

# GOPAC Donations Rise To Nearly \$1.1 Million In First Half of 1995

By R.H. Melton

Washington Post Staff Writer

Contributions to GOPAC, the Republican political organization that helped propel Rep. Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) to House speaker, surged anew this spring, raising nearly \$1.1 million in the first six months of 1995, the group announced yesterday.

Lisa B. Nelson, GOPAC's executive director, said the \$611,341 contributed by more than 1,800 individuals and corporations from April through June was a "very, very positive" development for an off-election year with legislative elections in only a handful of states. GOPAC primarily helps the campaigns of Republicans running for state legislative seats.

Nelson attributed the strong showing in part to the national media attention showered on Gingrich and his political and fund-raising apparatus in the months since Republicans captured control of Congress. "This is an indication that people now know, because of the press attention, where to go for training and education," she said.

GOPAC never revealed its donors for most of the nine years Gingrich ran the group, but by the time he stepped down as general chairman this spring, the group had begun limited disclosure of givers, their home towns and contributions.

In the first quarter of this year, 1,771 people gave \$487,520; in the second quarter, 1,809 gave \$611,341. Nelson said the second-quarter result compared favorably to the \$789,003 raised in the same period last year, when every seat in the House was up for election, and exceeded the \$416,633 for the spring quarter in 1993.

The GOPAC records released yesterday show that 35 people, including local automobile magnate Mandell J. Ourisman of Chevy Chase, gave \$10,000 each, while

four individuals around the country gave \$25,000 apiece. Corporate givers included Dwayne O. Andreas of agribusiness giant Archer Daniels Midland Co. and John W. Whelan of Golden Rule Insurance Co., with \$10,000 each.

GOPAC was notably successful in the Palm Beach area, raising \$85,000 from eight individuals. The group fared poorly in Northridge, Calif., where James R. Murrow gave two cents.

Nelson said the increased attention on GOPAC has been good for the group's business, which is chiefly teaching Republicans how to run for local and statewide office. Where GOPAC once had to reach out to various groups to conduct its training seminars, "now we have the entities coming to us."

Nelson met yesterday with leaders of BAMPAC, a group of African American Republicans, to plan seminars at their 18 chapters around the country. Today, GOPAC will be running weekend seminars in Washington state and New Jersey, two of the 27 scheduled for this year. GOPAC ran 38 seminars in all of 1993 and 1994.

The fund-raising success this year may ease pressure for GOPAC officials to find a successor to Gingrich, who faces an ethics complaint that focuses in part on his stewardship of GOPAC. "There is nothing hot right now, we're not in any big hurry," Nelson said of the chairman search.

GOPAC had talked several weeks ago with Bret Schundler, the Republican mayor of Democrat-dominated Jersey City, N.J., but he is no longer under active consideration. Rep. John Linder (R-Ga.), whose district is near Gingrich's in suburban Atlanta, remains a prospect. Despite the uncertainty about redrawing the Georgia districts later this year, "he's definitely on a list, somewhere," Nelson said of Linder.