

"Today We Have Broken the Marble Ceiling"

By Lynn Sweet

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"For our daughters, and our granddaughters, today we have broken the marble ceiling," said Nancy Pelosi on Thursday after being sworn in as the first female speaker of the House.

Democrats celebrated taking control of the House and Senate, as Republicans adjusted to minority status.

Rep. Bobby Rush, who is also a minister, invoked the name of a heroine from the Bible as he cast a vote for Pelosi to be speaker.

"Just as the biblical Esther was called, there is another woman who was called for times such as these," Rush said.

The House chamber was packed with children, and the California Democrat sat through the vote making her speakership official with a mix of her six grandchildren and three kids belonging to Rep. Rahm Emanuel swirling around.

Rep. Jan Schakowsky and her 8-year-old granddaughter, Isabel Hart, both stood and said "Pelosi" at Schakowsky's turn of the roll call.

Hastert a quiet observer

At 1:43 p.m., Eastern time, Democrats hooted and applauded as the vote for speaker was called for Pelosi. In party-line votes, all 233 of the Democrats were for Pelosi and all of the 202 Republicans backed Rep. John Boehner (R-Ohio), who will be the minority leader.

Meanwhile, sitting in the last row on the Republican side, quietly observing, was former Speaker J. Dennis Hastert. He will be readjusting to life in the House as a rank-and-file member, sans plane, security detail, large staff, and with a pay cut of about \$44,000 -- the speaker gets \$212,000 a year.

When other Republicans started to clap politely for Pelosi, Hastert declined. Finally, he put his hands together for a few limp taps.

Rep. Don Manzullo went over to Hastert and reached up to give the bear of a man a hug.

Keeping their distance

Over on the Senate side, potential presidential rivals Sen. Barack Obama and Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-N.Y.) kept their distance from each other.

Obama was quite a handshaker, backslapper and schmoozer in the chamber, avoiding Clinton, sworn in for her second term, sitting quietly off to a side.

Watching from the visitors' gallery were former President Bill Clinton, daughter Chelsea and

Hillary's mother, Dorothy Rodham.

The former president stopped in the Senate Press Gallery earlier to use the men's room, and he found himself cornered by reporters. He referred questions about running for president to his wife.

Also seen

Freshmen Rep. Peter Roskam (R-Ill.) and Rep. Phil Hare (D-Ill.) being sworn in. ... In Pelosi's box in the House gallery: Carole King, Tony Bennett and Richard Gere.... Vice President Dick Cheney and former Vice President Walter Mondale nodding to each other as they passed in a Senate hallway.