

Angle, Walters

## Not your average fund raiser

WASHINGTON (NEA) — The political fund raiser, a seasonal entertainment designed to separate invited guests from their money, is typically an event to be endured rather than enjoyed.

But contributors to a little-publicized May 6 Republican dinner in lavish Palm Springs, Calif., got a good deal more for their money than the usual self-serving speeches and pressed cardboard steak.

The admission price was relatively steep — \$1,000 per couple — but those who attended probably viewed it as a bargain. Early arrivals, for instance, had a chance to play golf with former President Gerald R. Ford and veteran pro Billy Casper.

The guests then enjoyed cocktails in the back yard of Ford's new Palm Springs home, and a buffet dinner on the lawn of Ford's neighbor, Leonard K. Firestone, former ambassador to Belgium and one of Richard Nixon's leading fund raisers.

Proceeds from the event were earmarked for the campaigns of GOP Sens. Howard H. Baker Jr. of Tennessee and John G. Tower of Texas, both up for re-election this year.

Tower missed his own party because the Texas primary was held the same day, but Baker attended along with Sens. S.I. Hayakawa, R-Calif., and Harrison H. Schmitt, R-N.M.

Guests not interested in mingling with the political celebrities could rub shoulders with a Hollywood delegation that included producer Otto Preminger and actresses Eva Gabor and Joey Heatherton.

The political organizer who persuaded Ford to open his home for a fund raising party for the first time was Brad O'Leary, former executive director of the Texas Republican Party who now heads a Washington-based campaign consulting firm called The Management Group.

Both Tower and Baker have retained the O'Leary firm, which specializes in statewide campaigns for GOP politicians, to provide financial management services this year. The choice appears to be paying off. Gross receipts of the Ford party alone were estimated at \$140,000.

### Incipient incumbent slippage

The May 6 Texas primary, by the way, offered the season's first hard evidence that incumbent members of Congress may have more to worry about this year than they like to believe.

Three-term Rep. Dale Milford, D-Texas, was defeated by liberal Dallas attorney Martin Frost while eleven-term Rep. John Young, D-Texas, was forced into a runoff June 3. Young, who figured in the congressional sex scandal of a couple years back, will face State Rep. Joe Wyatt.

Republicans, who had already

targeted Texas for special effort because six Democratic House members are retiring there, were heartened by the signs of incumbent slippage.

Up until now, national GOP strategists have focused most of their attention on open seats. But they are beginning to think incumbent Democrats may be more vulnerable than suspected.

The next test will come May 16 in Pennsylvania, where more than a dozen incumbents (all but three of whom are Democrats) face primary opposition.

### Small fear of Arizona recall

Sen. Dennis DeConcini, D-Ariz., whose controversial "reservation" almost scuttled the Panama Canal treaties, remains confident that a conservative recall campaign against him back home will flop.

Organizers of the drive claim to have collected some 50,000 of the 185,000 petition signatures they will need by July in order to put the recall on the November ballot, but no independent source has verified this figure.

"There's not a snowball's chance in hell that they will succeed," an aide to DeConcini said. "It didn't work against Mo Udall last year, and it won't work against us."

The Kingman