

I N T R O D U C T I O N

“If Newt Gingrich had been run over by a truck in 1993, it is almost certain that there would not be a Republican majority in the House today. Few other congressional politicians have made such a difference in partisan history.”
—Michael Barone, November 1997

On Capitol Hill, like it or not, the 1990s was Newt Gingrich’s decade. Certainly he made a major public splash as GOP House leader, and who would deny that many of his much-noticed moves in that role were consequential? “Gingrich’s articulation of a Republican agenda, culminating in the September 1994 Contract with America; his avid recruitment of candidates; his continual assertion since his election to the leadership by two votes in March 1989, that Republicans could win a majority—without all these, Republicans would probably have made gains in the House elections in 1994, but would have fallen well short of a majority. And, with Bill Clinton winning re-election, they would not have made further gains in 1996.”¹ These claims are at least plausible, as would be others about the policy results of the Republican congressional takeover in 1994. In Gingrich, we have as good a case as we are likely to see of a member of Congress operating in the public sphere with consequence.²

1. The opening epigraph and this quotation are from Michael Barone, “Slender Is the Newt,” *National Review*, November 24, 1997, p. 28.

2. See David S. Broder, “Newt Gingrich’s Legacy: He’ll Be Gone, But the House of Representatives Is Unlikely to Ever Be the Same Again,” *Washington Post National*