



Midterm Election Update: Impact on Committees in the 118th Congress

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Majority Status in the 118th Congress

Last week, Republicans secured a majority of seats in the House of Representatives. At this point, Republicans are likely to hold 222 seats to 213 seats for the Democrats next Congress – one race in California is too close to call and another race in Colorado is subject to a statutorily required recount, but both are expected to be won by Republicans. Democrats retain the majority in the Senate, and the Senate runoff election in Georgia will determine whether Democrats hold 51 seats or the chamber is split 50-50. The additional margin, if held, would have implications for congressional Committee ratios as explained below.

Committee Leadership in the 118th Congress

In the House, the current returning Ranking Members are expected to lead Committees in the 118th Congress. Specifically, on key committees, Rep. Kay Granger (R-TX) will Chair the Appropriations Committee; Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA) will lead the Energy & Commerce Committee; Rep. Bruce Westerman (R-AR) will Chair the Natural Resources Committee; and Rep. Sam Graves (R-MO) will lead the Transportation & Infrastructure Committee. There are, however, some Committees where the expected Chair is less certain. Leadership of the House Ways & Means Committee is a three-man race among Reps. Vern Buchanan (R-FL), Jason Smith (R-MO), and Adrian Smith (R-NE).

For House Democrats, most of the Committee leaders remain the same, except for the Transportation & Infrastructure Committee where Rep. Rick Larsen (D-WA) and Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC) are vying for the Ranking Member slot following the retirement of current Chairman Peter DeFazio (D-OR). On the Budget Committee, Rep. Brendan Boyle (D-PA) will likely succeed the retiring Chairman John Yarmuth (D-KY).

Of note in the Senate, both leaders of the Appropriations Committee – Chairman Patrick Leahy (D-VT) and Ranking Member Richard Shelby (R-AL) – are retiring, and Senators Patty Murray (D-WA) and Susan Collins (R-ME) are expected to ascend to the leadership spots in the next Congress. Sen. Murray is the current Chair of the Senate Health, Education, Labor & Pensions (HELP) Committee. If she takes the top post on the Appropriations Committee, Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT) is expected to lead the HELP Committee along with Sen. Bill Cassidy (R-LA) as the top Republican following the retirement of Ranking Member Richard Burr (R-NC). Sen. Roger Wicker (R-MS) is expected to replace retiring Sen. Jim Inhofe (R-OK) as Ranking Member of the Armed Services Committee, leaving Sen. Ted Cruz (R-TX) to step into the Ranking Member slot for the Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee.

Potential Committee Ratios in the 118th Congress

For the 117th Congress, House Democrats had a 5-7 seat advantage on most Committees, and Senate Committee ratios were equally divided between Democrats and Republicans given the evenly split Senate. For the 118th Congress, we could be looking at similar ratios for House Committees. While control of the House shifted to the Republicans, the slim majority is not likely to have a significant impact on the House Committee ratios.

The Senate, however, was governed by a power sharing agreement reached at the beginning of the 117th Congress that slowed the process for nominations in some circumstances and required agreement from the minority for all Committee hearings. Democrats may have a one-seat advantage on Committees if they retain the Georgia Senate seat. Should that occur, the power sharing agreement would be void and a new, more traditional, process will be restored.

To provide more detail, [click here](#) to access an updated list of vacancies on key House and Senate Committees in the energy, environment, natural resources, and healthcare areas of jurisdiction. This

reflects those Members who retired, sought other office, are no longer in office, or lost their re-election to-date.

Conclusion

With the critical issue of majority status of both the House and Senate decided, the focus now shifts to the agenda for the Republican-controlled House of Representatives under the expected Speaker of the House Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) as well as the priorities for the new Committee Chairs. We will provide an update on the new agenda of the House and Senate in our next alert in this series.

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