

RHM: Acceptance Speech
December 5, 1988

First, let me profoundly thank you for your vote of confidence./

Eight years ago when I first received your support for this position, the media said that I was seen as a "workhorse"/

It's good to know you are still willing to hitch up this old workhorse because we Republicans have a lot of ground to plow in this Congress./

Let me offer a very special thanks to Henry Hyde/ for his nominating remarks and to Bill Gradison/ for seconding my nomination./

Their combination of eloquence/
professionalism/
intelligence and dedication
reflects the very best this Conference -- and the House -- has to offer./

And now that you have paid me the highest tribute that this body of Republicans can bestow/ I owe it to you to let you know where I think we're going in the 101st Congress/

This Conference is a new beginning/ not just for our freshmen members, but for all of us/ who want to make the House of Representatives a more representative House./

This is the first Republican Conference in the third century of the life of the U.S. Congress./

We will have a new Leadership team./ We have new members/ We have a new resolve to become the majority party in the House/ and now is the time to begin again/

Not in 1990 or 1992./ Now's the time for us as House Republicans to let Jim Wright know that this is our House, too/ and we shall earn the right and the privilege to lead it into the 21st Century./

So I'm asking each one of you today to use every last ounce of your talent/ every ounce of your energy/ to make this House the cornerstone of the nation's future/ It will also take your faith/ faith in our values/ faith in those you elect today./

I would hope you would do your utmost to make your talent, your skills and your faith count/

-- count in your sub-committees/ and in full committee/

-- count on the Floor/ and in the media/

In this Congress, we House Republicans should act in such a way that President George Bush can look at the Hill every day and hear the sweet sound of good/ hard/ political combat/ and know that his flank is well-covered -- and advancing/

He must be able to count on us/ because we are going to count on him to help in our cause/ the cause of representative government through Republican reform.///

This institution needs reform/ We need true, bipartisan reform comprehensive enough to cover the waterfront from abuses of the frank, to campaign finances/and tough enough to stand the challenges of partisan treachery/

I believe we must more clearly define our ethics rules/ and then we have to enforce them/ The record of enforcement in this House is a national disgrace/ I don't mean calculating the cost of every dinner roll eaten at lunch/ I mean punishing wrongdoing which is deliberate, pervasive and felonious/

The reputation of this institution has been smeared by Members who blatantly break our rules/ and mock the institution's inability to enforce a penalty/

We must find new mechanisms of enforcing our code of ethics and policing ourselves in a manner redeeming to the American public/

When we address ethics we should clean up the loose way we deal with outside income/ Members should not have to depend on outside income, especially honoraria to make it/ and they should not have to depend on those who offer it/ It's time to stop nibbling around the edges of the pay issue/ and bring about reforms here, too/

Campaign reform is needed/ I'd like to lead House Republicans toward it/ but we all know it will take more than PAC reform/ When 99.2% of incumbents get re-elected, many of them without opposition, there is more than the PAC issue at stake/ Democracy is at stake/

I also intend to continue the fight we have been waging for so many years around here to reform the rules of the House/ We have to reverse the trend toward more and more closed rules/ self executing rules/ limiting debate and the offering of amendments in the legislative process/

The time for reform is here. I am calling on the Democratic leadership to join with us in forming a bipartisan task force, of equal representation to fashion reforms of ethics/standards/outside income/and campaign practices/

Mr. Gorbachev is getting headlines all over the world for reforming the so-called Soviet parliament. Can we in this truly representative institution simply drift along while real reform is needed here?/

I am eager to make this body a more representative body, a more respected body, a more responsive body. I will do whatever it takes/

I was asked a couple of weeks ago if I would support the nomination of a coalition Speaker in my place on the opening day of the new Congress/ My response was in the affirmative. If it would bring us closer to our goals and our dreams for this House and for the country. But what we do must not be frivolous or half-baked. What we do must be inspired by the heart, shaped by the mind and produced by a professional hand/

We've all heard that one person can make a difference!

But instead of just repeating that phrase, let me point out some of our own colleagues who in this past Congress have made the kind of difference only one, dedicated, hard-working Congressman can make!

-- I think of Dick Armey who took on the military base-closing issue and made it stick!

-- Of Dan Lungren and his efforts on immigration reform and the Omnibus Crime bill!

-- Of Ham Fish on the Fair Housing compromise.

-- Of Henry Hyde, that happy warrior/so often in debate on the floor, combining eloquence, wit and patriotism enhancing our party's position with his gift for words!

There are others who, except for time constraints, could be mentioned / The point is: each one of you can make a difference /

We have a tremendous obligation to our new President / With his power / we actually have leverage in the House as a minority party / I want to see us deliver for him the way we delivered for President Reagan / with dedication / loyalty and commitment /

But I recognize, too, that we must also seek out our own identity / and strive to place our own imprint on this Congress /

As most of you know, my 32 years in the House have all been spent in the minority /

I wouldn't wish that on any of you / You deserve much better and together we just have to find the magic key to change all that /

We have a great institution to reform✓

We have a new president to help✓

We have a majority to build✓

We have an agenda to fulfill✓

Now's the time!

Let's get on with it.

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