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Congressional candidate Steve Van Grack runs toward Capital Hill during a "Run for Congress" tactic Monday morning. The Rockville attorney and former city mayor hopes to unseat Rep. Connie Morella.

Steve Van Grack 'runs' for Congress — literally

by Anna Joyce
Staff Writer

Steve Van Grack put his own spin on the concept of hitting the campaign trail.

In the race for Maryland's 8th District Congressional seat, the Democratic nominee was peeing a nine-minute mile as he jogged from Chevy Chase Circle to the reflecting pool near the U.S. Capitol on Monday morning.

There, he signed his own "Contract With Montgomery County For America."

Wearing a blue "Steve Van Grack Run To Congress" T-shirt and accompanied by supporter Betty Smith, the former Rockville Mayor paused briefly to shake hands and occasionally came to a complete stop while awaiting a walk signal.

"I'm doing this to draw attention to the fact that Connie has signed a document that the people of Montgomery County won't agree with," he said during a brief breather at the corner of Connecticut Avenue and R Street in Dupont Circle.

Van Grack was referring to Republican incumbent Congresswoman Constance Morella, who is running — although not literally in her case — for reelection.

Morella recently signed the "Contract With America," master-minded by House Minority Whip Newt Gingrich.

Assuming that Republicans will

control the House after next week's election, the document pledges to bring issues like term limits, a balanced budget amendment and increased defense spending to the floor for debate.

While she would not vote for certain issues in the contract, like defense spending hikes, Morella said it would serve to get bills that have been "bottled up in committee to the floor for full and open debate."

Morella noted that the contract includes an open rule policy so that bills could be amended; 71 percent of the bills in this Congress were restricted, she said.

Van Grack had a different perspective on the Republican contract: "That's not being real because if they wanted to debate they would say 'let's debate military spending.' But, they're saying 'let's debate increased military spending.'"

In his contract, Van Grack pledged to work for and support reducing the federal deficit, the public debt and government spending to try to "bring about major change" by advocating more resources for law enforcement and gun control; and to support political and Congressional reforms.

Van Grack, 46, used the same campaign tactic in his 1987 race for mayor of Rockville as he jogged an eight-minute mile down Rockville Pike.