

## **Shays Turns To GOP Big Gun**

### **Democrats Say Hastert Fundraiser Visit Belies Maverick Image**

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WASHINGTON -- Rep. Christopher Shays, who fancies himself one of Washington's most outspoken mavericks, today will turn to one of the Capitol's leading establishment Republicans - House Speaker Dennis Hastert - to help him raise money and gain much-needed political momentum.

Democrats are using the fundraiser at Greenwich's swank Belle Haven Club as proof that despite Shays' constant claims of independence - including this spring's claim that Hastert's chief lieutenant, Tom DeLay, was an "absolute embarrassment" - the 4th District Republican badly needs his Republican Party and its leaders.

Hastert, R-Ill., will headline an event where about 90 people are expected to pay either \$1,000 for lunch or \$2,100 to attend a reception.

"This reinforces our view that Chris Shays depends on the Republican Party and the party depends on Chris Shays," said Leslie O'Brien, Connecticut Democratic Party executive director.

"I'd like the party to depend on me more," Shays laughed in response. "I have very good relations with the speaker and the leadership in general."

Shays, an 18-year House veteran, faced the toughest re-election race of his career last year against Westport First Selectwoman Diane G. Farrell, who is expected to challenge Shays again in 2006.

O'Brien and fellow Democrats are gleefully using today's event to show how Shays tries to be all things to all voters - a devoted Republican when it comes to seeking donors and voting on fiscal and defense issues, but a maverick on other issues and therefore unable to wield much power.

The state Democrats - whose chairwoman, Nancy DiNardo, was Farrell's treasurer last year - last week put together a three-page list of how Shays and Hastert voted together or agreed on such key issues as Social Security reform and highway funding.

The Democrats' finger-pointing was somewhat selective, though - they did not mention how Shays has long been a loyal Republican on the war on Iraq, Medicare prescription drug benefits and on imposing fiscal discipline.

One example the party gave to highlight the Shays-Hastert kinship is a March vote on a House transportation bill that Democrats said provided "33 percent less highway funding" than the Senate transportation bill.

What Democrats don't say is that the House approved the bill overwhelmingly - and Democratic Reps. John B. Larson and Rosa L. DeLauro joined Shays in voting yes.

Shays' forces are unapologetic about having Hastert in town. "The fact that the speaker is coming in for this event is positive," said state GOP Chairman William Hamzy.

Shays and Hastert have been friendly for a long time. "They don't always agree," said Michael Sohn, Shays' campaign manager, "but they've had a good relationship."

They were congressional classmates; both entered the House in 1987 representing upscale, largely suburban districts.

When the House had to scramble to find a new speaker in December 1998, Shays quickly began lobbying hard for his friend - an effort that was also a defensive move, since next in line were top House leaders Richard Armey and Tom DeLay of Texas, neither of whom counted Shays as a friend.

Appearing in the district with Hastert is a good political move, said Amy Walter, a Washington analyst specializing in House races, because it reminds the Republican voters that their congressman still has close ties to the GOP.

"If you're going to bring someone in to placate the Republican base, who better than the speaker? He's non-controversial," said Walter.

But events like today's also invite another discussion, one that shows a different side of Shays. Can he, Democrats ask, be effective if he's an outcast among many members of his own party?

It was Shays this spring who broke with other Republicans and called on DeLay to step down because of allegations of unethical behavior. It was Shays who defied Hastert, DeLay and other House leaders in 2002 and brought campaign finance reform to the House floor, where it eventually passed.

The leaders were so miffed they denied Shays a key committee chairmanship, and his icy

relationship with DeLay almost assures he won't get any influential title for the foreseeable future.

Shays, who regularly opposes the leadership on gay rights, abortion and other social issues, points to such brushoffs, as well as decidedly non-traditional Republican stands on those social issues, as proof of his independence.

But if he's such a gadfly and a moderate, ask Democrats, why is Shays willing to appear in the same town with the man who's arguably the most powerful Republican on Capitol Hill in order to raise money?

"Hastert's appearance confirms what we've known all along - that as much as he wants to deny it, Congressman Shays is in the pocket of the Republican leadership," said Sarah Feinberg, spokeswoman for the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee. "He votes with them all the time."

Among their evidence was that Shays and Hastert "bowed to White House opposition and voted against the original proposal creating an independent commission to examine intelligence failures surrounding the Sept. 11 attacks."

The White House had been reluctant to create the commission, but Shays, who has been close to families of Sept. 11, 2001, victims, wanted a panel that would be perceived as nonpolitical.

He did join other Republicans in a largely party-line vote to defeat one of the efforts to create a commission he thought would be too political. A compromise was reached, the commission was created, and Shays and most others voted for the measure.

Shays recalled how he was a key broker in trying to forge a compromise on the issue. "They're going after the thing I'm most proud of," he said.

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