

Gingrich

File 6/21/95

to pay way

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on book trip

WASHINGTON (AP) - A day after the House ethics committee cautioned him about congressional travel restrictions, Speaker Newt Gingrich decided Wednesday to avoid the restraints by personally paying for his planned 25-day book promotion tour.

Mr. Gingrich's action apparently placed him in conformity with House travel rules, but did nothing to defuse criticism of the tour by Democratic rivals.

The success of Mr. Gingrich's political book still depends on the promotional efforts of a publisher owned by Rupert Murdoch, the media executive who actively lobbies Congress on telecommunications issues, asserted Reps. David Bonior, D-Mich. and John Lewis, D-Ga.



GINGRICH

Rep. Nancy Johnson, R-Conn., the ethics committee chairman, and Rep. James McDermott of Washington, the senior Democrat, wrote Mr. Gingrich that he had two options for his tour. He could comply with a four-day limit for domestic trips paid by a private source, or finance the trip by himself to avoid any time limits.

"I have elected to follow the second option and personally pay for my travel, food and lodging expenses," Mr. Gingrich said in a statement.

The time limit for privately financed travel became effective in 1989, and was designed to prevent lawmakers from receiving trips as gifts that could influence their official actions.

Furthermore, the member taking the trip must substantially participate in an event - as Mr. Gingrich would be doing.

Gingrich spokesman Tony Blankley said he did not know how much the speaker would pay for the tour, which probably will take place during the August congressional recess.

The original plans were for Mr. Gingrich's publisher, the Murdoch-owned HarperCollins, to pay for the tour promoting "To Renew America."

Mr. Bonior, at a news conference, contended the tour still has ethical problems because Mr. Murdoch "has an immense interest in legislation pending in this Congress." Mr. Lewis added that Mr. Gingrich's decision to pay "doesn't make me feel any better" about the potential conflict.