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NAACP President Steps Down

Mfume brought era of stability and growth

(AP)—Saying he needs a break, NAACP President Kweisi Mfume announced Tuesday that he's stepping down as the head of the nation's oldest and largest civil rights group.

The organization's legal counsel, Dennis Hayes, will serve as interim president while a national search is conducted.

"For the last nine years, I've had what I believe is both the honor and the privilege to help revive and to help restore this great organization, which has ... really become an American institution," Mfume said. Mfume, 56, has been president

NAACP President Kweisi Mfume is stepping down as the head of the nation's oldest and largest civil rights group. (AP photo)



offs. In September, the group launched an advertising campaign aimed at combating what officials describe as stagnant membership growth.

Mfume, whose adopted West African name translates to "conquering son of kings," began his career as a dashiki-clad popular radio talk show host and political activist in the 1970s and transformed himself into one of the nation's foremost civil rights leaders.

He was leader of the Congressional Black Caucus before stepping down to head the NAACP.

"To serve as the president of the NAACP ... clearly has been the most rewarding and the most fulfilling experience in my life," Mfume said. "I walk away with more rather than less."

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Police Brutality Cases Settled

Video documented protesters claims

(AP)—Portland is set to approve payment of \$300,000 to 12 people who claimed police used excessive force during two anti-war marches in March 2003 and during President Bush's visit to Portland in August 2002.

A federal judge spent at least five months mediating the claims, and the City Council is set to approve the settlement Wednesday.

Plaintiffs argued in two lawsuits that the city, Mayor Vera Katz, then-police Chief Mark Kroeker and several officers violated their rights to free speech and

free assembly.

They said they were doused by pepper spray at close range and that police fired rubber stingballs into a crowd. They used videotapes to document their claims.

Political activist Lloyd Marbet was among nine defendants who filed a lawsuit stemming from the Bush visit.

Police clashed with protesters outside the Hilton Hotel as a Republican fund-raiser headlining Bush was getting under way. Three children there with their parents and a teacher who was hit by pepper spray were among the other plaintiffs.

Their lawyers reviewed more than 100 hours of videotape taken by independent observers and the Police Bureau.

GAO to Investigate Voting Irregularities

(AP)—The Government Accountability Office, responding to a request from Democratic lawmakers, will investigate the way votes were counted in the Nov. 2 election.

Questions have been raised about voting irregularities in many states, especially in Ohio and Florida - crucial states carried by President Bush.

The investigation will study the accuracy of the count and the methods used to count the vote. Investigators will look at the way officials counted provisional ballots, provided to voters whose names did not appear on voting lists but who contended they are eligible to cast ballots.

Congress' investigative agency cautioned that it is not authorized to take action if irregularities are found.

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