

Congressional gains, mixed results at home

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"It's Christmas come early for Mel," said Ted Arrington Ph.D., chairman of UNC Charlotte's political science department. "The Caucus and blue dog (conservative) Democrats like Heath Shuler (who upset incumbent Republican Charles Taylor in the N.C. 11th Congressional District) won't always see eye to eye. But (House speaker in waiting Nancy) Pelosi knows she can't ignore the Black Caucus. She's smart and she'll figure a way to get them to work together."

"We look forward to working with Democrats, Republicans and independents to advance the CBC's agenda," Watt said.

A Caucus member, U.S. Rep. James Clyburn (D-S.C.) is in line to become majority whip — the No. 3 post in the House. If he's elected, Clyburn would become the highest-ranking African American in House history.

Back home, the results were mixed.

Patricia Timmons Goodson of Fayetteville became the first woman to be elected to the N.C. Supreme Court. Appointed by Gov. Mike Easley earlier this year to succeed Sarah Parker, who was named chief justice, Timmons-Goodson easily defeated appeals court Judge Eric Levinson of Charlotte with 58 percent of the vote. Timmons Goodson, a

Fayetteville resident, even carried Mecklenburg County.

N.C. Rep. Jim Black, who is the subject of criminal investigations for alleged influence peddling, was locked in a tight battle with Republican Hal Jordan in District 100. Black, who had the backing of the Legislative Black Caucus during the inquiries and campaign, was ahead by seven votes early Wednesday morning. Even if he manages

to hang on his Statehouse influence — which paved the way for African American lawmakers to rise to unprecedented positions of power and steered millions of dollars to Mecklenburg — is all but drained.

"Nobody will stay on a sinking ship," Arrington asserted. In Charlotte, Democratic Mecklenburg County Commissioner Wilhelmina Rembert lost her re-election

bid, finishing last in a six-candidate race. As a result, of candidate commissioner Dan Ramirez finishing second between Democrats Jennifer Roberts and Parfs Helms, the Democrats' majority shrank to 5-4.

The GOP slate of McGarry,

Ramirez and Jim Puckett ran more aggressive campaigns with television advertising attacking the Democrats on same-sex benefits and lavish spending.

The Democrats, running separately, weren't as intense, although Roberts came close with personal appearances and mail campaigns in Republican-leaning suburbs. Outside Charlotte, Rembert struggled

"The part of this that's heartbreaking is that if one of the Democrats gets booted, it would be an African American," Arrington said. "We've seen African American candidates have trouble getting votes in white boxes, and that's what happened here."



Rembert
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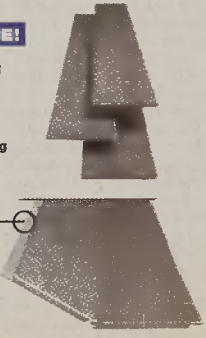
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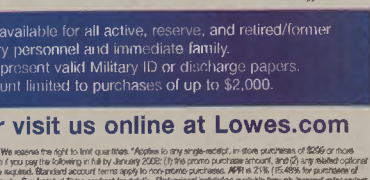


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Political war for blacks rages on

By Hazel Trice Eaney
NATIONAL NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

WASHINGTON — Even though Democrats wrested control of the U.S. House on Tuesday, paving the way for Congressional Black Caucus members to chair some key committees, African-Americans will still need to remain active to make sure their needs are met, say political observers.

"This is a great opening. This is the first time we will have more than one chairman. We will have significant power and we will have the majority in the House for a Party in which we have invested more than 90 percent of our vote," says Democratic activist Al Sharpton. "The question is whether or not we are betrayed or fulfilled. The question is can we hold them accountable? I think that we won a battle, but the war is not over because we have to make sure that those with whom we have remained aligned also remain aligned to the goals and principles that we believe in."

As of early Wednesday, Democrats had picked up at least 17 House seats, two more than they needed to regain control of the 435-member chamber. They had taken three Senate seats from Republicans, with the outcome of several still undetermined.

"If we went to the polls, then we might do a 10-minute celebration, but then we really need to be vigilant and really hold the Democrats to the fire. This is politics and they will go after the loudest voice. And at any given time, it seems that ours is not the loudest," says Desiree Pedescaux, political science professor at Spelman College in Atlanta. "There are other issues that will certainly draw out the concerns of African-Americans."

It's been a long wait for veteran CBC members. Reps. John Conyers (D-Mich.)

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