



14 of 26 DOCUMENTS

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**HEADLINE:** Sachs Endorsed by Black Baltimore Ministers

**BYLINE:** By Gwen Ifill, Washington Post Staff Writer

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**BODY:**

An organization of 210 black Baptist ministers, whose congregations are among the largest and most politically influential in this metropolitan area, announced today that it will actively support the gubernatorial bid of Maryland Attorney General Stephen H. Sachs.

The endorsement of Sachs by leaders of the Baptist Ministers' Conference, who represent 100,000 church members, could become a political liability for William Donald Schaefer, even though he has drawn wide support from black voters in 10 years as Baltimore mayor. Schaefer is expected to announce his candidacy for governor formally in the spring.

Spokesmen for the group predicted that their backing of Sachs will give him a sure inroad into the city's black community.

Sachs' stands in favor of gun control and increased aid to education, the ministers said, were two of the reasons they chose to support him. During Schaefer's tenure as mayor, Baltimore has spent less on education while state aid has increased, the ministers said. The mayor's refusal last week to take a stand on gun control also rankled the ministers. Many of the church leaders had supported unsuccessful legislation that would have given the city its own gun control powers.

"If people trust you to lead them to heaven, they'll trust you to lead them on earth," said the Rev. Alfred C.D. Vaughn, the pastor of Grace Memorial Baptist Church.

Del. Elijah Cummings (D-Baltimore), chairman of the Legislative Black Caucus, said that although the state's black elected officials do not plan to endorse a candidate for governor as a group, "the caucus can't ignore this. These ministers are the moral fabric of our community. They are the true leaders."

Sachs appeared at a news conference today with more than 30 black ministers from the city and Baltimore and Anne Arundel counties.

Sachs Endorsed by Black Baltimore Ministers The Washington Post March 6, 1986, Thursday, Final Edition

"This is by no means a paper endorsement," said the Rev. Walter Thomas of New Psalmist Baptist Church, the group's president. "He is our candidate, and we will work to see that he is elected. We will use our collective and individual strength to push his candidacy."

The ministers' endorsement was the second Sachs has received in the last week from a predominantly black organization. On Saturday, the Jesse Jackson-inspired Maryland Rainbow Coalition also voted to support him.

Schaefer campaign manager Mark Wasserman said today that early endorsements are not yet a concern. "It's safe to say that the mayor will do very well in the black community in Maryland," Wasserman said. "We fully expect that his candidacy will have broad and wide appeal."