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News - Wednesday, January 8, 2003

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Musgrave starts tour in Congress

By FAITH BREMNER

Gannett News Service

WASHINGTON -- Having spent four years on the Fort Morgan school board and eight in the Colorado Legislature, Marilyn Musgrave has been sworn into office a few times.

But her swearing-in ceremony Tuesday as Colorado's new 4th District congresswoman topped all the others. As family members looked on from the balcony, Musgrave recited the oath of office on the floor of the House of Representatives with 434 other voting members. Her new chief-of-staff's 4-year-old son, Collin Short, stood by her side.

"This is the big one," Musgrave said afterwards, admitting to shedding a few tears of joy. "I kept it together pretty well."

But her awe of the place and the history that precedes her did not intimidate her. On her first day on the job, she decided that she'd give a speech from the floor, soon. She said she doesn't yet know what she'll talk about.

The 53-year-old is proud that she grew



MUSGRAVE

Marilyn Musgrave

Age: 53.

Education: Bachelor's degree in Social Studies, Colorado State University.

Family: Married to Steve Musgrave; four children; four grandchildren.

Political experience: Fort Morgan school board, 1990-94; Colorado House of Representatives, 1994-98; Colorado Senate, 1998-2002.



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up in a poor family in Colorado and was a stay-at-home mom who raised four children. Now she's in Congress, and it will be the first time she has lived outside her home state.

"It indicates what a wonderful country we have," Musgrave said.

She calls herself a conservative Republican who believes in the party's platform and who likes people. Musgrave said she doesn't have any plans to introduce legislation. She gets her committee assignments Thursday and she's guessing she'll be placed on Agriculture and Education -- the committees her predecessor, Bob Schaffer, sat on.

Musgrave said she's keeping in touch with Fort Collins Republican Schaffer, who retired because of a self-imposed three-term limit. Musgrave hired several of Schaffer's former staffers and respects his advice.

"I think the world of Bob," she said.

She's already fielding calls from her constituents who tell her they're worried about the economy, the drought and national defense.

Her 22-year-old son, John, is in the Navy, stationed in the Mediterranean where he repairs submarines, so she's more sensitive than most House members to the potential human cost of war. She talked to her brother-in-law, a retired Air Force officer, about North Korea. She talked to her mother, whose brothers served in World War II, one of them in a prisoner-of-war camp, about the horrors of war.

"We are living in very interesting times in this country, very serious times," she said.

Her husband, Steve, an insurance agent, admitted he's a little worried about having his wife work in a building that could be targeted by terrorists. There has been speculation that the hijacked jet that crashed in Pennsylvania on Sept. 11, 2001, was headed for the Capitol.

Steve said he accepts that risk, just as he accepts the risk his son, John, faces every day serving his country.

"We can run from terror or we can stand up and do what's right," he said.

SWORN: House Speaker Dennis Hastert, R-Ill., left, administers a mock House oath to Rep. Marilyn Musgrave, R-Colo., Tuesday on Capitol Hill, after the House was officially sworn into the 108th Congress.

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