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Speaker Gingrich Reelected Despite Defections

Morella, Wolf Join 3 Other Republicans In Voting 'Present'

By Manuel Perez-Rivas and R.H. Melton
Washington Post Staff Writers

Shortly before yesterday's vote, House Speaker Newt Gingrich and Rep. Constance A. Morella entered a private cloakroom office near the House chamber. For three minutes, an aide guarded the door as they talked.

Three times in the past week, Morella (R-Md.), who had remained publicly uncommitted, had talked with the beleaguered speaker as he tried to amass the votes he needed for reelection, a measure of the pressure that fell on House Republicans to stand by their leader.

In the end it wasn't enough for Morella, who, along with Rep. Frank R. Wolf (R-Va.) and three other Republicans, voted "present" instead of supporting Gingrich (R-Ga.), who prevailed without them.

"We reached the point where he knew he wasn't going to change my mind. He did say, 'I know it's been hard for you,' " she said and then paused. "It's been hard for everyone."

Some analysts said the loss of two votes from the Washington area may have been the fallout from two government shutdowns last winter for which Gingrich took much blame. Morella and Wolf have districts that are home to more active federal workers than all but a handful in the na-

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THE VOTE

216
for Rep. Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.)

205
for Rep. Richard A.
Gephardt (D-Mo.)

6
voted "present"

- Gephardt
- John N. Hostettler (R-Ind.)
- Scott L. Klug (R-Wis.)
- Constance A. Morella (R-Md.)
- Mark W. Neumann (R-Wis.)
- Frank R. Wolf (R-Va.)

2
for Rep. Jim Leach (R-Iowa)

- Tom Campbell (R-Calif.)
- Michael P. Forbes (R-N.Y.)

1
for former minority leader
Robert H. Michel (R-Ill.)

- Leach

1
for former representative
Robert S. Walker (R-Pa.)

- Linda A. Smith (R-Wash.)

■ Additional coverage of
the opening of the 105th
Congress—Pages A8-11.

House Leader Offers Thanks, Apologies in Close Call for GOP

By John E. Yang
Washington Post Staff Writer

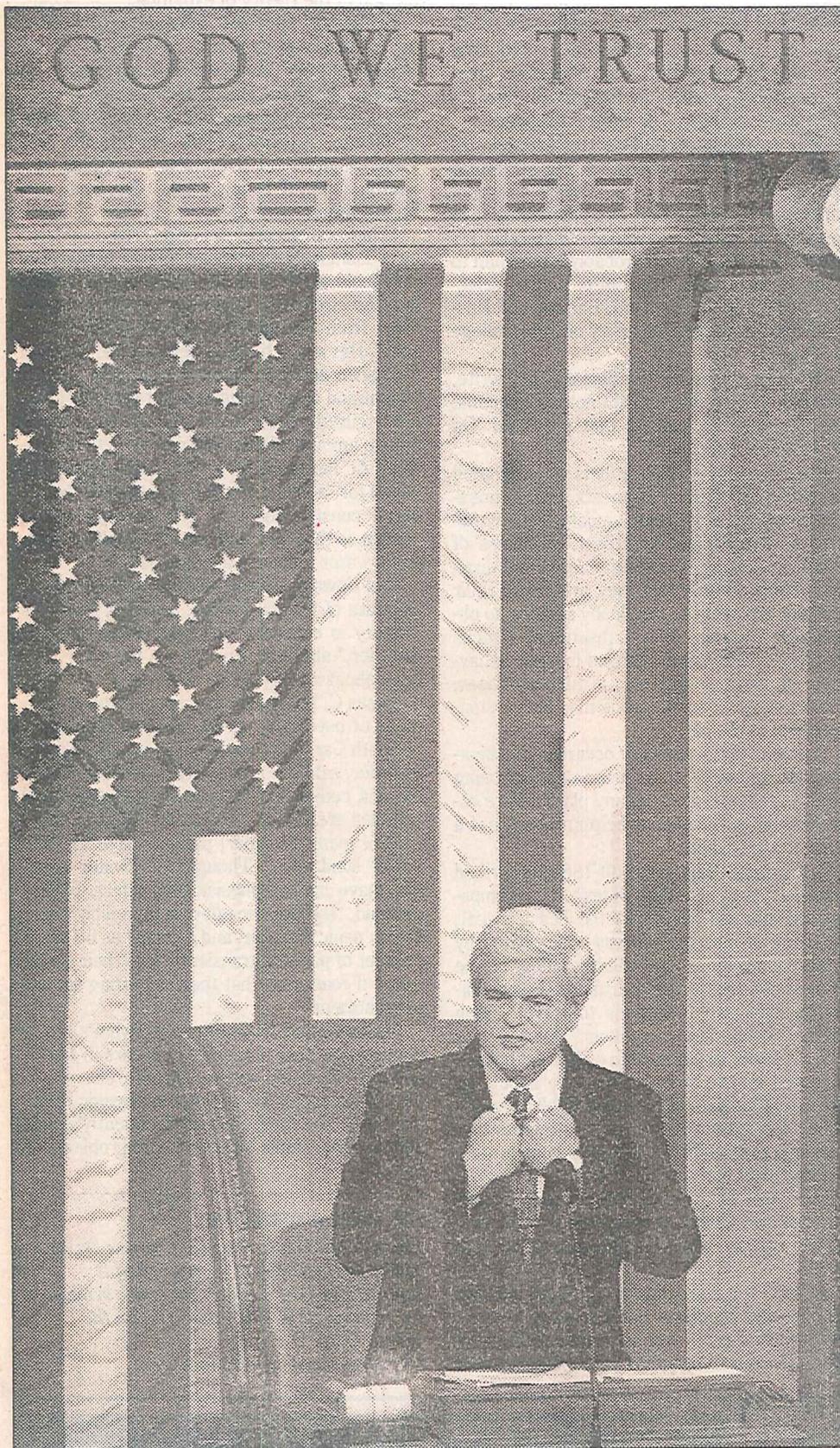
An apologetic Rep. Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) was reelected House speaker yesterday after a frantic lobbying campaign that convinced all but nine House Republicans that his ethical violations should not deprive him of another term.

Gingrich won with three votes to spare in a dramatic, hour-long roll call as 216 of the 225 House Republicans voting supported him. House GOP leaders—including Gingrich himself—worked to the end to round up the votes needed to make him the first Republican reelected speaker in 68 years.

Four GOP lawmakers voted for other candidates and five, including Reps. Constance A. Morella (Md.) and Frank R. Wolf (Va.), voted "present." House Minority Leader Richard A. Gephardt (D-Mo.) won the votes of 204 Democrats and independent Rep. Bernard Sanders (Vt.). Following tradition, Gephardt voted "present" and Gingrich, who was not in the chamber for the roll call, did not vote. Three members were absent.

After taking the oath of office from Rep. John D. Dingell (D-Mich.), the most senior member of the House, Gingrich offered his gratitude to House Republicans who reluctantly supported

See SPEAKER, A10, Col. 1



BY DAYNA SMITH—THE WASHINGTON POST

Speaker Newt Gingrich addresses colleagues in House chamber after swearing-in of members.

SPEAKER, From A1

him and his regret to the entire House for his past behavior as his mother, wife and daughters watched from the gallery.

"For those who agonized and ended up voting for me, I thank you," Gingrich said in his 20-minute speech. "Some of this difficulty, frankly, I brought on myself. . . . To the degree I was too brash, too self-confident or too pushy I apologize. To whatever degree and in any way that I brought controversy or inappropriate attention to the House, I apologize."

The vote ended two weeks of uncertainty over Gingrich's reelection that arose when some House Republicans questioned the political wisdom of backing him after he ended

In his speech to the House yesterday,

Gingrich sought to reach across the aisle—much as he did two years ago.

two years of steadfast denials of wrongdoing with a brief acknowledgment Dec. 21 that he broke House rules. Their nervousness is heightened by the fact that the full details of the House ethics committee's investigation of Gingrich and the panel's recommended sanction for him will not be known until next week.

Gingrich admitted to charges, brought by an investigative subcommittee of the ethics committee, that he brought discredit to the House. Specifically, the panel faulted Gingrich for failing to check with lawyers to make sure the financing of a college course he taught and a televised town-hall meeting would not violate federal tax law. Then, when the ethics committee investigated those projects, Gingrich gave the panel false information, the speaker acknowledged. He said the violations were not intentional and resulted from inattention.

The ethics committee is to meet today to begin the process of recommending a punishment. In addition, the Internal Revenue Service is looking into the financing of the college course and the ethics committee has not resolved complaints that Gingrich received improper gifts, support and contributions from GOPAC, a political action committee he once headed.

The ethics matter resulted in bitterly partisan rancor on the House floor last year, as Democrats sought to tarnish the speaker as part of their bid to retake the House. In a closed-door session with House Republicans Monday night to rally support, Gingrich blamed Democrats for his ethics problems.

But in his speech yesterday, Gingrich—much as he did two years ago—sought to reach across the aisle. "I will seek to be worthy of being speaker of the House and I will seek to work with every member sent by their constituents to represent them in the United States Congress," he said. The address centered on themes that lawmakers in both parties could easily embrace: bridging racial divisions, and combating drug abuse and ignorance.

But there were immediate signs that cooperation would not be so easy. Even before the vote for speaker Democrats sought to delay it until after the ethics case had been resolved. Republicans blocked that on a 222 to 210 vote, with four Republicans including Morella siding with the Democrats.

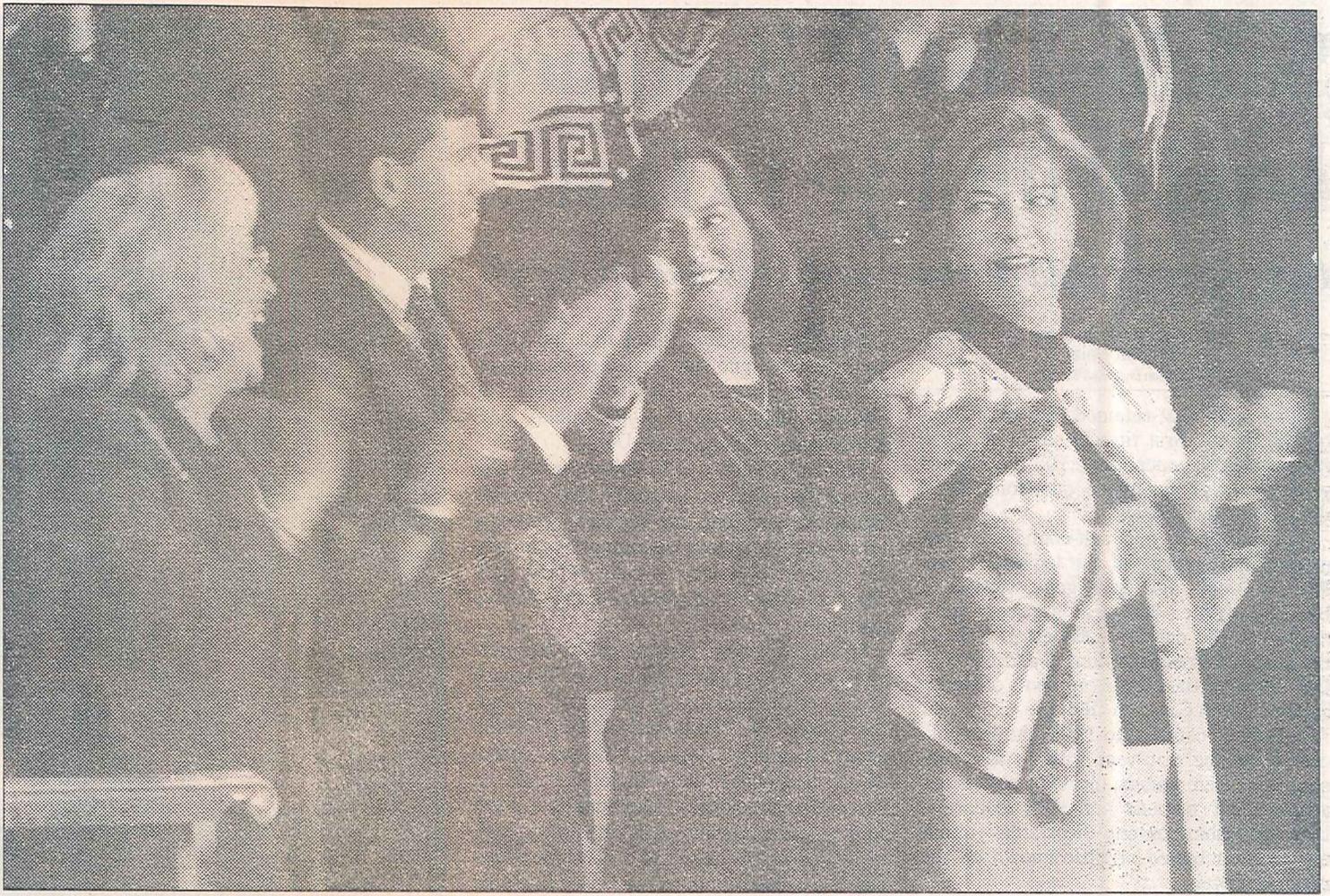
The ceremonial committee of lawmakers appointed to escort Gingrich into the chamber after his election included the entire House Democratic leadership except Minority Whip David E. Bonior (Mich.), the speak-

er's prime House antagonist, and the entire Georgia House delegation except Rep. John Lewis (D), a strong Gingrich foe.

Both men were asked to join the committee, but declined. "My conscience wouldn't allow it," Lewis said. "It would have been hypocritical." Bonior declined for similar reasons, an aide said.

Less than an hour after Gingrich spoke, a partisan skirmish erupted over the schedule for the ethics committee's consideration of a recommended punishment for Gingrich.

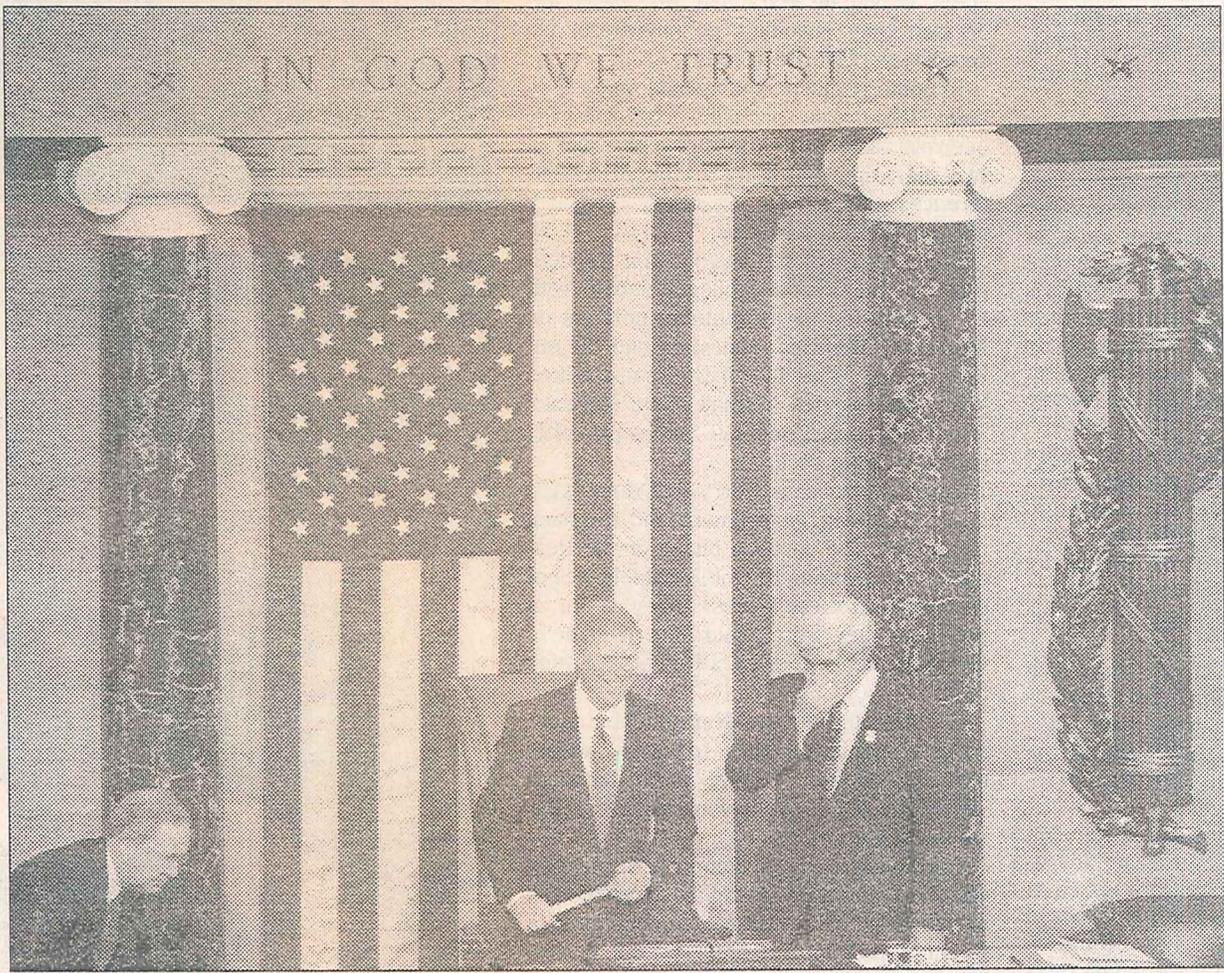
Late last year, the panel and House leaders agreed that the House would vote on the sanction by Jan. 21. But yesterday, the investigative subcommittee of two Republicans and two Democrats and James M. Cole, the Washington white-collar criminal attorney the panel hired to conduct the investiga-



BY DAYNA SMITH—THE WASHINGTON POST

Standing in the balcony of the House chamber and applauding the reelection of House Speaker Newt Gingrich are the speaker's wife,

Marianne Gingrich, right, his daughter Kathy Lubbers and her husband Paul Lubbers, and family friend Rayna Weiner, left.



BY DAYNA SMITH—THE WASHINGTON POST

House Minority Leader Richard A. Gephardt (D-Mo.), in a traditional gesture, prepares to hand over the gavel to newly reelected Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) so Gingrich can swear in members on the opening day of 105th Congress.

tion, asked the House for more time.

House GOP leaders objected. In a biting floor speech, Majority Leader Richard K. Armey (R-Tex.) said that if the lawmakers on the panel and Cole were "professional, capable and able people" they would figure out a way to get their work done by the original deadline.

In return, Rep. Jim McDermott (D-Wash.) charged that Republicans wanted to vote on Gingrich's penalty on Jan. 20, when it would be overshadowed by President Clinton's inauguration, as part of their "political damage control."

The House rebuffed the panel's request, 223 to 205. Reps. Porter J. Goss (Fla.) and Steven Schiff (N.M.), the two GOP members of the investigative panel, were the only Republicans to support the schedule change.

The opening day of the 105th Congress was a mix of hard-knuckled politics and family reunion. As is the practice, lawmakers brought their children, grandchildren and nieces and nephews to the House floor. The galleries were filled with lawmakers' families. John H. Sununu, White House chief of staff to President George Bush, and Jesse L. Jackson both watched their namesakes take the oath of office.

Former House members were also on the floor, including two with roles in Gingrich's ethics problems: Howard "Bo" Callaway Sr., the former Georgia congressman who headed a charitable organization that helped finance one of the Gingrich projects under investigation, and Pierre S. "Pete" du Pont IV, the former Delaware congressman and founder of GOPAC, which helped finance another the college course.

All the while, House GOP leaders scurried about buttonholing lawmakers, some of whom sat feeding bottles to infants, while toddlers played underfoot or dozed on the House benches. Checking their lists of uncertain votes, Reps. Bill Paxon (R-N.Y.) and John Linder (R-Ga.) led the charge. Gingrich met first with Morella and then with Rep. Scott L. Klug (R-Wis.) in the GOP cloakroom as Gingrich's executive assistant stood guard at the door.

Gingrich told Klug that voting for another candidate would "prejudge him as being guilty of a major violation," Klug recalled. "I said that voting for him would be prejudging him as not being guilty of a major violation." Klug voted "present."

Yesterday morning, in a second closed-door meeting of House Republicans, Gingrich recalled their accomplishments of the last two years and said he hoped he had earned their votes to lead them for the next two, GOP lawmakers said.

Leaders urged wavering lawmakers not to do anything that would either give Gephardt a majority of those voting for a candidate or deny Gingrich a majority, lawmakers said.

The vote for speaker is the only House vote routinely taken by roll call, with the clerk reading out each lawmaker's name in alphabetical order and each lawmaker calling out his vote.

The roll call proceeded routinely, with Re-

publicans declaring "Gingrich" and Democrats saying "Gephardt," until the 54th name was called. Rep. Tom Campbell (R-Calif.) rose and, his voice quavering slightly, called out: "Jim Leach of Iowa," the House Banking Committee chairman who on Monday announced his opposition to Gingrich's reelection.

Rep. Michael P. Forbes (N.Y.), the first GOP lawmaker to say he would vote against Gingrich, also voted for Leach. Leach himself voted for former House GOP leader Robert H. Michel (Ill.), triggering applause from Democrats, and Rep. Linda A. Smith (R-Wash.) voted for former representative Robert S. Walker (R-Pa.), a close Gingrich friend.

House GOP leaders have said there would be retribution for colleagues who voted against Gingrich. Yesterday the speaker said: "To those who voted for someone else, I hope that I can work with you in such a way

that you feel that I am capable of being speaker of the whole House and representing everyone."

In addition to Klug, Morella and Wolf, Reps. John N. Hostettler (R-Ind.) and Mark W. Neumann (R-Wis.) voted present. Neumann had said he intended to vote for Armey, the majority leader, but Armey asked him not to.

Early last year, Gingrich canceled an appearance at a fund-raising dinner for Hostettler after the then-freshman defied the speaker and opposed a plan to reopen the federal government at full force during the prolonged battle over the balanced budget. Hostettler said his vote was not related to that incident.

Rep. Sam Johnson (R-Tex.) missed the vote because his flight from Texas was late, but said he had intended to vote for Gingrich. Democratic Reps. Julia Carson (Ind.) and

Frank Tejeda (Tex.) are ill and missed the vote.

The relief at the end of the vote was evident among GOP leaders. Paxon, Linder, Armey, House Majority Whip Tom DeLay (Tex.) and Rep. J. Dennis Hastert (Ill.), the chief GOP deputy whip in charge of the vote-counting operation, converged on the House floor for celebratory handshakes and pats on the back, as broad smiles replaced their tense looks.

There were some light moments as well. The chamber quieted when there was no answer after the name of Rep. Rick Lazio (R-N.Y.) was called twice—perhaps a sign that he was abstaining from the vote rather than vote for Gingrich or someone else.

After a pause he dashed from the cloakroom, his young daughter riding on his shoulders, shouting: "Gingrich! Gingrich!"



BY DAYNA SMITH—THE WASHINGTON POST

Rep. Constance A. Morella (R-Md.) meets with House Speaker Newt Gingrich on the House floor, shortly before she declined to cast a vote in his favor. Morella voted "present" instead.

Wolf, Morella Don't Vote For or Against Gingrich

PRESENT, From A1

tion. Morella's constituent mail was heavily against Gingrich.

Morella and Wolf cited the speaker's ethics problems as the fundamental reason for their lack of support. Yet their decision was no doubt influenced by Gingrich's lingering image problems among voters in parts of Northern Virginia and Montgomery County—voters who, unlike nearly everyone else in America, have a front-row seat to everything that happens in Washington.

"It's been an agonizing decision to make," Morella said after the vote. In her office, she held two thick stacks of yellow message notes from constituents, running 4 to 1 against Gingrich. "I represented my constituents, my country and my conscience."

Wolf declined to speak with reporters, but he released a statement saying that, like Morella, he believed the vote for speaker should have been held after the House received the ethics committee's full report on Gingrich.

In his statement, Wolf said, "I felt the formal process should have been completed first, and therefore I could not vote in good conscience any other way."

Wolf had been noncommittal in the days lead-

ing up to the vote, but many Virginia political analysts had expected him to stick with Gingrich.

Voting "present" wasn't the worst thing Morella, Wolf and the three other Republicans could have done to Gingrich. Had all five voted for another candidate, Gingrich would have lost.

"It's the equivalent of punting," said Rob Housman, a Democrat who worked on Donald L. Mooers's fall campaign against Morella. "That's not leadership. It keeps her out of hot water."

All the other Washington area Republicans cast their votes for Gingrich.

"I never denied during the campaign [last year] that I would vote for Newt as speaker," said Rep. Thomas M. Davis III, a Fairfax County Republican who portrayed himself before the November elections as an "independent" and a political moderate.

Davis said he, Wolf and Morella "held hands together on this" before the vote. But, he added, "we just went our different ways when the vote came."

Morella said she expects no retribution, noting that she has a record of voting independently of the Republican leadership.

Back in their districts, the reaction to Wolf's and Morella's "present" votes were mixed.

Rick LaSota, the Montgomery County Republican chairman, said that he was disappointed by Morella's vote and that he had called her office on Monday urging her to support the speaker. Yet he also recognized the political realities of Montgomery County.

"She's a registered Republican but also an independent vote," LaSota said. "That's Montgomery County."

Richard Parsons, the executive director of the Maryland Democratic Party, said he believed Morella should have gone further and voted for someone else instead of casting a "present" vote.

"It's especially disappointing in light of the fact of what Gingrich has done in terms of shutting down the government and all the impact that he's personally had on the county," Parsons said.

Staff writers Mike Causey, Tod Robberson and John E. Yang contributed to this report.