

Two decades of votes put Kerry in Democratic mainstream

By Nancy Benac

WASHINGTON (AP) - The trouble with being a member of Congress, John Kerry once lamented, is that you can't vote "yes, but" or "no, but." Kerry has cast thousands of votes in his nearly 20 years as a senator from Massachusetts, and they place him squarely in the Democratic Party mainstream. He's given a lot of speeches over the years, too, and those words sometimes have suggested a more nuanced view.

"He votes with his party even though his critiques have sometimes gone against the grain of the party," says Elaine Kamarck, a public policy professor at Harvard University who was an advisor to Al Gore in the 2000 campaign.

As the front-running Democratic presidential candidate, Kerry is finding both his votes and words coming under increasingly intense scrutiny, and he spends a considerable amount of time explaining his thinking.

Legal Defense Fund

(Continued From Front)

"That's not a new development," Shaw explains. "The job is a difficult one. But, we have excellent young lawyers who do extraordinary work. And all we can do is provide the best representation possible and hope that the courts do what's right when we present evidence of discrimination to them that can't be refuted," Shaw says. "We can't worry about the courts once we are before them. What we will continue to do is monitor these judicial appointments to do everything we can to insure that those who are appointed to the federal bench are fair-minded."

He maintains faith in the system despite its weaknesses.

"I have to," he says. "What's the alternative? Those of us who have some discomfort about the system, we have to make it better."

Shaw says a main administrative priority will be fund-raising for the non-profit organization, which is supported by private contributions from individuals, foundations and corporations.

"I believe that the Legal Defense Fund should be one of the institutions that all Americans — or particularly, African-Americans — should support because we all have an investment in the work that it does," Shaw says. "I think it's one of the most important organizations in the country."

And he continues to carry its baton for justice even when he could be in private practice making a significantly higher salary.

"I stay because I believe in the cause that the LDF is committed to," he says. "And there's not been a day that I've awakened and said, 'I don't like what I do.'"

On one hand, Democratic rival Howard Dean has repeatedly criticized Kerry's 2002 vote authorizing the United States to go to war against Iraq, painting him as just another Washington insider. On the other, Republican Party Chairman Ed Gillespie this week cited Kerry's 1991 vote against military action in the Persian Gulf as one in a string of votes he said suggest the senator is weak on national defense.

The rationale for such votes - not just for Kerry, but for any candidate with a congressional record - often can get lost in a campaign of glib sound bites and quick retorts.

Nearly a year ago, Kerry spoke of the challenge. "This is the difficulty in any vote: You can vote 'no, but' and there are a whole lot of qualifiers, or you can vote 'Yes, but,' and there a lot of qualifiers sometimes," he said. "The way people read the votes, they don't see any of the qualifiers."

Whatever the qualifiers, Kerry has consistently voted his party's line, as reflected in ratings issued by various interest groups: a lifetime score of 5 for the American Conservative Union, a rating of 85 for 2001-2002 from the liberal People for the American Way.

The value of such ratings, though, is limited. For example, the scores

Brown Case

(Continued From Front)

lowed the path Brown had opened," Richard Kluger writes in "Simple Justice," a book about the decision.

Segregation was outlawed in public parks, recreation areas, interstate and intrastate commerce facilities, libraries, courtrooms, hotels, restaurants and other public places.

The decision's far-reaching legacy is being commemorated this year in events across the country. Some will culminate with the decision's 50th anniversary in May, while others will continue through the end of the year.

In St. Louis, Missouri, Historyonics Theatre Company is presenting "Brown vs. the Board of Education," a play that uses words spoken by people involved in the case.

Patton Chiles, the company's artistic director, dug into archives of interviews, newspaper articles and books about the case while writing the play, which opens Feb. 13.

The Brown decision "had a big impact on me," Chiles said. "I've sort of made that a cause, breaking down the social barriers between the two races. If you put theater up there and people can see something from somebody else's point of view ... they can put a human face on it, and it opens up dialogue between the two races."

At the University of Michigan, a semester-long commemoration of the anniversary includes a half-dozen new classes on the case began last month. Thirty other courses have been modified to discuss the decision in greater detail.

University of Virginia Law Professor Kim Forde-Mazrui remembers researching a college paper on Earl Warren, the chief justice who wrote the Brown opinion.

"Reading the accounts of Brown when I was doing this paper became my new moment of inspiration and hope," said Forde-Mazrui, a visiting professor at the University of Michigan, who will be speaking about the case at an event next month.

"For me, what I think Brown means, and probably for others, is seeing black people, and especially black children, as people ... It's about seeing past race."

Some caution the events should be infused with a careful examination of race relations today. Schools across the nation are becoming more segregated for black and Hispanic students, a recent report by Harvard University's Civil Rights Project found.

"We're at a really serious risk of losing what we're celebrating," said Gary Orfield, co-director of the project. "We're trying to inject into this a sense of both the amazing accomplishments of Brown and the Civil Rights Act and the fact that we've been pretty much going backwards now ever since the early 1990s."

On the Net:
Association for the Study of African American Life and History:
<http://www.asalh.com/>

for Sen. Joe Lieberman of Connecticut, the most centrist of the Democratic presidential hopefuls, aren't much different from Kerry's. Lieberman's rating from People for the American Way was identical to Kerry's - 85.

Darrell West, a political science professor at Brown University, describes Kerry as falling "at the pragmatic end of liberalism."

"He's somebody who has carved out his own path, and occasionally questioned doctrinaire positions, so although he is a liberal, he won't be quite as easy to pigeonhole as Republicans are claiming," West said.

Dean has stepped up his criticism of Kerry's record in recent days, saying the senator hadn't accomplished much and that the presidential nominee should be "a doer, not a talker."

Kerry's response is that effectiveness in Congress isn't measured by the number of laws that carry one's name and that he's helped pass important laws providing benefits such as family medical leave, mental health care and children's health care.

The senator also is increasingly the target of Republican fire now that he has emerged as the Democratic front-runner. The GOP's Gillespie besides labeling Kerry soft on defense, has cast him as an Eastern liberal out of sync with voters on economic and social issues.

Kerry, for his part, says he's happy to campaign on his Senate record, confident his background as a Vietnam war hero will help deflect any questions about his commitment to national security. He also can point to votes that show a centrist bent - in favor of welfare reform, trade legislation and the Gramm-Rudman deficit-reduction law, for example.

His speeches, too, sometimes stray from Democratic dogma. In 1992, for example, he gave a speech saying affirmative action, which he supports, has had costs as well as benefits. "There exists a reality of reverse discrimination that actually engenders racism," he said.

Taking a hard look at public schools in a 1993 speech, he decried the "political timidity and powerful interest groups" that were keeping the nation from meaningful education reforms that would improve standard schools.

But now Lieberman's campaign accuses Kerry, and another Democratic presidential rival, Sen. John Edwards of North Carolina, of backing away from President Bush's 2001 education reform package in deference to complaints from the education establishment. Kerry voted for the package, known as the No Child Left Behind Act, but now wants to revise it and complains that Bush has failed to back up the law with enough money to help schools raise academic standards.

Kerry has built his Senate reputation more on pursuing investigations than crafting legislation. For example, he led a subcommittee probe into the Bank of Credit & Commerce International scandal and subsequently wrote a book that helped document how international criminal and terrorist networks work together.

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City of Durham Weekly Calendar



WEEKLY CALENDAR: FEBRUARY 9, 2004 - FEBRUARY 14, 2004

Durham City Council meets regularly on the first and third Monday of the month in the Council Chambers on the first floor of City Hall at 7:00 p.m. The meetings are open to the public and aired live on cable channel 8.

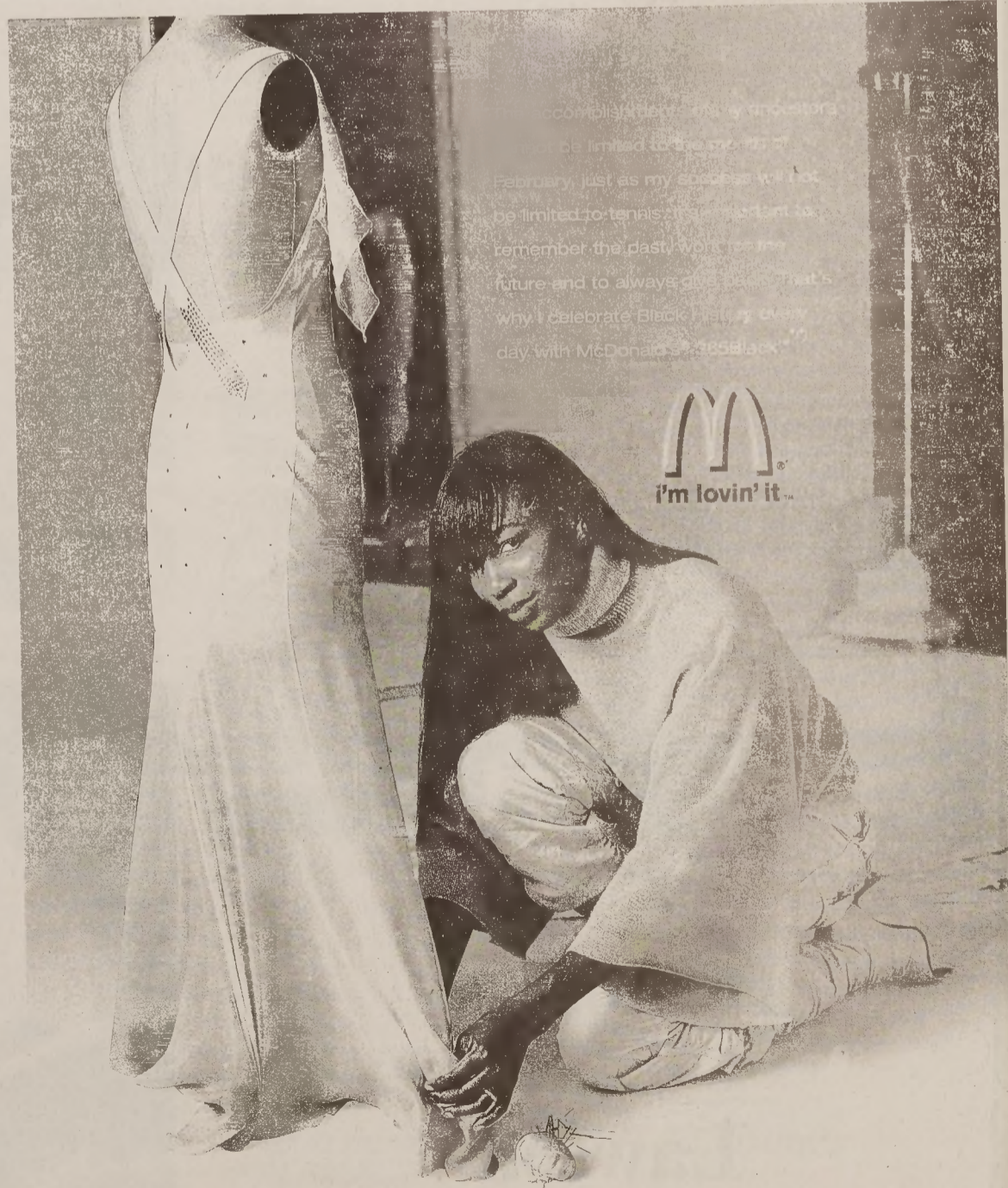
City Government meetings scheduled during the next week include the following:

- MONDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2004**
8:00 a.m. **LANDSCAPE COMMITTEE OF THE CITY-COUNTY APPEARANCE COMMISSION**
(Committee Room/2nd Floor/City Hall)
6:00 p.m. **COFFEE WITH COUNCIL DISTRICT 2**
(E.K. Powe Elementary School/213 Ninth Street)
- TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2004**
7:45 a.m. **MANAGED COMPETITION CITIZENS COMMITTEE**
(Conference Room B/Ground Floor/City Hall)
11:00 a.m. **DURHAM DESIGN REVIEW TEAM**
(Conference Room A/Ground Floor/City Hall)
12:00 noon **MAYOR'S COMMITTEE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**
(Committee Room/2nd Floor/City Hall)
12:00 noon **RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**
(Parks & Recreation Dept./Conference Room/2011 Fay Street)
2:00 p.m. **DURHAM COMPREHENSIVE PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE**
(General Services Dept./Conference Room/2011 Fay Street)
5:30 p.m. **SISTER CITIES OF DURHAM, INC.**
(Committee Room/2nd Floor/City Hall)
5:30 p.m. **COMMUNITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE OF THE HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION**
(Briefing Room/1st Floor/City Hall)
6:00 p.m. **ZONING COMMITTEE OF THE DURHAM PLANNING**
(Council Chambers/1st Floor/City Hall)
6:00 p.m. **ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS BOARD**
(Committee Room/2nd Floor/City Hall)
7:00 p.m. **COFFEE WITH COUNCIL DISTRICT 5 - DOWNTOWN DISTRICT**
(Committee Room/2nd Floor/City Hall)
- WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2004**
9:00 a.m. **TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**
(Committee Room/2nd Floor/City Hall)
10:00 a.m. **CAREERS IN HOSPITALITY COMMITTEE OF THE DURHAM WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD**
(Durham Convention & Visitors Bureau/101 E. Morgan Street)
11:30 a.m. **DURHAM CIVIC CENTER AUTHORITY**
(Durham Marriott at the Civic Center/201 Foster Street)
5:00 p.m. **BY-LAWS COMMITTEE OF THE DURHAM PLANNING COMMISSION**
(Council Chambers/1st Floor/City Hall)
6:00 p.m. **DURHAM PLANNING COMMISSION**
(Council Chambers/1st Floor/City Hall)
- THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2004**
9:00 a.m. **SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING**
Subject: City Council Retreat and any other matters that may come before the Council
(General Services Dept./Conference Room/2011 Fay Street)
4:00 p.m. **PRIORITY III OF THE DURHAM WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD**
(CCB Bank Building/111 Corcoran Street)
7:00 p.m. **LYON PARK ADVISORY BOARD**
(Community Family Life and Recreation @ Lyon Park/1313 Halley Street)
- FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2004**
9:00 a.m. **SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING**
Subject: City council Retreat and any other matters that may come before the Council
(General Services Dept./Conference Room/2011 Fay Street)
- SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2004**
10 a.m. **COFFEE WITH COUNCIL DISTRICT 3**
(Community Family Life and Recreation Center @ Lyon Park/1313 Halley Street)

All meetings are held in City Hall, 101 City Hall Plaza, unless otherwise indicated. Additional meetings JUNE be scheduled after this list is submitted for publication. Free parking is available during the Council Meeting in the Chapel Hill Street Parking Garage, located across Mangum Street from City Hall.

Any citizen wishing to be heard on agenda matters, please call the City Clerk's Office at 560-4166 to place your name on the Speakers' List. Interpreters for the Deaf and the Hearing Impaired are available by giving a 48-hour notice. If needed, please telephone 560-4180.

To learn about issues affecting the City of Durham watch *CityLife* the first Thursday of every month on cable channel 23 at 7:30 p.m. The show is rebroadcast every Thursday at 7:30 p.m. until the next show airs. We want your input — citizens are invited to call in and ask questions about the topics being discussed.



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