

Tom Delay has ace in political fox hole

By Ron Walters
Special to Sentinel-Voice

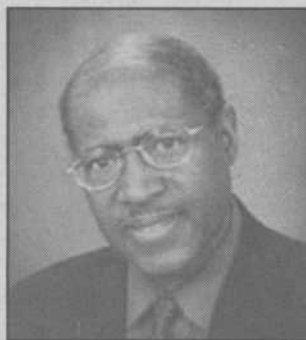
How is it possible, I ask myself again and again, that a key figure in the House of Representatives, such as the Majority Leader, Tom Delay, has managed to survive this long where others, such as his colleague Newt Gingrich, and Democrat Jim Wright, went rather quickly once their ethics violations became public?

Jim Wright became the subject of a House Ethics investigation in early 1989 that implied he had used bulk purchases of a new book he had written, "Reflections of a Public Man," to amass speaking fees in excess of what was allowed by House rules. By late May of that year, Wright sensed he had lost his effectiveness and resigned as speaker, and in June also resigned from the House.

Newt Gingrich, who had brought the original charges against Wright, faced poetic justice in 1996 when he was fined \$300 by the House Ethics Committee for violating House rules for accepting a \$4.5 million book advance — also in excess of what House members considered to be within the spirit of the rules. And even though he paid it back, this, together with the perception that he was implicated in Democratic victories that year, led to his exit from the House.

By contrast, Tom Delay has been under investigation for the past three years, was scolded three times last year by the House Ethics Committee that issued a report citing violations of House rules this year when it found that lobbyists paid for some of his travel. So powerful is Delay that he caused the Republican Ethics Committee chairman and some members to be fired and the rules to be changed. But the Democrats pushed back by refusing to attend committee meetings, causing Speaker Hastert to give in and change the rules back. The rules change would have made it more difficult for the Republican majority in the House to reject an Ethics Committee charge because if it were not decided conclusively after 45 days, it would be dismissed.

Delay carries around an unmistakable air of boldness and arrogance which, by the way, he earned by pumping millions of dollars into Republican campaigns. His infamous alliance with Washington lobbyists Jack Abramoff has found former Delay staffers participating in Abramoff's bilking of \$66 million from Chippewa Indians and others over their attempt to stabilize their gaming rights. Delay staffers



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also played a role in raking in \$200 million more from Hawaiian interests. The link to Delay through his former staffers has not yielded a dedicated money trail, but the inference is strong that they did not keep the money, it went where it could influence legislation — which was the point.

This money has had the effect of insulating Delay from punishment for some obvious ills, and even though Jack Abramoff is under federal investigation for his role in these cases, it is highly unlikely that he will be punished because he is Delay's cash cow. Proof of it is that right in the midst of the myriad investigations, conservative lawmakers threw a party for Delay at which they thumbed their collective noses at the allegations against him, further indicating that they plan to let him walk. This, even though 51 percent of the voters in Delay's own congressional district disapprove of the job he is doing, while 42 percent approve, according to a poll taken by Houston's KPRC-TV station in April.

Partly because of the linkage between Delay and lobbying interests, the attention of the public has been drawn to congressional travel. And in that, some journalist have sought to change the subject by pointing to the fact that members of the Congressional Black Caucus are high up on the list of those whose travel has been sponsored. However, a look at the data yields a different picture. The White members of Congress who are high on the list have enjoyed perks paid for by corporate lobbyists in the main, while the travel of Black lawmakers has been paid for by nonprofits that have sponsored them on speaking engagements. To compare them just doesn't wash.

At this moment in history, Tom Delay is to the Congress what Karl Rove is to the White House: he is the keeper of the conservative flame, who rolls the political dice to keep winning, who is brash enough to use the strength of ideology against their enemies and to brag about their intention to change the course of the country to fit the narrow interests. The power he has amassed is a frightening spectacle, but it is doubtful that it can be disciplined because those whom he has empowered are his protection now and are empowering him in return.

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POLITICAL NAME GAME

Photo special to Sentinel-Voice

Democratic North Las Vegas Sen. Steven Horsford, second from left, and Gov. Kenny Guinn, second from right, stand with former Clark County School District Superintendent Claude Perkins, far right, and his son. Horsford wants a school named after Perkins, the first Black CCSD superintendent. Perkins is now associate vice president of academic affairs at Albany State University in Albany, Ga.

No Clarence Thomas syndrome here

It has been an interesting journey over this last year for the Caucus of African American Nevadans (CAAN), with all of the activities and accomplishments that have taken place and some barriers to hurdle.

However, we have recognized a need to clarify for the public a few issues that have been misconstrued and some people misinformed.

This organization was formed to make Blacks free agents in the political process where they would take the time to evaluate all candidates and support a candidate whether they be Black, White, Hispanic, etc., who was considered the most qualified to ensure that the Caucus' agenda could be addressed and considered or that the individual supported would ensure the integrity of issues most important to

African-Americans are attended to properly.

Here in Las Vegas there was a desire to put in place an infrastructure to develop a political base for African-Americans, who would work in a non-partisan fashion, with a desire to take on the challenges of politics by working with both parties and all candidates to ensure the ability to push agendas important to Blacks throughout all of the Greater Las Vegas area.

The makeup of the executive board is short and long-term community leaders, business executives and religious leaders, all duly concerned with issues important to African-Americans, but knowledgeable that you must be able to work with all people and political parties to ensure a high success rate in achieving the overall goals of

CAAN.

We are working diligently to become financially strong. We are working to increase our ability to notify the public about various forums for continued community participation, but most importantly, please never question CAAN's commitment to African-Americans.

In our brief existence, we have too much of a solid track record in showing our intent and commitment, plus the board members who comprise this board would not allow for issues important to African-Americans to go unrecognized.

Lastly, you can also bet that if we were a White-sponsored and a White-front organization the current board members would have already dismantled this organization long ago.

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political party, but that will not, in and of itself, solve our problems. We must be willing to take off the gloves, go with bare-knuckles into the marketplace, and let our presence be known by withholding our dollars and redirecting our dollars. If we want to be players in the political game, we must put our money where our mouth is and give more to political campaigns. The only things that count with politicians are dollars and votes — in that

order. We must leverage both to get what we need from either party, the Demopublicans or the Republicrats.

As the right crosses and left hooks continue to come from crooked, immoral and unethical politicians, both White and Black, let's get busy economically and start punching back, before we get knocked out.

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giving the Pentagon veto power over which military experts appeared on air.

In an appearance on "Reliable Sources," Jordan said, "I went to the Pentagon myself several times before the war started and met with important people there and said, for instance, at CNN, 'Here are the generals we're

thinking of retaining to advise us on the air and off about the war.' And we got a big thumbs-up on all of them. That was important."

It was also sickening. And so was another story that appeared in the March 17, 2003, issue of *Newsweek*:

"Saddam could decide to take Baghdad

with him," the magazine said. "One Arab intelligence officer interviewed by *Newsweek* spoke of 'the green mushroom' over Baghdad — the modern-day caliph bidding a grotesque bio-chem farewell to the land of the living alongside thousands of his subjects as well as his enemies. Saddam wants to be remembered. He has the means and the demonic

imagination. It is up to U.S. armed forces to stop him before he can achieve notoriety for all time."

While *Newsweek* is issuing serial apologies, it should apologize for that one as well.

George E. Curry is editor-in-chief of the NNPA News Service and BlackPressUSA.com.