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Democratic presidential field crowds

Gephardt announces second candidacy, Moseley-Braun says it's time to take the 'men only' sign off

By Ron Fournier
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

By Will Lester
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ST. LOUIS — Rep. Dick Gephardt, a 26-year veteran of Congress and the former House Democratic leader, announced his second candidacy for president Wednesday, pledging to repeal President Bush's tax cuts to finance "quality health coverage for everyone who works in America."

The eighth candidate in a growing Democratic field, Gephardt sought to distinguish himself from lesser-known rivals for the party's nomination. "I think experience matters," said the Missouri lawmaker who sought the presidency in 1988.

"I'm not the political flavor of the month. I'm not the flashiest candidate around," he said. "But the fight for working families is in my bones."

Gephardt's health care plan, which would give billions of dollars in tax credits to businesses and require them to invest the money in employee insurance benefits, is the cornerstone of an ambitious policy agenda designed to win what he called "the contest of ideas."

It is his answer to critics who say other Democratic candidates have more momentum or charisma, aides said.

Addressing at least 500 friends, family and supporters at his former elementary school's gymnasium, Gephardt said, "Here in the home of my values, here at the heart of the American dream, I announce my candidacy for the president of the United States."

"I'm running for president because I'm tired of leadership that's left us isolated in the world, and stranded here at



Gephardt declares candidacy
Name Richard A. Gephardt
Birth date Jan. 31, 1941
Home St. Louis
Career Practicing attorney, 1965-77; St. Louis city alderman, 1971-1976; U.S. House, 1977-present; House Democratic leader, 1994-2002
Family Wife, Jane; three children
Quote "That's the Bush record — a nation with zero job creation, racked with debt, unprepared for the economy of the future. A nation that's growing apart, when we should be growing together."

SOURCE: Associated Press AP

home," Gephardt said. While saying he supports Bush's efforts to disarm Iraq, without the United Nations if necessary, Gephardt said the president's go-it-alone rhetoric has alienated allies. "We must lead the world instead of merely bullying it," he said.

Gephardt, 62, ran for president in 1988 but his candidacy fizzled for lack of money after he won the Democratic caucuses in Iowa. He took over the unenviable job of minority leader after the 1994 elections that gave Republicans control of the House for the first time in 40 years.

It was Gephardt who handed the gavel to Newt Gingrich, officially transferring power to the conservative Republican on what he later called one of the worst days of his life. He failed to return the Democrats to majority status in four closely fought elections between 1996 and 2002.

WASHINGTON — Former Illinois Sen. Carol Moseley-Braun, the first black woman elected to the U.S. Senate, said Wednesday that in times of trouble, a woman president could move the nation "toward peace, prosperity and progress."

Moseley-Braun, who has already made campaign appearances in Iowa, New Hampshire and South Carolina, filed papers establishing a presidential exploratory committee Wednesday afternoon, according to the Federal Election Commission.

Describing herself as a "peace dove and budget hawk," she criticized the Bush administration for its push for war against Iraq, arguing that the policy had alienated allies and "frittered away" the goodwill overseas that the nation had engendered after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11.

She also assailed the president's tax cut, saying that budget deficits are a major concern and "we have no right" to force our children to pay for tax rebates today.

The 55-year-old Moseley-Braun, the only woman in the presidential race, said, "in these difficult times for America, I believe woman have a contribution to make to move our country toward peace, prosperity and progress."

Moseley-Braun is the second black woman to seek the presidency. Former New York Rep. Shirley Chisholm ran for the Democratic nomination in 1972.

On Tuesday, in a speech at the University of Chicago Law

Civil rights leader to run for president

Former Illinois Sen. Carol Moseley-Braun, the nation's first black female senator, plans to make a bid for the 2004 Democratic presidential nomination.

Carol Moseley-Braun
Born: Chicago, Aug. 16, 1947
Education: B.A. political science, University of Illinois, 69; J.D., University of Chicago Law School, 72
Career: Illinois House of Representatives, 78-88; Cook County Recorder of Deeds, 88-92; U.S. Senator from Illinois, 92-98; U.S. Ambassador to New Zealand for Clinton administration
Major issues: Civil rights, women's rights, health care, education, gun control

SOURCES: W.H. Wilson Co.; Associated Press

school, Moseley-Braun said it was time to "take the 'men only' sign" off the White House. Moseley-Braun served one term in the Senate, losing her bid for re-election in 1998. Early in her term in the Senate, she drew national attention after taking on Jesse Helms, R-N.C., when he sought to renew a design patent for the United Daughters of the Confederacy's emblem that included the Confederate flag.

But she was criticized for splitting an inheritance from her mother that should have gone to reimburse Medicaid; for allegations that her campaign manager and then-fiance Kgosis Matthews sexually harassed workers; for a monthlong, post-election trip to Africa with Matthews; and accusations that campaign funds were used for jewelry and fancy clothes.

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FCC moving to give state authority over local phones

WASHINGTON (AP) — A weeklong delay in a vote on phone competition rules apparently did not resolve deep divisions at the Federal Communications Commission over rolling back requirements for companies to share access to transmission networks.

On Feb. 10, FCC Chairman Michael Powell postponed the vote until Thursday, hopeful he could win over a third commissioner on the five-member panel for a plan favored by the regional Bells — BellSouth Corp., SBC Communications, Verizon Communications and Qwest Communications.

Negotiations continued Wednesday, but industry officials and observers said they expected no change in the commissioners' positions.

The vote is the commission's last chance to meet a court-ordered deadline to rewrite the policy before existing rules are struck down. Courts have rejected the agency's last two attempts to revise the rules, saying they failed to meet the requirements of a 1996 telecommunications law.

At issue is a requirement that the Bell companies lease parts of their local networks to competitors such as AT&T Corp. and WorldCom Inc. at discount rates. The policy was adopted seven years ago to encourage companies to compete in the Bells' markets.

The Bell companies say they are at a competitive disadvantage because the FCC requires that they rent parts of their systems to competitors at a discount rate, which allows competitors to undercut their prices.

AT&T and other companies say without

the rule they cannot offer consumers an alternative for local phone service.

Government announces plan for arming pilots

WASHINGTON (AP) — Commercial pilots who want to carry guns in the cockpit would have to undergo psychological and background checks before being selected for a five-day training program under a plan announced Wednesday by the Transportation Security Administration.

The first group of 48 pilots could begin training in a month, the agency said. It said the plan is preliminary and could change between now and Tuesday's deadline for the agency to issue rules for the program, which was approved by Congress last year.

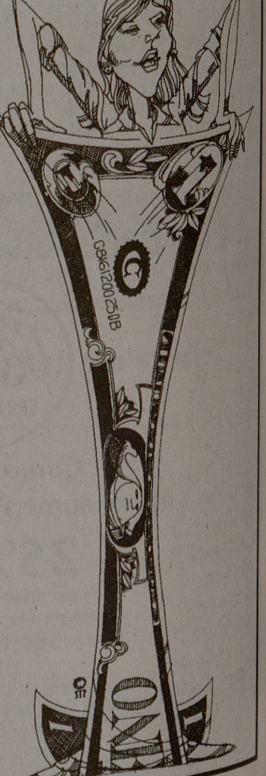
The plan calls for the training to include marksmanship, lessons on legal policies and defensive tactics, agency spokesman Robert Johnson said.

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