

Congress flunks NAACP test

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given to Doris Matsui of California, who got a late start after her predecessor, Robert T. Matsui, died in office. Bernard Sanders, an Independent from Vermont, received an A.

Among the 44 Senate Democrats, 29 earned As, 12 received Bs, two got Cs and one - Ben Nelson of Nebraska - got an F.

Overall, the 41 voting members of the Congressional Black Caucus showed overwhelming allegiance to the NAACP-backed issues. All earned As except for the Bs earned by Artur Davis of Alabama, Kendrick Meek of Florida and Adolphus Towns of New York and the Cs received by Sanford Bishop of Georgia and Harold Ford Jr. of Tennessee (Delegates Donna Christian-Christensen and Eleanor Holmes Norton are not voting members.)

At the close of the last Congress, all Republicans got Fs except one, Rep. Jim Leach of Iowa, who earned a C. This time, he got an F. On this report card, five Republican lawmakers scored higher than F.

NAACP Washington Bureau Director Hilary Shelton says the GOP improvement may be misleading because there were few major civil rights issues facing the Congress during the last session.

"There has been some improvement, but that is only within the context of the limited issues," says Shelton. "There are a significant number of crucial, more contentious issues that haven't

made it to the floor for a vote.

Those issues include the Hate Crimes Protection Amendment that passed in the House and is awaiting action in the Senate, and anti-police brutality and anti-profiling legislation, both of which are still stuck in committee.

Overall, voting on civil rights has not changed much in recent years. Fifty-three percent of the lawmakers voted against the NAACP position in the last session; more than half of the two legislative bodies have voted against NAACP-backed legislation for the past three sessions of Congress.

The NAACP graded members based on the percentage of times they voted in agreement with the 97-year-old civil rights organization. An A was awarded for a 90 to 100 percent approval; B for 80 to 89 percent; C for 70 to 79 percent; D for 60 to 69 percent and an F for 59 percent and below.

In the Senate, those issues include the passage of a bill that downgraded the strength of class action suits seeking lost wages and overtime pay, a proposal opposed by the NAACP; and a bill that prevented the elimination of \$14 billion in funds to Medicaid over a five year period, supported by the NAACP. In the House, the lawmakers were graded, in part, on the successful vote to stop the elimination of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, supported by the NAACP, and a successful amendment to increase funding for fair housing programs,

supported by the group.

At the leadership level, there was also a stark difference between Democratic and Republican voting.

Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, a potential presidential candidate, maintained his F-

rating, falling from a 9 percent support level at the end of the 108th Congress to 5 percent.

Senate Majority Whip Mitch McConnell of Kentucky mirrored Frist's voting pattern.

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Jurist adds color to Supreme Court

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judges and few African-American lawyers, there were some challenges related to individuals gaining confidence in the work that I did," she said.

Wynn, a former member of the Supreme Court who has known Timmons-Goodson since her school days at UNC-Chapel Hill, said her appointment brings two types of diversity to the panel.

"She brings representative diversity just from the facial look of the court, but she also brings substantive diversity from the experience of the type of community she was brought up in," he said.

Wynn said he has always seen Timmons-Goodson as a woman of integrity.

"She was a lady then, and she's a lady now, she's always carried herself as someone with a strong family connection who understood the value of others," he said.

Goodson said she wanted to be a lawyer from an early age.

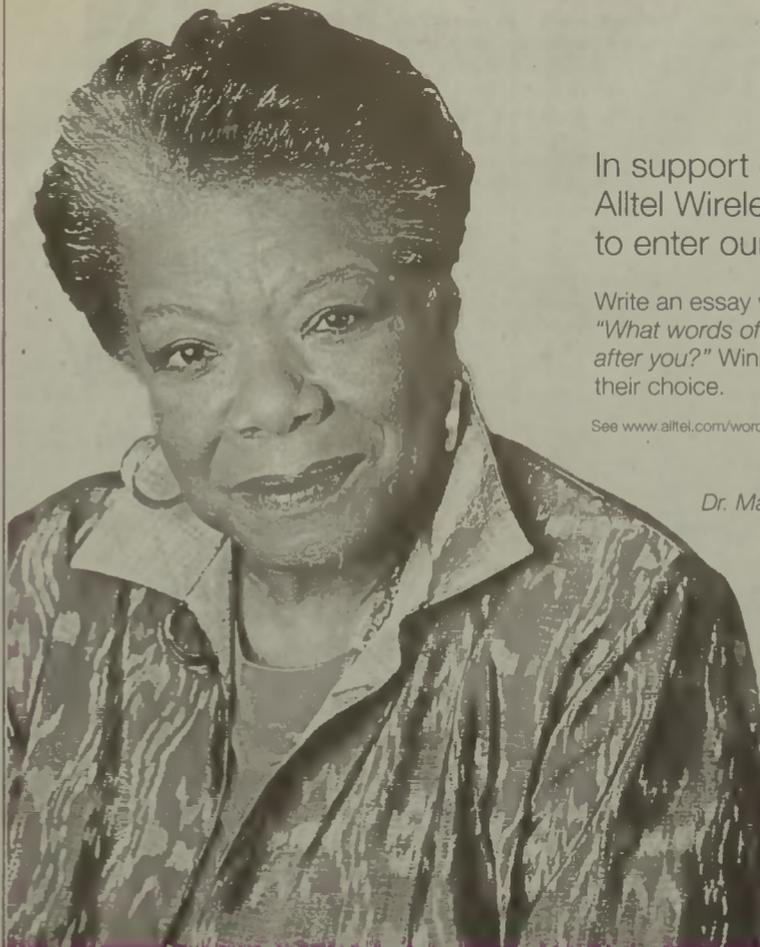
"I looked around as a young person, and it appeared to me that when folks had issues they didn't understand, they went to the lawyers and that's the kind of person I wanted to be, she said. "I wanted to serve, I wanted to help people."

Butterfield said he has all the confidence Timmons-Goodson will do a good job.

"Pat is a legal scholar with a full understanding of the people of North Carolina and their values he said. "She will also add to the diversity of the Court, and I know that she will continue to prove to be an outstanding jurist."

A native of Fayetteville, Goodson retired from the State Court of Appeals Oct. 31. She served on the court for eight years after serving on the 12th judicial district for 12 years.

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