

Cummings coasts to win over Kondner in 7th Dist.

Record-low turnout delivers Mfume seat to Democrat legislator

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SUN STAFF

Democrat Elijah E. Cummings, a four-term legislator from West Baltimore, coasted to victory last night in the special election to replace Kweisi Mfume as Maryland's 7th District representative in Congress.

Mr. Cummings crushed Kenneth Kondner, a Republican from Woodlawn, in the race to complete the last nine months of Mr. Mfume's term, after his exit from Congress in February to head the NAACP.

With 100 percent of the precincts reporting, Mr. Cummings, 45, the Maryland House speaker pro tem, captured 17,912 votes, or 81 percent, to 4,130, or 19 percent.

Mr. Kondner had hoped that the record-low voter turnout would benefit him by catching Democrats off guard in the district where the GOP is outnumbered by more than 4-to-1. But despite the stunningly low turnout of about 8 percent, Mr. Cummings, walked away with it.

Later this year, Mr. Cummings

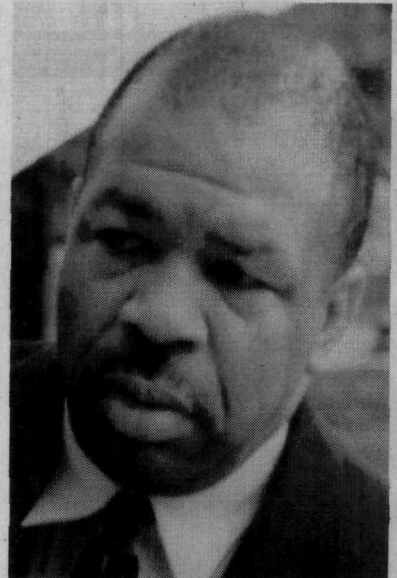
and Mr. Kondner will face each other again, when they compete in the Nov. 5 general election for the full, two-year congressional term that begins in January.

While awaiting returns, Mr. Cummings said he felt "very good" about the results, but expressed concerns about "the very low turnout in the city."

The election dealt Mr. Kondner, a 54-year-old dental technician, a fourth defeat in his attempts to win the 7th District — which stretches from East Baltimore across the center of the city and includes most of West Baltimore and western Baltimore County.

Preliminary vote totals were not available last night for the write-in candidate, Barry Patrick Farley, 40, an unemployed security guard from Remington. While Mr. Farley's name did not appear on the ballot in voting machines, it did appear on notices in polling places.

Baltimore city and county schools, where the bulk of polling places are located, remained open yesterday, though they are usually closed. Election officials reported a few minor problems — mostly voter confusion over voting machines being placed in areas of schools that were different than in other elections, so the disruption to students was minimal.



PERRY THORSVIK: SUN STAFF PHOTO

Elijah E. Cummings will run for re-election in November.

Baltimore city and county election officials expected a low voter turnout, but they were shocked by the showing yesterday.

"I thought it would at least reach double digits, maybe 10 or 11 percent," said Barbara E. Jackson, the city's election administrator.

"This is disgraceful," she said.