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# Clinton withdraws civil rights nominee

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.

"I'm convinced that the administration has taken a giant step backward," said Kweisi Mfume, D-Md., chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus. "Fairness and due process were abandoned for political expediency."

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 Wednesday night 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 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 re-evaluate 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

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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 Univer-

sity 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."

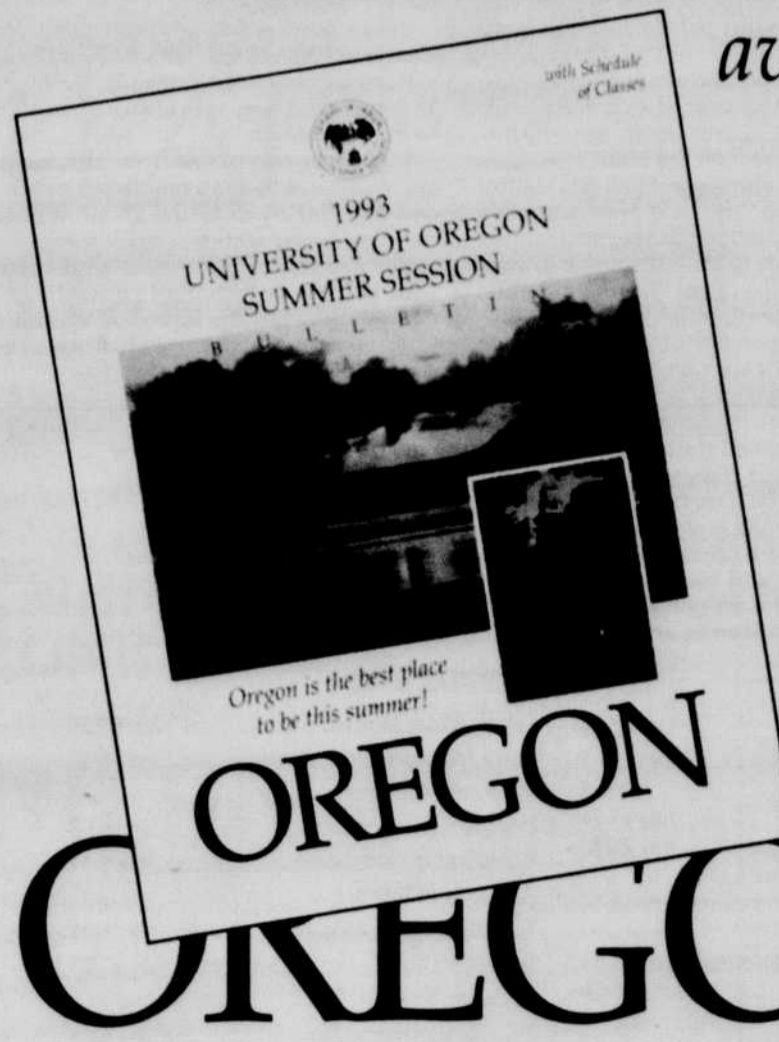
Clinton drew praise, however, from Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell, D-Maine.

"While Ms. Guinier has a distinguished record as a civil rights litigator, the controversy around her writings would have been divisive and counterproductive to the goals of civil rights enforcement," Mitchell said in a statement.

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