

Md. Delegate Easily Wins Mfume's Seat

By Todd Spangler

Associated Press

BALTIMORE, April 16—Democrat Elijah E. Cummings, the highest ranking black state legislator in Maryland's history, was elected to Congress today in balloting to fill the unexpired term of Rep. Kweisi Mfume (D).

Cummings got 17,912 votes to Republican Kenneth Kondner's 4,130, for a victory ratio of slightly more than 5 to 1.

Cummings and Kondner, a dental lab owner and three-time loser against Mfume, will face off again in the Nov. 5 general election to represent the 7th District for the next two years.

The seat opened when Mfume left this winter during his fifth term to take over as president of the NAACP.

At the Urban League in Baltimore tonight, Cummings led supporters in a chant of his campaign mantra: "In my time and in my space, I will make a difference with God's grace."

Cummings promised to be a voice for the people he has met while campaigning, such as the unemployed, senior citizens and AIDS patients.

"I'm going to have a conscience that is synchronized with my conduct," he said.

Cummings's election caps a long political road taken by the 45-year-old Baltimore lawyer, who served in the Maryland legislature for 14 years. Last year, he was tapped by House Speaker Casper R. Taylor Jr. (D-Alleghany) to become the first black lawmaker named speaker pro tem, making him the second-ranking Democrat in the House of Delegates.

The overwhelmingly Democratic

district, which includes parts of Baltimore and Baltimore County, gave Maryland its first black member of Congress in 1970 when Parren Mitchell was elected. Neither Mitchell nor Mfume, who was elected in 1986, faced a serious challenge during their terms.

Kondner, 54, was watching a video tonight and said he was not keeping track of the election results. Although he did not concede, Kondner said, "Of course I wish [Cummings] the best. It's a full-time job. I would hope he would try to be a public servant instead of a career politician."

Turnout today was about 8 percent, compared with about 30 percent for both parties during the March 5 primary, when Cummings prevailed over 26 Democratic challengers with 37 percent of the vote and Kondner beat four challengers.