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Beauprez, Musgrave feted in D.C. as new Colorado House members

By Bill McAllister and Mike Soraghan
 Denver Post Washington Bureau

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- If the doors at 1208 Longworth House Office Building seemed a bit shiny Tuesday, Rep. Marilyn Musgrave, R-Fort Morgan, had a good explanation.

She and some friends slipped into her new Capitol Hill office Monday and polished the woodwork and touched up the walls. "Sometimes it takes a woman to make it work," the former state legislator said as she marked her first day as a member of Congress.

"There's a lot to celebrate," said former U.S. Sen. Bill Armstrong earlier Tuesday as he hosted a Capitol Hill breakfast for Musgrave and Rep. Bob Beauprez, R-Arvada, the state's other newly elected lawmaker. The event reflected not only the clout Colorado gained with a seventh House member, but also Armstrong's continuing influence over the Colorado GOP.

"Here's the godfather of politics," exclaimed Rep. Scott McInnis, R-Grand Junction, as he introduced Armstrong, now a Denver mortgage executive, to a newcomer at the reception. The event drew all of the state's GOP lawmakers and Interior Secretary Gale Norton, a former Colorado attorney general who had spent the previous night editing a 300-page submission in her continuing court fight over Indian trust accounts.

It wasn't just the two newcomers who were making news.

Sen. Ben Nighthorse Campbell, R-Ignacio, disclosed he has tapped into a new political consulting firm for his 2004 re-election bid.

The two-term senator said he has hired a firm run by Cinamon Watson and Sean Tonner, key figures in Gov. Bill Owens' recent reelection, to help in his fundraising.

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The senator also said he plans to debut his new Freightliner truck in a Jan. 31 Durango parade. He plans to use the truck, with sleeping room for four, for state parades and campaign events.

Meanwhile, Beauprez's staff overcame its first crisis, securing two gallery seats for family members after finding there weren't enough passes for the formal swearing-in in the House chamber.

Both Beauprez and Musgrave spoke excitedly about their future in Congress. "It was great," Musgrave said after her swearing in.

Neither Beauprez nor Musgrave had received firm word about their committee assignments. Musgrave said she expects to be on agriculture and education, panels that are of major interest to voters in the sprawling 4th District.

Beauprez, who defeated Democrat Mike Feeley by 121 votes, hopes for a seat on transportation, a big issue in his suburban district, which needs more federal dollars.

Beauprez has been ribbed about his office, on the fifth floor of the Cannon House Office Building - unreachable by most elevators.

"When you walk up to the door and see your name, even if it is on the fifth floor of Cannon, you just say, 'Holy Cow!'" Beauprez said.

Added Beauprez chief of staff Sean Murphy: "I tell him it sure beats Mike Feeley's office."

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