

## The Gingrich Speakership

**Mr. OLESZEK.** This conference now turns to an examination of the Gingrich speakership. I am delighted to introduce our moderator for this panel—Don Wolfensberger. As many of you know, Don is a 30-year House veteran who was staff director of the Rules Committee during the chairmanship of the late Gerald Solomon of New York. Currently, Mr. Wolfensberger is the director of The Congress Project at the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars. He is also the author of an award-winning book titled *Congress and the People: Deliberative Democracy on Trial*. Don, the podium is yours.

**Mr. WOLFENSBERGER.** Thank you, Walter. I want to add my thanks to the Carl Albert Center and to the McCormick Tribune Foundation for sponsoring this event. I also want to add my kudos to the Congressional Research Service, Dan Mulhollan, Walter Oleszek and their whole team, for putting together just a marvelous all-day conference. Please join me in thanking them. What I'll do is introduce Newt Gingrich first and then I'll have introductions for each of our two discussants, Leon Panetta and Bob Walker, when it's their turn to speak.

I vividly recall a day in early October 1994—I think it was after a Republican leadership meeting—and Newt Gingrich made me a bet, or tried to. He said, “Wolfie—I’ll bet you 50 cents that we take control of the House in the next month’s elections.” Well, I kind of brushed it off and I said, “I’m not really a betting man, but I sure hope you’re right.” But I remember thinking to myself—does he really believe that’s going to happen? You know, all the pundits, the political pros, the prognosticators at the time were saying, in effect, that the Republicans might pick up 20, maybe even 30, seats in the 1994 elections for the House.

Well, as you know, the rest is history. On November 8, 1994, the tsunami happened and Republicans picked up not just the 40 seats that they needed for a bare 218 majority, but 52 seats and brought in 74 freshmen Republican Members. I think, to his credit, Newt Gingrich had prepared his party for the takeover. Not only was the “Contract with America” unveiled in September, the product of a year-long development effort by the Republican conference, but he had also tasked each of the ranking minority members on the committees and their staff to put together an organizational

plan, a game plan, for how they would run their committees for the first year once we won the majority. And this was done early in 1994.

I was really grateful, as the appointed staff director of the Rules Committee, that we had that document in our hands when we awakened on the morning of November 9. Everyone was plugged in to Newt's planning model—"vision, strategy, projects, tactics." And everyone also knew the leadership model of "listen, learn, help, and lead." So we were trained for this, but we had no idea, really, of what we were getting into.

The Rules Committee, where I was working for Jerry Solomon, was at the center of the action in processing the Contract bills. You may recall that the Contract with America was a 10-plank legislative program. But that really translated into about two dozen bills when it was broken down. And most of these, if not all of them, were coming through the Rules Committee where we were busily still trying to find out where the bathrooms were. I remember thinking in the middle of the 100-day Contract period that I wish Newt Gingrich had been a little more like Joe Cannon in one respect. Joe Cannon once said, "We don't need any new legislation. Everything is just fine back in Danville."

But for me, the high point really of the whole experience was the opening day of 104th Congress when we worked all day and well into the night debating and voting on a package of House reforms that had been developed over the years. Not only did the Contract have an 8-point plan for various House reforms such as banning proxy voting, putting term limits on committee chairmen and so on, but there were 24 other reforms that had evolved over a 3-decade period that I had had the pleasure and the honor to work with our leadership in developing. Most of these were put into effect in just 1 day. You can imagine how that would be the highlight of a career for someone like me.

As I mentioned in my book about this whole experience, I did leave the Congress after the first 2 years of the Republican takeover. I had my 30 years of government service and was ready to do something new. But I looked back on it and I said that this was a very interesting 2 years. It was like a roller coaster ride when you consider all of the ups and downs of the 104th Congress. But I would not have missed it for the world. So with that, I probably for the first time want to thank you for quite a ride, Newt. And with that, I give you Speaker Newt Gingrich.

**Speaker GINGRICH.** Thank you, Don. It's very good to be here with two of the friends I served with for years. Bob Walker, who helped found the Conservative Opportunity Society—we did so many different projects together—and Leon Panetta, with whom I served in the House and got to know even more when he became Chief of Staff for President Clinton. I also want to acknowledge Chairman Rostenkowski—it's great to see you back. We were over just now in Speaker Hastert's office reminiscing with

four Speakers, which I think is the only time I know of that you've had four Speakers at one place. Many of you who are true students of the House will appreciate the speed with which we arrived on the topic of the Senate and found a bipartisan, non-ideological passion and agreement, which I'm not going to go into today because of my interest in comity.

I thought about this chance to talk, and I want to try to keep it fairly brief. I want to give you an overview of my understanding of what happened to us when we won control of the House. And I want to suggest to everyone—if you get a chance—please read *Kings of the Hill* by Dick and Lynne Cheney, both the first edition, which came out in 1983, and the second edition, which came out after I had become Speaker.

The first point I want to make is that they captured two things in their works. First, if you look at page 194, they said, "Today's House has neither strong leadership nor any other well-developed centralized power. Authority is dispersed among a few elected leaders, many committee chairmen, and a multitude, or so it sometimes seems, of subcommittee chairmen (there are currently 137)." They then go on to describe the kind of leadership that might be needed in the information age, arguing that it would be a party leader who could combine debates on the floor with grassroots activism in real time—a synergistic network. They wrote this in 1983 and I think it's a very good forerunner for what we actually did in the intervening period. Again, I would encourage everyone to look at the two editions of *Kings of the Hill*, they are very revealing each in their own right.

To a degree that it's almost impossible to get this city to think about, the Republican capture of the House was an intellectual effort. I think that has been very hard for people to appreciate. It was a long march in the sense that there are some fundamental things that I had learned early on. I always recommend Peter Drucker's *The Effective Executive* to groups, which I first read in the late sixties. If you read books like that, you begin to think about how much we had to aggregate resources and how many things we had to do right, because 1994 was not an accidental campaign. It was a campaign which required some help from our opponents and which we would not have won under other circumstances. We could have gained 25 seats and probably would have but not without all of the previous 16 years of work. And so I start with that.

Additionally, I would say that House GOP campaign chairman Guy Vander Jagt was the unsung hero, both because Vander Jagt insisted on supporting my candidacy when I had lost twice, and because when I became a freshman, even before I was even sworn in, he asked me to chair the long-range planning committee to look at how to become a majority. I always point out to people—we failed in 1980, 1982, 1984, 1986, 1988, 1990, and 1992 before we won in 1994. So first of all, it wasn't like there was this sudden magic moment. I mean we had a lot of things that didn't work

right. It's a sign that if you can persevere, that can be a very important component of victory over time. In that context, I think you have to look at a series of stages.

However, I just want to cite another book for 1 more minute. The 1994 election was essentially based upon Norman Nie's *The Changing American Voter*, and Robert Remini's *The Election of Andrew Jackson*, and it is actually worth your time to read these two books if you are a serious student of how this business works. We were looking for models of how do you get very large-scale change? Remember, the point Don made wasn't unusual. I think only a small number of chairmen, including Bob Walker, thought we could win a majority. If you look at the news media prediction outtakes during the weekend before the election, they are almost funny in retrospect because it was inconceivable that we could create a majority—it had been so long. What people failed to understand is the hardest election was going to be in 1996. Republicans had become a majority in 1946 and we had become a majority in 1952, but we had not won a second consecutive election since 1928.

September 17, 1994, was the day that Joe Gaylord briefed the GOP team. We had a team that was going on a campaign swing on September 17—Dan Meyer, Steve Hanser, Kerry Knott, Joe Gaylord, and myself. Literally, as we were taking off at National, I asked both Kerry Knott, who headed up our planning operation, and Dan Meyer, what were we planning on the night after the election? At that time, I was still the minority whip and Bob Michel was still the GOP leader. I said, "On election night, are we planning for me to be minority leader or to be Speaker?" And Gaylord broke in and said, "Well, you better be planning to be Speaker, because you're going to be." Dan Meyer then turned to him and said, "OK, before we do anything else, explain this prediction." Gaylord started in Maine and, by memory, went through every congressional seat in the country and came up with a 52-seat gain. I think we gained 53, so he was off by 1.

From that date on, my entire goal was to be able to maintain the momentum of doing what we had pledged while winning a second election in 1996. And I would argue the second election was much harder. Leon Panetta may want to comment on that. Democrats did a brilliant job of orchestrating resources, designing images, and really taking it to us. By our count, there were 125,000 negative ads around the country that had me in it. We made a conscious decision not to defend me, and we made a decision that our historic goal was to keep control. We also decided to balance the budget and we knew that meant you had to reform Medicare. We were close enough to AARP and Horace Deets, its executive director, who had the nerve to stay with us long enough that we ran seven points ahead of Bob Dole among senior citizens and that was the margin of victory. Very briefly, I think that there are six stages that are worth looking at. First,

how did we grow the majority? You have to look at Bob Walker, Vin Weber, Connie Mack, Duncan Hunter and the entire GOP team that created the Conservative Opportunity Society as well as GOPAC and the extraordinary work of people like Bo Callaway and Gay Gaines in creating a nationwide network of literally, at its peak, 50,000 activist Republican candidates and incumbents receiving audio tapes and training.

Second, how did we implement the revolution? And there you have to look at what was really an extraordinary team in a specific moment as the loyal opposition. Dick Armey, Tom DeLay, Bob Walker, Bill Paxon and I sat down and said, "OK, can we be a single team? Because if we're a single team, we can amass the energy to win the election, but if we are five independent egos competing with each other, we probably can't win a majority." And to his credit Dick Armey, who was clearly the decisive person at that point, said, "This is really hard for me. I've always flown solo. You're asking me to fly in formation. I really have to go home and talk to my wife and pray about it." And within a week, he came back and said, "We are one team." We operated, from that point on, as one single unified team, and it was an amazing accomplishment.

The other person you have to recognize is the new Governor of Mississippi, Haley Barbour, and it concerned a key moment in Annapolis, Maryland, where the Republican Senators had gone to decide what to do about Hillary Clinton's health care plan. Over a drink at the tavern right across from the State Capitol, I said to Haley Barbour, then the chairman of the Republican National Committee {RNC}, "If you will help us, we will do a contract with America and we'll include tort reform." And he said, "By George, if you'll include that, I'll pay for the ad." It was at that point that his assistant said he would never again go out for a drink, because it was the most expensive single trip he had ever made.

All this became a process. We now had a commitment from the RNC to run a two-page ad in *TV Guide*, so you could now go back to Members and say, "Gee, we've got to get a contract, because we've got the ad to fill." We began a dialog where "listen, learn, help, lead" came in because you had to get 350 independent entrepreneurs called Republican candidates to sign a contract. Remember: this is the only time in American history that candidates didn't have a platform which says, "We believe in such and so." Instead, we had a contract which said, "We will vote on specifications," which is a much higher standard.

There were only three incumbents, to the best of my knowledge, who did not sign the contract. Everyone else signed the contract. The contract, in my mind, was a management document which enabled me to pivot and turn to Bob Walker, Dick Armey, and Tom DeLay and say, "You guys get this through." Armey literally had total control of the floor in a way I don't think any Speaker normally has delegated that responsibility. From

day one, I turned over control of the floor so I could then focus on figuring out with Bob Livingston, Bill Archer, and John Kasich how we were going to balance the budget, because you couldn't have done both in the same setting. You had to have different leadership operating both projects. So everything that was driving Don crazy on the floor was being driven by Armeý based on what was in the contract we had signed before the election. By the way, we wouldn't have gotten it signed after the election. Once these guys got to be chairmen, there was no hope they were going to sign a contract because it gave away too much power. We then had a pretty serious effort to centralize authority in the speakership, something, which is fair to say, has continued to this day.

The next phase after that was winning the crucial election of 1996. And there the key, as Don was saying, was an enormous effort. I have a tremendous respect for Dan Miller of Florida, because he trained every single one of our Members with very few exceptions. They could then all go home and answer Medicare questions and win the Medicare argument, because we thought that was the crisis of the campaign on our side. The other two things I'd say is we had a very close working relationship with Scott Reed, Dole's 1996 Presidential campaign manager, a guy named Don Rumsfeld over at the Dole campaign, and a very close relationship with Haley Barbour. Frankly, if we had not had the foreign campaign contribution scandal of the last 10 days, I think we might have lost control of the House. But the combination of winning Medicare, having raised enough resources with the aid of Bill Paxon, and then having the ability to focus a lot of energy on the question about foreign contributions got us through winning reelection for the first time since 1928.

Fourth, we had a phase of working with Bill Clinton. And the fact is, if you look at welfare reform, which was signed; you look at the balanced budget, which was negotiated out and signed; you look at a number of other issues, including creating the Hart-Rudman Commission; there were a whole series of things working in 1996 and then particularly in 1997, where I thought there was a real momentum of cooperation. This is a period that you have to look at as genuine bipartisan cooperation. We were actually passing bills and routinely getting about half of the Democratic Caucus to vote with us.

Part five of this in my mind is that perjury drowned out the bipartisanship. The question of what was happening with the Presidency just shattered party cooperation, and the President couldn't risk any of his left so we were pinned into being in a fight with him. All of 1998 was, in a sense, a great lost opportunity. If that had not happened, if that particular scandal had not broken out, my hunch in retrospect is you would have seen a much different 1998. We would have passed an amazing amount of very positive

legislation on a bipartisan basis. I think that's where President Clinton was headed, and I think that all went down the tubes in December and January.

Finally, the sixth and last stage for me was when it was clearly time for a new Speaker and there were a lot of different factors there. One was my exhaustion. A second was the fact that the ethics war against me had taken its toll. A third was the fact the House is really not designed to have an entrepreneurial dominating figure in the speakership position. Henry Clay pulled it off in a very different world in very different settings. But it's very difficult to do because the House really is a collection of equally-elected people who have real authority and real power. Far more than the Senate, the House really delegates authority to its committees, and its committee chairmen really acquire mastery of their topic. The idea that there might be some guy at the center who is going to run over them is anathema to the way the House has been structured—except for a very brief period, I would argue, under Cannon and a very brief period earlier than that under Speaker Reed from Maine and under Clay in a very different world. It's very hard to go back and imagine the House of Representatives when Clay was Speaker because it was so much smaller and so very different.

I basically had burned out the centralizing process. Losing seats in November 1998 sealed that and, in my judgment, made it appropriate for me to leave and to permit a different kind of speakership to emerge. I also think that Speaker Hastert has actually carried out a more conciliatory, more managerial speakership with extraordinary skill and has gotten an amazing amount done, given the size of his majorities.

In retrospect, I'll just close by saying there are four big things I would do differently. The first, looking back on September 17, 1994, I should have understood that the jump from the minority whip's job to the leader of a national movement at the center of the national news media and chief organizer of the House was an enormous jump. We should have brought in a number of very senior people with Presidential and gubernatorial experience, because we needed to upgrade our operations. This is not a bad comment about anyone on the team, nor is it a bad comment about any of our staffs, who are fabulous. It is simply an objective fact. We were suddenly on a different playingfield and we were going to get overmatched by reality, even though I think we accomplished an amazing amount.

The second is I should have had much more media discipline. I say this not because of the times when I would say things that would get me in trouble, when I was just being a partisan Speaker, but because I would get confused about my role. There's a side of me that's permanently analytical, that likes coming and giving the speech, and that side of me should not have been allowed out of the box for the entire time I was Speaker. If I really had to say something, I should have said it into a tape recorder for the archives and brought it out as a book 20 years later. Instead, I would

go and say something controversial. You go back and look at the whole Air Force One example where I just handed Leon Panetta and his boss an opportunity to just beat me around the head and shoulders for no good reason.

If you actually go and look at the text of my comments at a Sperling breakfast {sponsored by the *Christian Science Monitor*}, they were analytical comments about the difficulty of understanding how to negotiate with Clinton. I wasn't complaining about what happened except to say, "I don't know how you read him." Within an hour, my observation was immediately turned to "Gingrich was whining," which then got turned into a picture of me as a crybaby on the front page of the *New York Daily News*. That story led some of my colleagues to think I'd lost my mind. Well, I will tell you in retrospect, they were right. A fully professional Speaker would have understood that it was somebody else's job to comment on Clinton, that that wasn't my job. I have the greatest respect for President George W. Bush and the later phase of President Clinton's term, when he got much more disciplined, and for President Reagan, who understood that this is who I have to be in this context to play this game, captured brilliantly by John Keegan in a book called *The Mask of Command*.

Third, the ethics charges have never been actually looked at. I really recommend, if you want to understand my speakership, that you read the volume published by the Ethics Committee. It includes all of my planning documents. You'll understand how intellectual this process really was, because it's all been published. It's all available for students of how you do these things. In retrospect, I underestimated the degree to which there was a legal strategy. Frankly, we should have gotten an attorney who was prepared for that kind of litigation-style strategy. Early on we didn't and if you go back and look at the 83 charges, no serious charge was ever judged to be true. What I got hammered on was having signed a letter which was inaccurate, which was written not by my attorney nor by a partner in his firm, but by a new hire who was an assistant. Now, that's still my responsibility. I still failed, but in retrospect, it was a combination of bad litigation and not taking the entire fight seriously enough. That was an erosive process and the truth is, without Randy Evans having come in and having fired my prior attorney, I probably wouldn't have survived. The entire process just eroded my authority substantially.

Last, I would say in retrospect, we should have insisted on celebrating. We did so many things so rapidly that we never slowed down. I'll give you an example: the Medicare fight. Because we never stopped and celebrated being the first reelected majority since 1928, the only majority ever elected to the House as Republicans with a Democratic President in American history, we never had 1 day of stopping and saying—this is amazing. So nobody figured out that we had won the argument over Medicare, and that we had



run seven points ahead of Dole in the November 1996 elections, and that, in fact, senior citizens were our margin of victory. And so people felt like you lost because you're so badly bruised and you're so tired. That was sort of the mood that we had throughout a good bit of late 1996 and early 1997. Those are the things I would have changed. I look forward to my colleagues' comments. Don, as you said, it was a pretty wild ride.

**Mr. WOLFENBERGER.** Our first discussant on the Gingrich speakership is Leon Panetta, who is the co-director with his wife Sylvia of the Panetta Institute in Monterey, California. It's a non-partisan center dedicated to the advancement of public policy. Mr. Panetta served from 1977 to 1993 as a Representative from the Monterey area in California. And then beginning in 1993, Mr. Panetta served 4 years in the Clinton administration, first as OMB Director, and then as White House Chief of Staff. On the one hand, he was spared serving in the House under a Republican majority; on the other hand, he was fated to deal with that same majority during 2 of the most turbulent years in the history of Presidential-congressional relations. In the House, he was known as the top budget expert on the Government's budget. In the White House, he became known as the top expert on how to keep the Government running without a budget. I give you Leon Panetta.

**Mr. PANETTA.** Thank you very much. I also want to extend my thanks to the Congressional Research Service, and to the Carl Albert Center for having this forum on the changing nature of the speakership. There are obviously differences as we look at each of the Speakers who are reviewed today in terms of their personal relationships with Members, as well as their leadership styles. And I think it helps us define the place in history for each of them. When it comes to my friend Newt Gingrich, I don't think there's any question that, of the four Speakers, he represents the more controversial figure, because of both the personal and leadership styles that he brought to the speakership.

Let me preface my remarks by saying that I had the opportunity to serve with Newt as a colleague in the House, and developed a friendship with him during that time. I then had the opportunity, obviously, to work with him when I became Chief of Staff to President Clinton. We began a series of efforts to try to negotiate various issues.

Incidentally, if you all want to feel insignificant, you want to sit in a room where Newt Gingrich and Bill Clinton are having a conversation. These are two individuals who are extremely bright, well-read, full of ideas, and full of enthusiasm about how to resolve issues. If you listened to the both of them, there was no question in your mind that they could solve any issue in the world. What was interesting is that they came to basically oppose each other on most issues that they dealt with. But it was interesting.

Part of the reason I term his speakership controversial is because it became a conflict between the role of the Speaker as leader of his party, and the role of the Speaker as leader of the House dealing with individual Members and also the Speaker as leader of the Nation. I think he was without question a successful leader of his party. His ability to be able to pull the party together, to consolidate the political power that was important to obtain the majority, and the fact that he put together a very effective agenda that became the platform for the Republican Party—this was an exceptional achievement. He, in effect, created a revolution in politics. But the challenge was also how to convert that revolution into effective policy-making on a continuing basis to help govern the Nation. And that's where I think the distinction has to be made.

In academic terms, for those of you who are academics, let me refer you to James MacGregor Burns' book on leadership, in which he talks about transformational leadership, and what's called transactional leadership. Transformational leadership is leadership that tries to attract people by offering a higher purpose, a higher calling. It goes beyond simply cutting deals. On the other hand, the transactional leader is a person who provides rewards or penalties for compliance. And generally, if you want to be Speaker, it probably involves using both of those capabilities. There was no question that Newt Gingrich wanted to be a transformational leader. He wanted to be a Disraeli, a Wellington, a Churchill, a Jack Welch. He tried to inspire Members and push them to a higher calling, to a higher standard, that went beyond just simply cutting deals, and basically serving their own interests. He tried to rise to a higher calling with regards to the party and the agenda of the party. But the problem is that a Speaker is not a CEO. A Speaker is not a general. And a Speaker is not a Prime Minister. You can't take the parliamentary model and try to apply it to a branch of government that is based on the separation-of-powers approach to governing.

The House of Representatives, as has been pointed out time and time again during this forum, is a unique legislative body. It's a unique institution in which each Member is autonomous and independent; in which Members basically try to ensure their survival through their own election and through responding to their constituency. That's the nature of a House of Representatives. So, you're not going to get Members to take the hill unless they're convinced that in the end it's in their interests to take the hill. The point is, if you're going to be a visionary or a transformational leader in the House, and if you really want to transform both the House and the country, which I believe Newt Gingrich was trying to do, then you damn well had better make the right decisions. And beyond that, you had better be able to adapt to changing circumstances, or else you're going to lose the support of your Members. The force of your personality is simply not

enough in itself. There has to be a pragmatic side to that leadership as well.

There's no question that Newt had great successes as the leader of his party—the first GOP majority in 40 years. That is a significant achievement for an individual, to nationalize the congressional elections. This is really one of the first times, instead of every Member fighting on his own in his district, where Newt broadly nationalized elections with the Contract with America. Moreover, he brought all of those items in the Contract with America to a vote within the first 100 days, which is also a significant achievement. He did implement reforms. He cut the number of committees. He implemented term limits. He got rid of proxy voting. He also accomplished some significant legislation like welfare reform, the freedom to farm bill, the telecommunications bill, and the line item veto. He pushed for a balanced budget. Which leads one to ask, “Where the hell are you now, when we need you, Newt?” {Laughter.}

So he clearly achieved some successes. But if you're going to have a high profile, if you're going to be a high-profile charismatic leader, the transformational-type of leader in a legislative body, you have to be careful that you don't make some big mistakes. I think the problem was that he made some mistakes that began to erode the support that he needed from his own Members.

What were some of those mistakes? I guess they're obvious to all of us. First of all were the shutdowns that took place in 1995 and 1996. I mean, clearly, when you're going to impact the citizens of this country, either through an inconvenience or through a reduction or a temporary loss of benefits, you're going to suffer a blow. I remember Bob Dole, when we were sitting in the Oval Office, talking about the fact that we really shouldn't be in a shutdown. Bob Dole said, “You know, in my experience, you can probably shut the Government down over the weekend, but if you shut it down for any longer period of time, people are going to come looking for you.” And he was right. I think Bob Dole understood that it would be a mistake to do that. Frankly, my own view, I think Newt Gingrich understood this point as well. But the problem was that he had created a revolution within his own Members, with the sense they would wholeheartedly fight for everything they were trying to achieve. And that led to an almost impossible situation in that the strong ideological constituency that he had created in the House made it impossible for him to be able to compromise. We were probably very close to compromising at one point. But for whatever reason, it just could not happen. And that, of course, led to the shutdown.

In addition, I think the disaster relief he asked for—disaster relief, flood relief, for the Midwest—was important, but it had a couple of amendments attached to it by the Republicans, and was ultimately vetoed by the Presi-

dent. I think the Republicans were basically blamed again for preventing disaster relief because of those amendments. I think that was a tactical mistake.

Obviously, the handling of President Clinton's impeachment, which created the impression of being more partisan than balanced, and the Speaker's own ethics violation, continued to erode his status. Ultimately what happened is that he became in a very real way a campaign liability. He was polling badly in the country as a result of that. If you're a charismatic leader you can't afford to poll badly in the country. So the consequence was like all revolutions: in the end, Members turned on their own leader and moved him out of the speakership.

Let me just reiterate that the speakership of Newt Gingrich, as I defined it, was controversial and it perhaps may go down in history as one of those that was the most controversial. As a result, there is a profound lesson, I think, to be gained from that speakership. There is no question that you can be a strong charismatic leader of the party, and there have been strong charismatic leaders within the House of Representatives. But at the same time, if you're going to be a leader of the House, you have to stay in touch with your Members. You have to respond to their needs. You've got to listen to them. You've got to compromise when necessary in order to govern. And you always have to be willing to change with the needs of the Nation, to adapt to changing circumstances, even if that involves compromising an ideology. I think that's the difference between success and failure; and I think that is perhaps the profound lesson of the Gingrich speakership. Thank you.

**Mr. WOLFENBERGER.** Our second discussant on the Gingrich speakership is Bob Walker, who is chairman of Wexler and Walker Public Policy Associates here in Washington. Many of you remember him, though, as a 10-term Pennsylvania Congressman from 1977 to 1997, a ubiquitous floor presence in the House, and a top Republican strategist, tactician, and parliamentary guru over most of those years. As someone who worked closely with Bob Walker and the Republican leadership on various procedural matters, I often wondered where he got his kinetic energy. I stopped wondering after I once sat down with him for breakfast in the Rayburn cafeteria, and his breakfast of chocolate milk, a chocolate-covered donut, and a half-grapefruit covered with sugar. Now you know the secret of what it is that makes the "Energizer Walker" run. Congressman Bob Walker.

**Mr. WALKER.** My staff always said they knew it was going to be a bad day when I had two chocolate donuts. Newt has done a pretty good job of walking through how we got to where we were in 1994 when we took over the House. But it seems to me that when we got there, we discovered a few things about ourselves that speak to the issues that Newt faced inside his speakership.

The main lesson that we learned very quickly was that governing is hard. When we had been in the minority, we never had any responsibility to do any governing. We had fought the good fights, we had charged up the hill every day, we had gotten bloody fighting with our flags flying, and so on. We would come down off the hill if we lost, but we felt really good about it because we had fought glorious battles. All of a sudden, we found ourselves in a position where we actually had to govern, where it did require compromise, where it did require a lot of work with individual Members. And at the end of the day you got part way to where you wanted to go. You won, but you didn't feel really good about it.

It was going through that transition in the majority that for everybody was a huge learning experience. And Newt was in the position of having to work through that. He was in the position of having to work with a number of things that we had set up in advance very consciously. The Contract with America was a political document and a governing document. How much of a governing document became very clear to us on one of the opening days when we had come back to Washington after the elections were over. We were faced with all of the freshmen who had been elected, who came in and said very clearly to the people who were going to be in the leadership, "We're going to do the Contract, right?"

You know, they had internalized this to the point that there was no changing anything that was in the document. They were determined to ensure that it was the direction that the leadership was going to go. And that was a positive thing from the standpoint of our being able to do an agenda right at the beginning of the 104th Congress. Remember, we had also committed to do that agenda within 100 days. While the 100 days was an arbitrary figure that we thought had great political saliency, when it came to actually accomplishing it, it was a major slog through the legislative process, because you had the rules of the House to contend with, such as layover requirements and a number of different procedural things that you had to be aware of.

What it meant was that you had to have a lot of direction from the top. And Newt did use his leadership to help implement the agenda. The fact is that committee chairmen learned from the very earliest days of the Gingrich speakership that they were taking orders from the Speaker's Office, and that we were going to go through this agenda. It was going to get done in a way that reflected exactly what we had put in the Contract with America. That seems to me to be something that then played itself out in a variety of ways throughout the speakership.

From then on, people who ended up with problems inside their committee structure as they dealt with issues felt that they could come to the Speaker because, after all, the Speaker had in the earliest days forced the agenda through. So we were constantly in some of those committee battles.

The chairmen were also faced with a new situation where we had term-limited them. They did not have long-term prospects in the job. Their power was somewhat diminished by the fact that they were only going to be there a short period of time. It seems to me that the 100-day agenda was a very important part of shaping the way the speakership evolved in the years ahead.

There's another thing that has not been discussed here that I think needs to be recognized about Newt's speakership. There was a great technology focus in it. Dr. Billington made mention here a little while ago of the fact that Newt in the earliest days, as a personal crusade, created the THOMAS computer system for the House of Representatives. For the first time, it brought online all of the documents of the House of Representatives for the public to have easy access to and to learn what was actually going on inside the Congress. It was Gingrich's recognition that we had entered a new technological era in this country, and that Congress needed to be a part of it. I believe that it is a technology revolution that continues today.

It has certainly changed the shape of those of us who are lobbying in town. It used to be that one of the things that a lobbyist could produce was the documents out of the House of Representatives. Only lobbyists could easily get them because they went to the House document rooms for their clients out across the country. Now the clients can get the documents simply by going online.

Speaker Gingrich also was focused on science and technology as a broad general subject. The whole business of doubling the budgets of NIH grew out of a relationship between Newt and John Porter on the need to have amounts of money flowing into some of these technology areas that were so important. Technology also was frustrating for him because that was a part of the agenda for which the Republican conference was not completely on board.

I remember going out to the Xerox center outside of town just after we had completed the 100-day agenda, and Newt was determined to have us adopt a new agenda to move forward. Part of that agenda was to make the Republican Party into the leadership party of the information age. Newt had drafted some concepts for the conference to consider and ultimately adopt that would move us in that direction. When we got to the Xerox center and broke into groups to discuss these various agenda items, Members took a look at some of the things that were supposed to take us into the information age. I remember one committee chairman—where I walked into the room to listen—who described the discussion as “psychobabble.” That was probably one of the kindest things that was said about these discussions. By the time we got back into the general session, this was a portion of the agenda that was just written off. I remember Newt, following the meet-

ing, being very discouraged because it was clear that the conference participants simply didn't understand where we were headed at that point in the economy and how we could be leaders in that arena.

Another thing, as I reflect on this, that seemed to me to be a shaper of the Gingrich speakership was the fact that we had a number of people in the freshman class who arrived in 1994 who were "self" term-limited. They had decided on their own that they were only going to be here for a short period of time. Those folks became people inside the conference who resisted whenever we attempted to make long-term deals and look down the road a long way. They were there for a very short period of time. They wanted to get things done now, or they wanted to stop things from being done now. Interestingly enough, it was a number of those people who ended up being at the base of the revolt that took place against Newt's leadership later on.

Newt's operational style was often not understood by a lot of people. It was to empower folks to go out and do things with regard to issues that came up. If a young Member of Congress came to the Speaker and said, "You know, I'd like to do something about this issue." Newt's tendency was to say "yes" and empower them to go do it. The problem with that was, for a number of us who were part of his leadership team, we almost immediately got a call from a committee chairman or a subcommittee chairman who didn't realize that this responsibility had now been given to some freshman Member of Congress. The chairman was outraged by the fact that this person had seemingly been empowered by the Speaker. So there were a number of us in the leadership team and on Newt's staff who would have to go to the freshman and say, "You may not have understood exactly what the Speaker was saying." We would try to work out some of these arrangements.

Certainly, part of the problem that Newt ultimately ran into were the dozens of ethics charges that were filed against him. The ongoing issues there stem from the fact that many people in the opposition party, in the Democratic Party, never really got over their anger about the confrontational tactics that had been used in order to take the majority. That made it very difficult to work with the Democratic leadership. And it may have been partially work that we didn't do very well. Additionally, many in the Democratic leadership didn't work very hard at forging a relationship. That reality really led to much of the decision of the Republicans that we had to go it alone. No matter how narrow our majority we had to do it on our own, and it was a way of shaping policy throughout the Gingrich speakership.

I must say that working with President Clinton was different, and Leon Panetta has somewhat characterized this relationship. Newt and President Clinton did have this ability to talk to each other, because they were both policy wonks. Yet there was no end of frustration on our end of Pennsylvania

Avenue when Newt and the President would get together and talk about something, and Newt would come up to explain this great deal he had just cut. Somebody in the leadership would say, "Newt, we can't do that!" And then there would have to be more discussions that followed our meetings. I believe that there was an understanding that we could, through that relationship, forge some legislative packages. As has been mentioned, there were some things that were done, such as the welfare reform package that ultimately was a major change of direction in American policy.

I have a somewhat different view of the Government shutdown than Leon's. I think that most of us felt as though that was very successful. It would have been a disaster had it led to us not being able to retain the majority in 1996. The fact was that we were able to retain our majority despite having gone through the shutdowns. Many of us have felt that the shutdowns convinced a lot of the markets that there was a serious effort under way to balance the budget. It wasn't just rhetoric anymore. There was, in fact, a serious effort under way. A lot of the growth that happened in the economy after that really resulted from the willingness of the Republicans to take the political heat that came with the government shutdowns.

Let me just sum up here. There are a half a dozen things that I would say are probably the legacy of the Gingrich speakership. First, it seems to me that his speakership affirmed the national Republican political ascendancy. Up until then there had been a lot of feeling that the Republican Party was basically a party where a personality, Ronald Reagan, had managed to bring us to a status that gave us a fighting chance in politics. With the speakership of Newt, and the ability to win successive elections after 1994, it certainly affirmed our political ascendancy.

Second, his legacy should certainly include that he moved the House of Representatives into the modern technology era. Third, it seems to me that his speakership also changed the relationship between the Speaker and committee chairmen. Clearly, there is a much different relationship that continues to this day. Fourth, the speakership of Newt Gingrich and the way in which the Republican majority approached legislation assured the long-term vibrancy of Reaganism. We took much of the Reagan agenda and assured that it was what we were enacting as a result of our work in the Congress. Fifth, it seems to me that the Gingrich speakership created a positive visionary platform for dealing with national issues from a conservative base. In large part, that kind of visionary outlook resulted in our ability to keep a majority in the House over a long term.

Finally, sixth, it seems to me that what the Gingrich speakership also did was change the nature of the political dialog in the country. Up until then we had debated the issues largely from the standpoint of liberal rhetoric. We changed a lot of that rhetoric. Just the idea that we went from discussing how long we were going to have large deficits to the fact that



we could actually have a balanced budget was a tremendous change in rhetoric. Despite the fact that we're having trouble keeping those balanced budgets today, we still talk in terms of balanced budgets in ways different than we did before. That's my view. Thanks.

**Mr. WOLFENSBERGER.** Because we did get a late start, I've been authorized by the organizers to go a little late in this, so we can allow for some questions. But what I'd like to do is first of all give Newt a couple of minutes to make some comments on what was said since he last spoke, and also if Mr. Panetta would like to do so as well. Mr. Panetta will probably have to leave before our question period is over to catch a plane. So I want to make sure he has an opportunity for a last word as well. Newt.

**Speaker GINGRICH.** First of all, just a couple of quick observations. I think there are two grounds for focusing on my speakership. The first is that it was actually a team effort all the way through. You can't describe my rise without talking about the Congressional Campaign Committee, Guy Vander Jagt, Joe Gaylord, and others. You can't describe our rise in the House without mentioning the Conservative Opportunity Society and people like Bob Walker and Vin Weber and Connie Mack and others. You can't describe how we ran the Contract with America without looking at the extraordinary role Dick Armey played. And you can't look at how we ran the House in the first couple of months without looking at Armey and Walker and DeLay. Finally, you can't describe balancing the budget without including Kasich and Livingston and Archer. So there was an extensive team process. I was the central executor and I had very substantial power, but it was as the leader of a collectivity. It wasn't just me and then you drop down 100 feet to the next person. The team concept was a very conscious design.

Second, because of the separation of powers that Leon pointed out, I believe it is a mistake to see 1994 in isolation, and Bob Walker came closer to the right model—which is, Reagan in 1980 brings us back from a distinct minority party status to being competitive. We, I think, helped get ourselves to parity, recognizing that much of the Contract was in fact standing on Ronald Reagan's shoulders. Bush now has to see whether or not he can move beyond parity to majority.

You can go back to earlier studies of American politics in the 19th century. There are three things to think about in terms of what I tried to accomplish: the political, the policy, and the personal. The first thing, and I wrote down what Leon said because I thought he caught it right, although he and I probably will disagree on it. He said, "effective policy-making on a continuing basis to help govern." This is the 9th year of a Republican majority in the House. The last time we were in the 9th year of a Republican majority in the House was 1927. So at a political level, it's pretty hard to argue that we weren't successful. Just as a fact.

Second, on policy grounds, look at welfare reform, balancing the budget, reforming the FDA, strengthening the National Institutes of Health, increasing the Central Intelligence Agency's budget, cutting taxes. It's hard not to say that those 4 years were fairly substantial at a policy level.

And the third is personal. Here I'm quite happy to have people decide that I failed in the end because I left the House. But it's a little hard for me to look back and not feel success as a former Army brat who had no great personal wealth, no ties, and I arrived in Georgia courtesy of the U.S. Army at a time when it was segregated and Democratic. Georgia is now a State that has a Republican Governor, a Republican Senator, I think a soon-to-be Republican second Senate seat, and a majority of Republicans in the House. I arrived in Washington when we were in our 24th year of being in the minority. We're now in our 9th year of being in the majority. I got to have a dinosaur in the Dinosaur Room, as Denny Hastert reminded me today. What's to feel bad about? This was an enormously successful run that changed the House, changed the Republican Party, and marginally changed the country.

In the end, I don't think you can be that aggressively entrepreneurial in Washington in the speakership and sustain it very long. So you either have to decide, "I really want to get all of these things done and then I'll have to go do something else for a while," or you have to decide, "I'd rather stay around here and get a lot less done." I don't think there's a game in the middle between those two styles. Most successful Speakers don't try to do as many different things, and they're right. But we had a very unique brief window to really change things.

Last, I agree totally with Leon about the disaster relief fiasco in 1997. That was one of the reasons we ended up with my leadership in rebellion. I thought it was crazy for us to be in the fight. It was a moment of saying, "You know how good Bill Clinton is at this stuff, why are you putting your head up so he can just beat on you for three hours?" I couldn't agree more. That's one of the places I failed. I failed in part because by then there were too many things going on and too many moving parts, which is the weakness of a centralized leadership in the House.

The shutdown, though, is really important for sophisticated people to look at for a long time. Livingston and Kasich have both told me in the last year they are absolutely convinced we wouldn't have gotten to a balanced budget without the shutdown. They see it as shock therapy. But there's a key mantra, which is, "We lost." I want all of you to think about this. We were the first reelected majority since 1928. We are the only majority ever reelected with a Democratic President winning the national election in 1996. What is it we lost? People say, "Oh, that was a terrible period, and we lost." But what did we lose? We had a running brawl 9 months before the election. We proved that we were really deadly serious about

solving our Nation's problems. Leon has his version, and mine is a totally different discussion. We have to get Bob Livingston to come in some time and do an entire session on whether the shutdown was a mistake. I think you would have Leon on one side and you would have Kasich and Livingston on the other side.

I would just say that as a professional designer of campaigns, the shutdown did not cost us anything except in the press corps and in this city and at cocktail parties. It didn't cost us anything in the country. In the end, we were able to win election in a way that nobody had done since 1928. We didn't feel good about it, so people tend to undervalue the sheer fact that it's still Speaker Hastert.

**Mr. PANETTA.** Well, I guess I would just caution that the fact of simply holding power in and of itself is not necessarily an indication that you're governing the country. Democrats made the mistake of basically assuming that because we held power, that somehow we didn't have to deliver in terms of governing the country. I've often said that we govern in our democracy either through leadership or crisis. Leadership that's willing to compromise and willing to find solutions is the most effective way of governing this country, in order to avoid crisis. But I think if you look at the last few years, we are a Nation that more and more governs by crisis, as opposed to leadership. Crisis drives policy. It drives energy policy. You've got to have the lights shut down in order for the country to respond to the energy problem. On budget issues, there's always the threat of some kind of shutdown or forcing Members to stay beyond an adjournment date to pass appropriations bills in this place. The same thing is true on health care. The same thing is true for Social Security. The same thing is true for Medicare. Ultimately, we are doing more and more as a result of crisis driving policy. Now, whether we're Democrats or Republicans, I think that's a reality. And let me add, the public may for a period of time basically allow that kind of gridlock to proceed. But, as the California example demonstrates, there is a point at which angry and frustrated people are going to take their vote out on leaders who are in office. If there's any lesson you should take away from the California recall experience, it's that incumbents ought not to feel too comfortable about where they are at the present time. I think there is an angry and frustrated public out there, that at some point may do exactly what happened in 1994, which is to change the leadership because they are frustrated with the fact that we are doing more by crisis than by leadership.

**Mr. WOLFENBERGER.** I think we have time for one question.

**Question.** In what way did your view of the speakership change during your tenure?

**Speaker GINGRICH.** Virtually none. My view was that we had to be very different than traditional speakerships. My assumption was that we

would be faced with overwhelming resources against us from the White House, large parts of the media, and the capacity to raise money from interest groups who would be threatened by changing government and changing priorities. Leon mentioned Wellington, and Wellington is one of the leaders I looked at because I expected to be in a peninsular kind of campaign where the other side had more resources. We had to be very sure we were focused on what it took to win. And my models were actually not so much prior speakerships, although I understood a fair amount about people like Tom Reed and Henry Clay and Cannon and Rayburn. My models were much more how do you organize people to be effective in a situation of enormous pressure where you're trying to get things done? In that sense, I do accept Leon's point that I tended to take as models Alfred Sloan of General Motors or George Catlett Marshall in the Second World War or a Franklin Delano Roosevelt. I was trying to find ways to be able to rally our people to do the things we wanted to do.

**Mr. WOLFENBERGER.** I'm now going to call on CRS Director Dan Mulhollan to make a few closing remarks, but please join me in thanking our panel for doing an outstanding job.

**Mr. MULHOLLAN.** This closes our session. I want to thank everyone who participated in this important conference and everyone who attended the various sessions. One of the things it underscores is that each one of you being here indicates an interest, a caring about the institution of the U.S. Congress, and for that we are quite grateful. I must also add that, in order for this event to take place, a lot of people worked very hard. I wanted to mention Justin Paulhamus, Karen Wirt, Jill Ziegler, and Robert Newlen of CRS who worked to make the conference a success. Another CRS person merits special mention because he had the idea for the conference and carried it out in a highly successful manner. He is Walter Oleszek, my colleague and friend for over three decades, and we should thank him for his initiative and efforts.