

Lacking information, committee approves course



NATIONAL

ed on an incomplete description of how the course would be financed and promoted, documents indicate.

The documents are important because the speaker plans to go on the offensive this week, releasing the ethics committee letter that conditionally approved the tax-deductible financing and teaching of the course, "Renewing American Civilization."

The Aug. 3, 1993, committee letter, obtained by The Associated Press, was carefully and narrowly crafted to approve only the tax-deductible educational activity described to the committee by Gingrich, who was then Republican whip. Information on Gingrich's contacts with the ethics committee came from congressional sources who declined to be identified publicly.

Gingrich described the course in letters he sent the committee May 12 and July 21, 1993, also obtained by the Associated

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House ethics committee, in giving Rep. Newt Gingrich R-Ga., approval in 1993 to teach his college course, acted

Press. Those letters did not mention the central role in promoting and financing the course by Gingrich's political committee — GOPAC.

In the letters Gingrich promised there would be no mass mailings, although documents show GOPAC did such mailings. Gingrich wrote that the course would be non-partisan and not attack President Clinton. Yet GOPAC documents described the course's goal as recruiting 200,000 conservative activists and in some cases bitterly denouncing Clinton.

The GOPAC effort was under way for more than two months before Gingrich sought approval for the course. Gingrich, who began teaching the course in late 1993, gave his last lecture at Reinhardt College in Waleska, Ga., on Saturday. He said he has 20 hours of lectures on videotape that can be distributed to teach others about his philosophy of government.

The ethics committee caught up with the GOPAC role when the course was challenged as a partisan activity — not eligible for tax-deductible financing — in a complaint filed in September 1994. Former Democratic Rep. Ben Jones of Georgia, who filed the complaint, provided dozens of GOPAC documents. Two months later, Jones lost his bid to unseat

Gingrich from his suburban Atlanta district.

On Oct. 31, 1994, then-committee chairman Rep. James McDermott, D-Wash. and the ranking Republican — former Rep. Fred Grandy of Iowa — wrote Gingrich about his omissions. They said the documents supplied by Jones "reflect the involvement of GOPAC and GOPAC employees in developing and raising funds for the course. GOPAC's role in seeking funding for the course was not disclosed to the committee in your letters."

The committee then cited some two dozen of the GOPAC documents, all written before the panel approved the course — several dated before Gingrich initially contacted the committee for approval.

The committee leaders also said the documents "raise questions as to whether the course was ... exclusively educational in nature, or ... partisan political activity intended to benefit Republican candidates."

Gingrich spokesman Tony Blankley said Sunday that the GOPAC role was not relevant because the course itself was non-partisan.

"The *New York Times* recently cited academics who characterized the class as not partisan," Blankley said. "Anybody who

sees all 20 hours of the class would have to agree with that proposition."

"If the class is non-partisan, though ideological, all of the references [to GOPAC] are irrelevant to the point Newt was making to the committee: that the class will not be a partisan activity."

Blankley said Gingrich's promise not to do mass mailings referred only to taxpayer-financed mailings, not to mailings paid from private funds. And he added that Gingrich's pledge not to attack Clinton meant he would not do so in the class — a promise the speaker has kept.

In the committee's 1993 approval letter, McDermott and Grandy wrote Gingrich that since he said he would not be compensated, he did not need committee approval to teach.

Gingrich's request to present course material in floor speeches was viewed as "well within your official prerogatives."

The committee also approved soliciting tax-deductible donations, provided the fund raising followed tax law — which allows use of tax-deductible donations for education, but not for partisan activity.

The fund-raising approval also had these conditions: "that no official resources are used, no official endorsement is implied, and no direct personal benefit results."

Monterey peninsula flooded by storms

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Floods washed out all roads into the Monterey Peninsula on Sunday as waterlogged California struggled to recover from storms that battered two-thirds of the state.

At least eight people died in five days of flooding, and five more are missing after driving into a rain-swollen creek when an Interstate 5 bridge collapsed in central California.

Sunday was rain-free for most of California. The National Weather Service said showers were expected again Monday, but not the downpours of last week.

In Monterey County, thousands of people left their homes overnight as the Salinas and Pajaro rivers inundated some of the nation's richest farmlands, the site of John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*.

The flooding cut off the communities around Monterey, about 100 miles south of San Francisco.

"At this point all roads are closed — the Monterey Peninsula is literally isolated," said county emergency Officer Al Friedrich.

California Highway Patrol officials said roads may remain closed until Monday.

Many people were rousted from their homes early Sunday

as flood waters rushed into low-lying riverside communities overnight.

"Police went down the streets with their sirens telling people to please leave," Friedrich said. "It's a scary thing to hear in the dark."

In the farming town of Pajaro, residents were in shock.

"People walked in here in tears. They looked like they were caught completely off-guard," said Salvation Army Maj. Joan Souders. "We saw people walk in here with no shoes, no socks or with water lines up to their thighs."

From the Oregon state line down to Mexico, rain, wind and snow wreaked havoc across 40 of California's 58 counties.

"It's the most widespread geographic storm in California in this century," said James Bailey of the state-federal Flood Operations Center in Sacramento.

The storms may also be the most expensive in California history, he added, costing up to \$2 billion in a state already burdened with January's Pacific storms, as well as a series of earthquakes, fires and mudslides.

In Coalinga, about 50 miles west of Fresno, teams were back at the scene of a fatal I-5 road bridge collapse on California's main north-south freeway.

Teens shoot woman in head, steal vehicle

MONTCLAIR, N.J. (AP) — Two teenagers shot a 65-year-old woman in the head as she was pulling her car into her driveway, left her on the ground and took off with the vehicle, police said Saturday. They were captured hours later.

The woman, Shelia Gillespie, was in a coma Saturday, authorities said.

A police officer saw her 1990 Honda Accord several hours after it was taken from her West Caldwell home on Friday night. As the vehicle left a gas station with two youths inside, the officer followed. Another picked up the pursuit as the car sped through Mountclair before jumping a curb and hitting a hedge, said Police Chief Thomas J. Russo.

After the crash, the youths fled on foot.

Karl E. Bethel, 19, was found hiding under a backyard deck, Russo said. A 17-year-old, who was not identified because of his age, was arrested later at his home.

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