

No \$1,000 a plate here

Musgrave keeps it low-key with visit to Longmont club

By Ben Ready

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LONGMONT — On Tuesday, Congresswoman Marilyn Musgrave hosted President Bush at a \$1,000-a-plate fundraiser in Denver, which earned her national media coverage and more than \$450,000 for her re-election campaign.

On Thursday, she was the guest of a handful of retired social and service club members in a back room at Longmont's Perkins Restaurant. The con-

stituents weren't necessarily donors, either.

"This is very comfortable," Musgrave said afterward, "but really not that different (from Tuesday's Bush-attended event). When I spoke to the group at the Brown Palace with the president, I spoke from the heart, without reading anything. And that's what I did here."

Dave Sonnesyn, a member of Longmont's branch of Sertoma — a service organization that helps clean up the St. Vrain Greenway and donates money to local programs for the speech- and hearing-im-

paired — said he invited Musgrave to speak to his group without really expecting an answer.

"I didn't think she'd have time to come see a little club like ours," Sonnesyn said. Though all but one of its 15 local members happen to be Republican, Sertoma doesn't push any political agenda.

Musgrave gave a 20-minute speech at about noon Thursday and answered questions for another 10 minutes. She touched on topics such as tightening

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Times-Call photo by Kristin Goode

Congresswoman Marilyn Musgrave, standing, speaks to the Longmont Sertoma club on Thursday at Perkins Restaurant and Bakery in Longmont.

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the federal budget, the expansion of Interstate 25, nursing shortages, her support for oil drilling in Alaska and a desire to crack down on illegal immigration.

"The American people expect us to secure our borders," Musgrave said. "There's a heavy cost of entitlements with illegal immigrants."

The longest part of her talk, however, centered on Iraq.

Musgrave said she was disheartened by increasing calls to pull the troops out of Iraq and "the liberal media's" efforts to portray the war as another Vietnam.

"I wonder what our troops think when they read some of this stuff in the paper," she said.

She also choked back tears as she recalled President Bush's visit Tuesday with a Colorado couple who lost their son in Iraq.

"Everyone expected me to ask her a tough question," said Sertoma's lone Democrat, Harry Holmes, who remained silent during Musgrave's visit. "I'm not here to embarrass any-

one. I support Angie Paccione. She'd be welcome here, too."

Paccione, a Democratic state representative from Fort Collins, is challenging Musgrave in 2006.

Nearly everyone else at the event, including former Longmont mayor Leona Stoecker and her husband, Bernie, a longtime member of Sertoma, praised Musgrave.

"She's an articulate and passionate person. She exudes trust," Leona Stoecker said. "As a woman, it's tough to be in a position where others can take potshots at you and not be intimidated."

Though she finds it difficult to get away from her responsibilities in Washington, Musgrave said it's essential for her to stay in touch with her constituents in the 4th Congressional District, regardless of their political leanings.

"Frankly, you just get a request from someone to come and don't know if (the audience) will be supportive or not," Musgrave said.

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