov. 7, 2000.

Among the agreement's provisions: County officials will try to identify people incorrectly removed from voting rolls as a result of "felon" lists provided by the state Division of Elections. Felons convicted in Florida are not allowed to vote unless their rights have been restored. Wrongly removed voters would get a written explanation that their voting privileges had been restored.

The department will make sure that all voters in line at poll closing time, 7 p.m., are allowed to vote.

Election staffers will mail a written explanation to people whose provisional ballots are disqualified. Provisional ballots are given to voters whose eligibility to vote cannot be immediately verified at the polling place.

The elections department will keep the NAACP and other rights groups informed about how precincts will be staffed and equipped.

U.S. Rep. McKinney faces pointed questions from challenger during debate

ATLANTA - Rep. Cynthia McKinney faced pointed questions over Arab contributions to her re-election campaign Friday from a former judge who hopes to unseat her.

The exchange came in a 30-minute debate broadcast live over Georgia public broadcasting. McKinney kept the program's sponsors guessing until the last minute whether she would show.

McKinney, known for her controversial positions, faces her toughest challenge in 10 years in an Aug. 20 primary contest against Denise Majette. Both are black women in a district just east of Atlanta that is primarily black.

When candidates were allowed to ask each other questions, Majette said, "On 9-11 while the rest of the world watched in horror ... you were counting money received from some people who have been named as Arab terrorists. How do you explain this?"

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported earlier this month that McKinney received contributions from several people who have come under federal investigation for suspected links to Middle Eastern terrorists or have voiced support for extremist groups.

"We don't racially profile our contributors," McKinney replied. "All of our contributions are legal. My opponent, on the other hand, has an awful lot of Republican money going into her coffers."

McKinney attacked Majette for taking various stands on affirmative action, saying Majette flip-flopped on the issue and also criticizing her for opposing slave reparations.

Majette said she supports affirmative action and has been a beneficiary of such programs. But, she said, reparations for slavery can best be made through improved public schools and by leveling the economic playing field for all.

- Compiled from staff and wire reports

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INDEX

OPINION.....	A6
SPORTS.....	B1
RELIGION.....	B6
CLASSIFIEDS.....	B10
HEALTH.....	C3
ENTERTAINMENT.....	C7
CALENDAR.....	C9

AME bishop ministers to Africa

BY SYLVIA DUNNAVANT
THE DALLAS EXAMINER

DALLAS - She has gone from Baltimore to Mozambique. She is the spiritual leader of four African countries, the mother of three and the mentor to many.

Yet, Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie's biggest challenge hasn't been breaking the glass ceiling; it has been rebuilding a straw house.

As a result of McKenzie's historic election, she not only became the first female bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in July 2000, she also became the presiding prelate over the 18th Episcopal District of the AME Church, a post that is made up of Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique and Swaziland in Southern Africa.

Known for bringing about change, McKenzie began an immediate needs assessment of her new parishioners, many of whom were left homeless after severe flooding in Mozambique.

"It was very important to do needs assessment. I needed to get to know the people. I need to know how they worked, why they worked, so that we could work together," said McKenzie, who was in Dallas recently at the African American Christian Counselors national meeting.

McKenzie and the 18th District responded to this crisis by providing funding and labor for 51 temporary houses outside Maputo, Mozambique, in October 2000.

The biggest challenge, she said, has been realizing the four countries may be similar, but they are very different.

"Sometimes I have to keep reminding myself where I am and what language I am expected to speak. Each country is very different, they have different languages, and their needs are different as well," said



Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie, right, shakes hands with parishioners.

KRT Photo

McKenzie. Although AIDS and HIV are at epidemic levels across the United States, both are at pandemic levels in the continent of Africa.

"Botswana and Swaziland lead the world with the highest rates of AIDS," said McKenzie.

The disease has infected one in five people. The generation between the ages of 18 and 24 is in danger of being decimated. Orphans become one of the great fallouts from the devastation of AIDS in these countries.

According to the National AIDS Conference held in Barcelona, Spain, last month, about 25 million Africans will be orphans as the result of the devastation of AIDS.

For McKenzie, this issue is too real. Vast numbers of young people roam the country with no physical or spiritual guidance, creating a multitude of other

issues, she said.

"To combat this problem we have developed group homes, not orphanages," said McKenzie. The group homes will house 12 children and one adult. Unlike an orphanage, the homes are developed to help bring spiritual and physical enrichment to the children and create stability.

This December, McKenzie is slated to complete three group homes, which will house 36 children.

"You might say 36 children out of 25 million is not a lot...but you have to start somewhere," said McKenzie.

Throughout McKenzie's ministerial history, she has shown a love and devotion to youths. In her new post she is using that devotion to enrich and empower the children of the 60 schools in her district. She also has started a computer drive to get computers in the

school systems. She mentioned one high school housed more than 800 students.

"As the United States has become a digitized country, Africa must also join them in that form of technology. We cannot afford to be left behind," she said.

Last year McKenzie started an educational workshop for teachers in her district. Educators from her sorority, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc., as well as from across the country joined her for a two-week training session. She is planning to make this an annual event and bring in other educators as well to make sure her teachers are equipped to handle the educational challenges of the 21st century.

Before her appointment, McKenzie served as senior pas-

See McKenzie on A4

Report: Poor shorted on education

SPECIAL THE CHRONICLE

WASHINGTON, D.C. -

The Education Trust last week released a new report documenting large funding gaps between high- and low-poverty and -minority districts in many states. The analysis reveals that, in most states, school districts that educate the greatest number of low-income and minority students receive substantially less state and local money per student than districts with the fewest low-income and minority students.

The report, "The Funding Gap: Low-Income and Minority Students Receive Fewer

Dollars," looked at school finance data by the Education Trust. It found that:

- In 30 of 47 states studied, the quarter of districts educating the greatest number of poor students receive substantially less (i.e. a difference of \$100 or more per student) state and local money per student than the quarter of districts educating the fewest poor students.
- Nationally, the gap between high- and low-poverty districts is shrinking, but in some states it's getting worse. The good news is that the gap has decreased in 27 states since 1997, in some cases by a substantial amount.

Unfortunately, the gap has increased substantially (i.e. by more than \$100 per student) in nine states over the same period.

- In 31 of 47 states studied, districts enrolling the highest proportions of minority students receive substantially fewer (i.e. a difference of \$100 or more per student) state and local education dollars per student than districts enrolling the lowest percentages of minority students.

The Education Trust believes the gaps have real consequences for the quality of education low-income and minority children can receive. In New York, for example -

the state with the largest funding gaps - the \$2,152 per student difference by poverty enrollment translates into a whopping \$860,800 difference between high- and low-poverty elementary schools of the same size (400 students each). That amount would easily be enough for the high-poverty school to compete with elite suburban schools for the most qualified teachers and also provide extra instructional time for students who are behind.

Nationally, districts that educate the greatest number of poor students receive \$966 less per student than low-poverty districts.

Washington, DC to Charlotte, NC

Notice of Availability

The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation and the North Carolina Department of Transportation have completed a Tier I Final Environmental Impact Statement for proposed high speed passenger rail service between Washington, DC, and Charlotte, NC.

Copies of the Tier I Final Environmental Impact Statement may be reviewed at these locations.

Public comments are vital to the project and will be entered into the public record. Comments will be received through August 30, 2002, and should be sent to:

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