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GOP House leader steps down

WASHINGTON (AP) — A top House Republican resigned his leadership post Monday, complaining that the GOP hierarchy was becoming more "hard right" and hurting the party.

Rep. Steve Gunderson of Wisconsin, chief deputy whip for four years, said the new GOP House leaders do not represent "mainstream Republicans."

"I suspect that much of their agenda will be rigid confrontation and opposition, a strategy that simply does not suit my style of political cooperation," Gunderson said.

Gunderson has been a deputy to House Republican Whip Newt Gingrich of Georgia, the number two minority leader. Gingrich declined comment on Gunderson's resignation.

Others within the GOP's shrinking moderate wing voiced similar complaints a month ago with

the election of the new House leadership. GOP lawmakers ousted a moderate — Californian Jerry Lewis — as chair of the House Republican Conference and instead picked a combative conservative, Texas Rep. Richard Arme.

Arme at the time said he viewed "confrontation as a tool," prompting moderate Republicans to complain that if the House GOP took an outsider, combative and conservative role, the party would be forever doomed to minority status.

"This is as all-white, all-male, conservative leadership as this party has had in my lifetime," Gunderson said in an interview Monday.

The House Republicans' turmoil is similar to what's going on in the national Republican Party as the GOP tries to figure out what went wrong with this year's White House loss. Some moderates think the religious right played too big a role.

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Politician hired by his successor

WASHINGTON (AP) — At noon Tuesday, David O'B. Martin will go from congressman to congressional aide — on the staff of the man elected to succeed him.

Martin, a Republican from Morristown, N.Y., has been hired by Rep.-elect John McHugh as a special aide monitoring the federal base closing commission. McHugh said Martin's salary will be \$75,000 a year — more than half his 1992 congressional salary.

"I feel clearly I've hired the best possible staff person available in the country," McHugh said Monday.

President Bush wins 'Medal of Mediocrity'

CASCADE, Colo. (AP) — President Bush was awarded the Millard Fillmore Society's tongue-in-cheek "Medal of Mediocrity" on Monday, beating out runners-up Woody Allen, Vice President Dan Quayle and the U.S. Postal Service.

The group said Bush clinched its 1992 award when his popularity plummeted from a record high after the Persian Gulf War, and he lost the Nov. 3 presidential election to Bill Clinton.

"Fresh from the flutter of a million yellow ribbons and a 90 percent approval rate, President Bush belly-flopped like a wounded swan into the lake of American despair," said Phil Arkow, vice president of the nationwide group.

"He finally 'got it' on Nov. 3 when his 'vision thing' led to Bush league bumbling in the ballot box," Arkow said.

The award, established in 1980, is given each year about the time of Fillmore's birthday (Jan. 7). It honors "mediocrity to combat the rising tide of overachievers," Arkow said.

Fillmore, the nation's 13th president, took office when his predecessor, Zachary Taylor, died in 1850. He was defeated in 1852 and finished a distant third when he ran again in 1856.

Quayle, who won the award in 1988, was named a runner-up this year for his misspelling of the word potato during a New Jersey spelling bee.

Allen was cited for the very-public troubles in his private life, and the U.S. Postal Service was singled out for "subjecting consumers to the expensive debate on which Elvis Presley stamp they want to be overcharged for."

Other previous winners have included announcer Ed McMahon, Britain's Prince Charles and Princess Diana, former baseball star Pete Rose and singer Boy George.

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— Phil Arkow,
vice president of
the Millard Fillmore Society

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