NAACP sues area school board

MARKSVILLE, La. (AP) — The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People has filed a federal lawsuit against the Avoyelles Parish School Board, claiming a racial imbalance exists in the school system.

NAACP parish president Allen Holmes had threatened in February to file the suit as board members debated a plan to consolidate its schools in an effort to deal with a predicted budget deficit.

At the time, the board voted against consolidation and came up with another way to deal with the deficit.

In the suit filed April 15, the NAACP said some schools have predominantly white populations and little or no black student enrollment. The suit said that on the other hand, Mansura High School has a large black student population.

The NAACP charged in the suit that the School Board reneged on a 1969 consent decree order intended to balance school enrollments racially, Holmes said.

“I still feel like ... we are abiding by the 1969 order,” said School Board President Eddie Rabalais.

He said that if there were any racial imbalances in the school system, they arose from demographic changes and not because the board had reneged on the order.

The school board was to have discussed desegregation at its meeting Tuesday, but delayed talks in order to gather more information on the subject.

Most board members have contended there is no racial imbalance problem in the school system.