

# NATION

## House 'radical right' summit has conservatives crying foul

By Cheryl Wetzstein  
and Laurie Kellman  
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The "Radical Right Task Force," a closed-door summit of House Democrats, yesterday evoked calls of religious bigotry and misuse of public funds from Republicans and conservative groups barred from the meeting at the Capitol.

"This is a pathetic action of the Democratic leadership of Congress to continue their assault on people of faith and people who want to change Congress," said Rep. Bill Paxon of New York, chairman of the National Republican Congressional Committee.

"Why are they meeting on the taxpayer's dime to develop strategies against people of faith being involved in the political process?" asked Marshall Wittmann, director of legislative affairs for the Christian Coalition. "I'm sure there's plenty of rooms at the DNC [Democratic National Committee]."

The meeting was arranged by Rep. Vic Fazio of California, vice chairman of the House Democratic Caucus.

"Given Fazio's well-publicized anti-Christian sentiment, these meetings smack of religious bigotry," said Andrea Sheldon, director of government affairs for the Traditional Values Coalition.

But Rep. James P. Moran, Virginia Democrat, who attended the 40-minute meeting, said it was "to discuss the issues that the radical right has focused on and how it will affect the legislative agenda for the rest of the year."

"We think that religion should not be involved in politics," said Mr. Moran, who is running for a third term. "We're trying to figure out how we can dissuade other churches from getting involved in partisan politics."

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something to do with religion are being targeted by these religious coalitions for partisan purposes," he said, adding that the "radical right" is partly responsible for yesterday's scuttling of President Clinton's anti-crime bill.

"They have a responsibility to define who is the 'radical right,'" Mr. Paxon said, adding that the task force's agenda and goals should be likewise clarified.

On Tuesday, Mr. Fazio sent a memo inviting "Democratic colleagues" to the meeting, which was to include "a general update and discussion on recent Radical Right activity."

The meeting was held in a House conference room in the Capitol and was attended by Democratic Reps. Louise M. Slaughter of New York, Mike Synar of Oklahoma, Richard J. Durbin of Illinois, Dick Swett of New Hampshire, Cynthia McKinney of Georgia, David Price of North Carolina and Sam Farr of California, among others.

Democratic House staffers guarded the door to the "members only" meeting, and, by special request, Capitol Hill police patrolled the halls and checked identification badges.

Members of the Traditional Values Coalition and the Christian Coalition waited outside the meeting door.

A spokesman for Mr. Farr, who won a special election for the seat vacated by White House Chief of Staff Leon Panetta, said "the main thrust of the meeting" was "non-profit groups vs. advocacy groups" and "When do [non-profits] cross the line and become advocacy groups?"

Nonprofits receive tax exemptions under the law, whereas advocacy groups do not.

According to House ethics rules, use of "official resources" for campaign purposes is prohibited and use of meeting rooms is restricted to "congressionally related purposes."

In recent months, many Democratic leaders — including Mr. Clinton, Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders, outgoing DNC Chairman David Wilhelm and Mr. Fazio — have denounced broadcasters and groups of the "radical right."

### CORRECTION

A quote about personal security details being misused as "glorified gofers" was incorrectly attributed in yesterday's editions of The Washington Times. The remark was made by Rep. Jack Kingston, Georgia Republican.