

Gingrich Set to Be First Speaker Disciplined by Vote of the House

Resolution to Adopt Reprimand Unlikely to Meet Resistance Today

By John E. Yang
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Rep. Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.), a historian who has boasted that he is a "transformational figure," is poised to make history today by becoming the first House speaker disciplined by a vote of the House.

Shortly after the House goes into session at noon, Rep. Nancy L. Johnson (R-Conn.), chairman of the House ethics committee, is to call up a resolution that would adopt the ethics panel's recommendation that the House reprimand Gingrich and order him to pay \$300,000 toward the costs of the committee's investigation of him.

Gingrich agreed to the penalty in December as part of a deal in which he admitted his guilt to modified charges of breaking House rules—essentially a plea-bargain agreement.

Under House rules, there will be an hour of debate, 30 minutes each for the Republicans and Democrats. Johnson will manage the GOP's time and the Democrats' time will be controlled by Rep. Benjamin L. Cardin (Md.), his party's top ethics panel member.

The speaker does not plan to address the House, according to spokesman Lauren Maddox. He is to speak to House Republicans at a closed-door meeting this morning.

Gingrich need not be present in the chamber to be reprimanded. A simple majority vote is required to impose the punishment. Under the chamber's rules, lawmakers may try to change the penalty to make it either more or less severe, but it appeared increasingly unlikely yesterday that anyone would attempt either.

The whole process may take as little as 90 minutes from start to finish.

Gingrich, who has been mostly out of sight the last few days, yesterday was visible as he played his ceremonial role in the presidential inauguration, but barely so. He quietly carried out his official duties, escorting President Clinton from the White House to the Capitol and then to the platform for the inaugural ceremonies. At a congressional luncheon honoring Clinton in Statuary Hall, Gingrich presented the president with a U.S. flag that flew over

the Capitol yesterday morning. "While we may disagree about some things, here you are among friends," he told the president.

As House Republicans returned to Washington yesterday, Rep. Ray LaHood (R-Ill.) said he did not think special counsel James M. Cole's presentation of his case against Gingrich on Friday had much effect on the support for the speaker among House Republicans. When Gingrich was reelected speaker Jan. 7, only nine of the 227 GOP lawmakers did not vote for him.

That is because Gingrich's support has as much to do with politics as it does with the details of this ethics case, according to LaHood. "There are a lot of reasons to vote for Newt—some of it is because he's been a strong leader for the last two years, some of it is because he campaigned for a lot of members and raised a lot of money, some of it is loyalty and some of it is the merits of his case," he said.

But, LaHood said, Gingrich has little leeway for future personal controversies. "He has pushed the loyalty litmus test to the limit," he said.

LaHood expressed surprise at the financial penalty and its magnitude. "I am absolutely astounded at the size of the fine," he said. "I am having a very difficult time understanding how they can possibly fine him \$300,000." And Rep. Jay Dickey (R-Ark.) said he was "astounded at the amount of the fine or the amount that they're requiring him to pay back. . . . I'm having some difficulty placing it in the minor category; \$300,000 is a lot of money."

J. Randolph Evans, Gingrich's lead ethics attorney, said the speaker would decide in the next two weeks how to pay the financial penalty. "There are three criteria: what is legal, what is ethical, what is appropriate under the circumstances," Evans told the Associated Press. "All three will be applied in making a decision."

Evans said he would seek the advice of the ethics committee, the Federal Election Commission or other agencies. Although Gingrich aides have said there is precedent for using campaign funds, election law experts say the law is unclear. In addition, House rules allow him to establish a special fund to collect contributions to pay the sum, according to ethics committee chief counsel Theodore J. Van Der Meid.

Gingrich has been paying his legal

fees with campaign contributions.

Over the weekend, some key House Republicans have said that it would be politically unwise for Gingrich not to use personal funds to pay the sum.

The speaker's campaign committee had \$1.1 million in cash after the election. As speaker, Gingrich is paid \$171,500 a year. In 1995, he was paid \$1.2 million in royalties for his best-selling book, "To Renew America," which is based on the college course at the heart of his ethics case. After expenses and a donation to a charity, he was left with about \$424,000.

The penalty has been described as a reimbursement to the ethics committee for part of the costs Gingrich caused when he gave the panel false information, extending the investigation.

But Cole suggested it had as much to do with punishment as with reim-

bursement. "The number was not the product of a mathematical calculation," he said Friday. "It was the product of a sense of the seriousness of the violation. . . . It needed to be high enough to send the message that this was, in fact, a very serious matter."

House GOP leaders have been careful to describe the sum as a "cost assessment" or "reimbursement" rather than a "fine." That is because ethics committee rules say a fine is "appropriate in a case in which it is likely that the violation was committed to secure a personal financial benefit," and they have been stressing that Gingrich did not reap a financial benefit in this case.

Despite those efforts, Johnson called the penalty a "fine" on Friday night, saying: "A sanction to reprimand is a very severe matter and coupled with a \$300,000 fine is a very serious matter."

After the turmoil and intense work of the last week, the ethics committee staff had prime viewing positions for yesterday's inauguration ceremonies from the panel's office along the Capitol's West Front. Among those taking advantage of the view were Cole and his family.

Congress - primary mission

Advocate of civilization

Definer of civilization

Teacher of the rules of civilization

Answer to those who form civilization

organizer of the pre-civilization activity

leader (possibly) of the civilizing forces

A universal value transcending mission

Th. 3 retains a primary focus on
elated political power as
the central arena and fulcrum
by which a free people determine
future and govern themselves.

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18 DEC 1992

Exhibit 42

HAN 02104

Among documents gathered by House ethics committee during its investigation of Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) were notes he made during a meeting with Florida business consultant Owen Roberts, a major contributor to GOPAC.



After escorting the president to the Capitol as part of his official duties, Speaker Newt Gingrich looks on during the ceremony with Vice President Gore.

BY JAMES M. THRESHER—THE WASHINGTON POST