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Statement from House Speaker J. Dennis Hastert

(Washington, D.C.) Speaker of the House J. Dennis Hastert (R-IL) today issued the following statement:

“As a former wrestling coach, I know what it is like when your team takes second place in the state tournament. It hurts. And so it is with politics.

“This morning I called Nancy Pelosi to congratulate her. At the beginning of the next Congress she will make history as the first female Speaker of the House. Her achievement follows from a lot of hard work and determination, and I respect that.

“Now that the Democrats have won the House, they have a huge responsibility to help govern this nation. We are at war, and what is at stake goes to the very nature of our democracy. We can and should have a vigorous debate about how we conduct the war. But that debate must rest on a mutual understanding that our enemy is ruthless and seeks to destroy our way of life, and that we must ultimately be victorious in this battle.

“Likewise, the Democrats now have a responsibility to work with our President to provide homeland security -- and to ensure a continuation of the economic prosperity that has improved the lives of so many working Americans.

“Many pundits will analyze why the Democrats won and why the Republicans lost—obviously I wish my party had won. I take some comfort in the fact that a majority of the winning candidates ran on a platform of common sense conservatism, be they Republican or Democrat. That bodes well for the future of our nation.

“Finally, I want to thank all of my colleagues, friends, and constituents for all the support they have given me over the years. It has been an honor and a great personal privilege for this old wrestling coach to be able to serve the American people as their Speaker.

MORE, MORE, MORE

“The men and women of the Republican Conference in the House are dedicated public servants. I can think of no higher honor than to have been entrusted by them with the Speaker’s gavel in four consecutive Congresses. Together we accomplished many good things for the American people and together we will always be proud of those accomplishments.

“The Republican leader in the 110th Congress will have the responsibility to emphasize conservative values and reform principles. I will not seek this role, but will support our leader to the best of my ability as I return to the full-time task of representing the people of the 14th district of Illinois who have honored me 11 times with the privilege of serving them in the House of Representatives.”

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