WASHINGTON (AP) - House Speaker Newt Gingrich's former political action committee quietly went to work on behalf of Republican state and local candidates without submitting required reports in some states, an Associated Press review found.

Gingrich's PAC sent in its reports only after the Associated Press asked the PAC to do so, a mark of a strategy to avoid attracting attention — in part to keep from tipping off Democrats.

The political action committee, whose mission was to assist lower-level GOP campaigns in states where Gingrich hopes they would make gains next year, sent in its reports only after the Associated Press asked the PAC to do so, a mark of a strategy to avoid attracting attention — in part to keep from tipping off Democrats.

But the AP checked 18 states where Gingrich PAC said it spent money that year and found no reports on file with state elections officials in four — Colorado, New York, Texas and Wisconsin. Incomplete reports were available in five others — Georgia, California, Michigan, Missouri and Mississippi.

GOPAC Executive Director Lisa Nelson said the group filed proper reports wherever obligated, but could not explain why some states had no such records, which they are required by law to keep.

"It could be that the files of some of those states are as incorrect as some of our records are," Nelson said.

GOPAC previously had attracted questions about its work on behalf of candidates for federal office. But a federal judge in February dismissed a government lawsuit accusing it of illegally aiding federal candidates in 1990.

"The citizens' lobby Common Cause plans to ask House outside counsel James Cole to investigate whether GOPAC fulfilled state-level reporting requirements, said the group's president, Ann McBride.

"On its face, this raises very serious questions about whether GOPAC violated state campaign finance laws," she said.

Steve Jost, who has helped Democrats study GOPAC's finances, said the Gingrich PAC's operations were "pretty brilliant in terms of developing this concept of flying under the radar — both on a federal and state level."

Top GOPAC officials warned aloud at a January 1991 meeting that the PAC would be required to submit detailed reports to the Federal Election Commission once it started helping congressional candidates, its own records show.

Just two months earlier, GOPAC sent its members a mailing detailing its 1990 election activities on behalf of lower-level candidates in Colorado. GOPAC said it had contributed $70,000 in seven state-level political candidates.

Colorado election officials have no record of those donations, despite rules that all contributions exceeding $25 must be reported.

WASHINGTON (AP) - Republicans gearing for an election-year budget battle hope to heal wounds they suffered last year and boost domestic programs. Republicans will be able to propose some smaller reductions than they did a year ago, which they hope will undo some of the political damage Clinton inflicted on them by slashing budget programs. This will be possible because of an improved deficit picture, caused by a stronger economy and savings Congress and the states have made in some programs.

"We can emphasize our areas of spending priorities — education, crime, some low-income programs," said a recent internal memo to Senate Budget Committee Chairman Pete Domenici, R-N.M., from his staff.

But Republicans have enough internal differences over strategy and details that the House and Senate budget committees, which had planned to approve similar packages next week, won't do so until at least the week of April 29. GOP leaders want Republicans in the two chambers to first minimize their differences to avoid embarrassing public disputes.

DENVER (AP) — As delegates to the United Methodist General Conference meet this week in the convention center, gay Christians hold doors open for them — symbolic acts for the policy they want the church to adopt toward homosexuality.

When delegates return to their hotel rooms at night, some are greeted with welcome mats with the added words: "Don't you wish everyone was gay?" When they get up in the morning, they'll be greeted by the policy-making body of the nation's second-largest Protestant church. The General Conference enter the convention center, gay Christians hold doors open for them — symbolic acts for the policy they want the church to adopt toward homosexuality.

When delegates return to their hotel rooms at night, some are greeted with welcome mats with the added words: "Don't you wish everyone was gay?" When they get up in the morning, they'll be greeted by the policy-making body of the nation's second-largest Protestant church.