

Musgrave pushes agenda in Congress

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WASHINGTON — Four months into the job, Marilyn Musgrave stood nose to nose with one of the House's most powerful members.

The Republican congresswoman had rallied against a gas tax hike backed by House Transportation Committee Chairman Don Young.

She felt his wrath as he barked, spit flying from his mouth and finger wagging, demanding to know how she proposed paying for \$1 billion in projects she wanted in her rural Colorado district.

Musgrave was taken aback, but did not back down. "I never got the handbook on being a freshman and not doing anything controversial," she said.

When she isn't fighting Young, Musgrave is pushing her plan to amend the Constitution to prohibit states from recognizing gay marriage. It is a campaign that has plucked her from freshman obscurity and thrust her into the role of national spokeswoman on the topic.



Musgrave

In many ways, the amendment is a reflection of the conservative beliefs she has exercised for decades.

For example, she wants to require parental notification for a minor seeking an abortion, help parents homeschool children and rescind a provision wage law for highway projects.

She has resisted pressure from party leaders and even direct lobbying by President Bush on a prescription drug plan passed earlier this year.

Her positions have made her something of a banner-carrier for the new conservative blood in the House.

"I'm sure the leadership would prefer that she sit back and learn the role of a freshman, but for our part we're grateful she's moving forward and putting principle ahead of politics," said Connie Mackey of the conservative Family Research Council.

Musgrave grew up in northeastern Colorado and graduated from Colorado State University in Fort Collins about 64 miles north of Denver. She and her husband own a hay baling company.

The mother of four was a teacher who grew frustrated with what she called a lack of academic rigor in the classroom. She won a seat on the Fort Morgan school board in 1990.