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PRESS ROOM

Center for Media and Public Policy

Recent Events

October 13-15, 2002

One Year Later: How Much Safer Are We? Issue Seminar
 Co-sponsored by Heritage's Center for Media and Public Policy and El Pomar Foundation

Homeland Security experts and some of America's top journalists convened at El Pomar Foundation's Penrose House in Colorado Springs, Colorado, to discuss progress or its lack since the terrorist attacks on New York City and Washington, D.C. on Sept. 11, 2001.

July 26-27, 2002:

Start the Presses! Seminar

Co-sponsored by Heritage's Center for Media & Public Policy and the Collegiate Network/Intercollegiate Studies Institute

More than 30 independent college newspaper journalists from across the country traveled to Washington for this two-day seminar held at Heritage. Speakers included Jay Ambrose, Chief Editorial Writer at Scripps Howard News Service, Tony Meia, a reporter for *The Charlotte Observer*, Dr. Stan Ridgley, Vice President and Executive Director of Collegiate Network, and Stephen F. Hayes, a writer for *The Weekly Standard*.

[See photo from conference](#)

July 9, 2002:

Scholars and Scribes Review the Rulings:

The Supreme Court's 2001-2002 term

Judge Kenneth Starr was one of six legal experts who spoke to the standing-room-only crowd at Heritage's annual Scholars & Scribes Supreme Court review following the conclusion of the high court's 2001-2002 term.

Other panelists included Akhil Amar of Yale Law School, Charles Lane of *The Washington Post*, Frank Murray of *The Washington Times*, and Jeffrey Rosen of *The New Republic*. Heritage's Paul Rosenzweig also spoke.

The panels were moderated by former Attorney General Edwin Meese III, the foundation's Ronald Reagan Distinguished Fellow in Public Policy, and Todd Gaziano, Director of The Heritage Foundation's Center for Legal and Judicial Studies. ([view archived video footage](#))

OF ADDITIONAL INTEREST

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Media Center Upcoming Events

Computer Assisted Research and Reporting: 2003 CARR Boot Camp Schedule Announced!

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 CARR HOT Sheets

In the News:

York Daily Record Justice Series: Pennsylvania's Black judges found tougher on crime
 Media Center multiple regression completes York Daily Record's award-winning series on criminal sentencing bias.

Computer Assisted Influence?
The Washington Post
 April 19, 2002

Media Center Reports:

NEW!
The 990 Project: Study examines teachers unions and public disclosure trends.

Who Uses the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)?

Media Center Cyberforum

Media Center Commentary

Media Center Advisory Board

June 1, 2002:

Foreign Correspondents Course

Co-sponsored by the Center for Media & Public Policy and the Collegiate Network/Intercollegiate Studies Institute

Heritage's John Hulsman, Mike Hedges of the *Houston Chronicle* and Stephen Hayes of The Weekly Standard briefed college journalists before a 10 day trip to Prague, Czech Republic. Hedges and Hayes discussed the different challenges presented by reporting in foreign countries, while Hulsman focused on the emerging world political situation.

[See photo from the conference](#)

May 29, 2002:

Young Leadership Network Sound bites Seminar

Complete Communications Strategies' Mark Montini spoke to 65 members of Heritage's Young Leadership Network. Montini's presentation focused on tips and techniques on how to form and deliver an effective sound bite.

[See photo from seminar](#)

May 16, 2002:

Fear and Loathing on the Potomac:

The Washington Times at 20

2002 Distinguished Journalist Lecture delivered by Washington Times Editor-in-Chief Wes Pruden

The *Washington Times* turned 20 years old in May 2002 and as part of the celebration Pruden spoke to a standing-room-only crowd and live C-SPAN audience about two decades of "getting it first and getting it right."

[\(view archived video footage\)](#)

[See photo from lecture](#)

May 15, 2002:

Scholars and Scribes: Should Government Play with Models?

'Static' Versus 'Dynamic' Economic Forecasting

Two panels of experts and journalists convened in Heritage's Van Andel Center to discuss static vs. dynamic economic forecasting. Panelists included Dan Crippen, Director, Congressional Budget Office, Lindy Paull, Chief-of-Staff, Joint Committee on Taxation, Martin Sullivan, Tax Notes Magazine, William Beach, The Heritage Foundation, Tom Donlan, Barron's magazine, Rex Nutting, CBS Marketwatch.com and Howard Gleckman, Business Week magazine. [\(view archived video footage | read the transcript\)](#)

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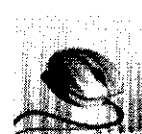
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Friday, Apr 29, 2005

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Politics XML

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Posted on Sun, Feb. 20, 2005

House newcomer already a rising star in the GOP

Young congressman groomed to sell Bush's Social Security plan

TIM FUNK
Observer Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON - It's 9:47 a.m. and that's Patrick McHenry -- the youngest member of Congress, and possibly its fastest walker -- speeding down the second-floor hallway of the Cannon House Office Building.

The 29-year-old freshman from Cherryville, in Gaston County, is late for his fourth appointment of the day. But he's already thinking about how to arrive on time for No. 5 -- his debut speech on the House floor.

"We've got 15 minutes," he says darting into Room 224 and greets the waiting delegation from the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank. "I'd shake your hands, but ..."

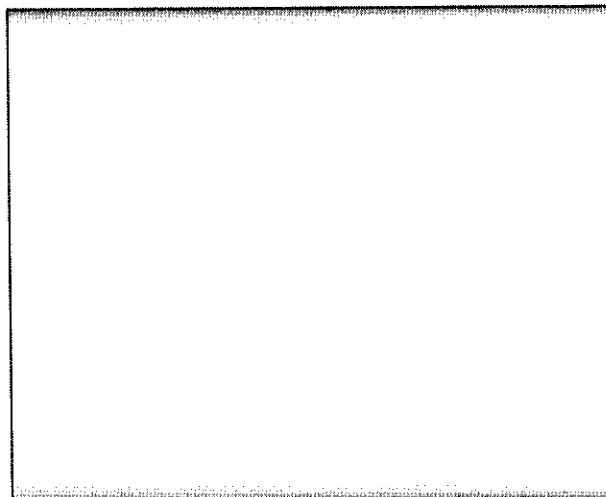
He holds up his index finger, recently dipped in purple ink -- the House Republicans' sign of solidarity with Iraqi voters.

Just weeks after taking over the 10th District seat from Cass Ballenger, who retired after holding the safely Republican post 18 years, McHenry is already a spokesman for President Bush's proposed Social Security overhaul. And he plans to stay in the limelight. With speeches, strategy sessions, media interviews, roll-call votes and ink-stained fingers, he tirelessly presses an ambitious conservative agenda.

Besides bringing democracy to Iraq, McHenry wants to outlaw most abortions, ban same-sex marriages, drill for oil in the Alaska wilderness, cut "pork barrel" and other federal spending, replace the income tax with a flat tax, cap jury awards, block any meddling with gun owners.

And change Social Security without raising taxes -- the focus of the 15-minute meeting and his upcoming floor speech.

Because of his age, Republican leaders consider McHenry a natural salesman for Bush's plan to let young people divert some of their Social Security taxes into private accounts. They've even named him vice chair of the House GOP caucus's public affairs team for Social Security, a plum usually reserved for members who've paid their dues.



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McHenry is already in message mode: He calls the politics of the AARP, which is leading the opposition to Bush's plan, "left-wing liberalism, tried and true."

Partly privatizing the retirement system, he says, will help "reignite the revolution" that began in 1994, when then-House Speaker Newt Gingrich and a corps of freshly elected conservative Republicans took control of the House away from the Democrats. Their "contract with America" promised a lot, but ended up delivering a lot less.

"Change doesn't happen easily," McHenry says. "Sometimes you have to use revolutionary tactics. ... We have to change the way Washington operates."

That's bold talk for a new congressman who won the runoff for his party's nomination by 85 votes and who's too young to be a U.S. senator (legal age: 30), let alone president (minimum age: 35).

But in Congress' conservative firmament, the amiable-but-uncompromising McHenry is being viewed by some as a rising star.

The Washington Post wants to profile him. He's been interviewed five times by the BBC -- the British Broadcasting Corp. And House Speaker Dennis Hastert, R-Ill., named him to two substantial committees: Budget and Financial Services.

"He's become the subject of great interest," says Rep. Mike Pence, R-Ind., who recently succeeded Rep. Sue Myrick of Charlotte as leader of the Republican Study Committee, a group of almost 100 of the House's more conservative members.

"If we're going to bring about the kind of (Social Security) reform the president is advocating," Pence adds, "we are going to have to promote a national dialogue between the generation of Patrick McHenry and the generation of World War II. So he has a very important role to play."

Learning how to sell

McHenry's political heroes look out from framed photos as he escorts the team from the Heritage Foundation into his office. In one picture, Jesse Helms smiles as McHenry, then 17, sits behind the senator's desk.

The agenda for this morning's meeting: How does a congressman who's under 30 sell Social Security reform to constituents who have retired or are about to?

Mark Montini, a communications specialist under contract to Heritage, jumps in: What you have to do, he tells McHenry, is convince older people that, for you, this is not a political issue, but a personal one.

"If you can show them," Montini says, "that this is an issue where 'I'm going to protect my grandmother, I'm going to protect my mother, I'm going to protect my neighbor, I'm going to protect the lady who used to baby-sit me,' then they're willing to open up the door and say, 'OK, tell me what you're going to do,' because now you have shared interest."

Leaning forward in his chair, McHenry responds with three words: "My Granny Gooch."

Team Heritage nod their heads and murmur their approval.

"Granny Gooch," McHenry continues. "Social Security is practically what she lives on."

"Exactly," Montini says.

"She still sends me a \$25 birthday check."

Montini wraps up: "'Granny, number one, communicates 'old.' Two, you talk about (her) depending on Social Security for most of her retirement. The \$25 check? Anything you can do to humanize you. And if they say, 'Man, this guy loves his grandma,' then why would you pull the retirement out from underneath her?'"

The meeting over, McHenry exits his office, turns left, and heads for the U.S. Capitol.

Official business in the House begins every day with a series of one-minute speeches, all seen on C-SPAN. Members salute small towns in their districts, praise or condemn the president, lobby for or against upcoming bills.

McHenry is here to talk about changing Social Security.

"Mr. Speaker," he begins, "unless we act now, those workers who are 20 years old or in their mid-20s – when they retire, the system's going to be bankrupt."

Reading from a speech, he mentions the declining ratio of workers to retirees, and how, in 2040, there will be only two workers supporting each Social Security recipient.

In conclusion, McHenry skips over a reference to "our kids and grandkids" -- he has neither -- and instead ad-libs "my grandmother" and "future generations of Americans" as the stakeholders in the coming debate.

A political veteran

McHenry's first political memory dates to 1984, when Helms and President Reagan headlined a rally in Charlotte. He was 9.

The youngest of five children, McHenry traces his conservative ideology to watching his father tend to a small lawn business -- "he wanted to be left alone by the government" -- and his mother tend to raising the kids.

His political start came in high school, when he knocked on doors for GOP congressional candidate David Balmer.

In 1995, he came to Washington for a summer internship with then-House Majority Leader Dick Arme, a Gingrich lieutenant. Back home, while at N.C. State University and then Belmont Abbey College, he got elected to leadership posts in the state and national College Republicans.

Then a state House seat came open in Gaston County. McHenry, 22 and still a college junior, got in the race. He won the GOP nomination, but lost the election after his Democratic opponent -- the father of one of his Gastonia Ashbrook High School classmates -- sent out McHenry's high school photo and asked voters: Would you trust your tax money with a mere child?

After graduation, McHenry returned to Washington to run nohillary.com, -- an anti-Hillary Rodham Clinton Web site launched by DCI/New Media, a right-leaning consulting firm. He moved to Austin, Texas, to become youth director in Bush's 2000 campaign, then moved back to Washington to take a political job at the Labor Department.

In 2002, back in North Carolina, he won a seat in the N.C. House. Two years later, McHenry ran for Congress. He bested better-funded opponents in the GOP primary, then survived a nasty runoff with Catawba County Sheriff David Huffman, who accused him of having loud, "Animal House"-like parties. McHenry played rough, too, charging the sheriff with campaign finance irregularities.

McHenry was elected with help from College Republican alums, who now dominate his congressional staff, and the Club for Growth, a Washington-based conservative group that spent \$170,000 on Charlotte TV ads.

Since taking office, he has spent most weekends back in the district, recently attending the Troutman Centennial, church services at St. Stephen's Lutheran in Hickory and a 2006 fund-raiser for himself at the Kings Mountain Country Club.

On Capitol Hill, McHenry is learning his way. He races down the halls of government, constantly inspecting his BlackBerry for staff e-mails about where and when his next appointment is. He wears a House lapel pin, partly to ward off sergeants-at-arms who have mistaken him for a young aide who has no business on the House floor. And when he needs advice, he often turns to Rep. Myrick, a fellow N.C. conservative who's been in Congress for a decade -- and whose office is just down the hall.

Still, the prematurely gray, 5-foot-6-inch congressman with a girlfriend who works at the White House is hoping for a long stay in Washington. Asked about term limits, once part of the conservative creed, McHenry says he won't "unilaterally disarm" in the battle to transform Washington.

As for why the youngest member of Congress jumped into politics so early, he's eager to explain:

"I'm not willing to sit on the sidelines and just wait for change to happen. I wanted to get in (the game) and make a difference for people ... And what time is better to do that than now?"

U.S. Rep. Patrick McHenry, R-N.C.

AGE: 29.

FAMILY: Single. Four brothers and sisters. One surviving grandmother. Parents deceased.

EDUCATION: B.A. in history, Belmont Abbey College, 2000.

EXPERIENCE: Elected to the U.S. House in November; one term in N.C. House of Representatives, 2002-04.

RELIGION: Roman Catholic.

HOBBIES: Quail/duck hunting and reading – the Bible and, most recently, Winston Churchill's "History of the English Speaking Peoples."



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