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## Former Congressman to Head Major Foundation Group

By Ian Wilhelm

Washington

The Council on Foundations, which represents more than 2,000 foundations in the United States, today named Steve Gunderson, a former Republican congressman from Wisconsin, as its new chief executive.

Mr. Gunderson, 54, will replace Dorothy S. Ridings, who announced her retirement last year after serving as head of the council since 1996.

Mr. Gunderson joins the council, a coalition of many of the nation's largest and wealthiest grant makers, just as members of Congress are expected to introduce proposals -- possibly as early as next month -- to tighten rules on nonprofit groups and foundations. Several lawmakers have charged that some foundation executives are paid too much money and that grant makers are spending too much on administrative expenses.

Maxwell King, vice chairman of the council's Board of Directors and president of the Heinz Endowments, in Pittsburgh, said Mr. Gunderson's Capitol Hill experience will be invaluable as the council seeks to influence lawmakers from both political parties as they consider new rules to govern charities and foundations.

"He has proven that he can work with people on both sides of the aisle very, very effectively," said Mr. King. "He's shown the kind of far-sighted and flexible approaches to public policy that we need and will benefit from in the philanthropic community."

Mr. Gunderson served eight terms in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1980 to 1996. While in office, he was considered a moderate Republican and concentrated primarily on legislation involving education, worker training, job creation and agriculture. He was also one of the first openly gay members of Congress.

### Lobbying in Washington

Since leaving public office nine years ago after he decided not to run for re-election, Mr. Gunderson has been the managing director of the Washington office of the Greystone Group, a lobbying group that is headquartered in Grand Rapids, Mich.

As a consultant, Mr. Gunderson has worked closely with several charities, but he admits that he has little experience with foundations. "I'm not fully up to speed on all the issues before the philanthropic community," he said.

During the six weeks before he officially starts his new position October 1, Mr. Gunderson said, he will be intensely studying grant makers and their operations to educate himself.

In addition, he said the issues of the foundation world are not that different from the ones he handled as a member of Congress. "When you look at the issues facing philanthropy today, so many of those issues are the issues that the Congress and the political arena have dealt with because we're trying to improve the quality of life in the public sector," he said. "Many of those issues are going to be transferable, and I'll be able to bring those skills with me."

Aside from his political background, Mr. Gunderson said his experience as a gay man who grew up in the Midwest will help him in his new job.

"My personal history is as diverse as the nation we seek to serve," he said. "As a gay man I know the importance in extending the road of full opportunity to every citizen."

Mr. Gunderson will receive \$340,000 a year, a salary comparable to the amount Ms. Ridings received, council officials said.

### **New Kellogg Foundation Head**

Several nonprofit officials applauded the council's choice, but Rick Cohen, executive director of the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy, a foundation watchdog group in Washington, said the test will be to see if Mr. Gunderson can change the tenor of the conversation between foundations and lawmakers.

"One would hope he'll bring to the council a pragmatic political sense," he said, and "not simply be reacting negatively to proposals, but acting constructively."

Aside from increased governmental scrutiny, another issue Mr. Gunderson will face at the council is a spate of recent leadership changes among the country's largest foundations. Five of the top 10 largest grant makers have either replaced their chief executive in the past two years or are looking for a new leader.

Indeed, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, in Battle Creek, Mich., today announced that Sterling Speirn, president of the Peninsula Community Foundation, will become its new chief executive at the end of this year. William C. Richardson, who has served as the Kellogg Foundation's leader since 1995, announced his retirement in December.

Before joining the Peninsula fund, which is in San Mateo, Calif., Mr. Speirn worked for Apple Computer as the manager of its national computer grants program.

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