

Democrat hopes run to Congress will capture seat

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By Lisa Nevans
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Montgomery County Democrat Steven Van Grack hopes to break from the pack today when he runs to Congress from the district he hopes to represent.

When he crosses the finish line, Mr. Van Grack plans to unveil his own "Contract With Montgomery County for America," a response to the much-publicized "Contract with America," signed by his opponent, Republican Rep. Connie Morella.

The former Rockville mayor, 46, says he will be the first-ever congressional candidate or incumbent to run from his district to the Capitol.

"I'm glad I'm not from California," he joked.

Mr. Van Grack admits his run is a ploy to get a little media attention for his low budget, underdog race against Montgomery's most popular politician.

It seems to be working. People and Newsweek magazines have expressed interest in covering the 7½-mile run, as have several television stations, Mr. Van Grack said.

Mr. Van Grack also ran during a previous run for office. In his 1985 mayoral bid, he ran two miles down Rockville Pike to show a runner could travel faster than a car down the clogged road.

Mr. Van Grack won the race against the car — aided by a tractor-trailer that blocked the



Rep. Connie Morella



Steven Van Grack

right lane — then beat the incumbent mayor and another challenger in the general election a week later.

The added publicity may boost his fund-raising efforts. The candidate has limited donations to his campaign to \$100 per person or organization. He said he has returned checks as large as \$500 and turned down offers of up to \$2,500, leaving him with less than \$5,000 in his campaign war chest.

The challenger has attacked Mrs. Morella for signing the Contract, saying she should not have signed it if she does not agree with all its provisions.

The Contract, signed by hundreds of Republican candidates

and incumbents, promises open debate within 100 days of the start of the next Congress on certain proposals, including term limits, a \$500-per-child tax credit, cutting the capital gains tax in half and more.

Like many of her Republican colleagues, Mrs. Morella has said she disagrees with some provisions of the Contract but signed it because she wants to open the process and bring the issues to debate. She could not be reached for comment yesterday.

Mr. Van Grack's contract will call for increased federal spending on crime prevention programs and campaign reform, including a \$100 limit on campaign contributions. He also will oppose tax incentives, tax credits, tax relief and tax cuts, "most of which benefit the rich," he said.