

## **Committee Leadership in the 117th Congress; 2020 Post Election Analysis Issue by Issue**

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Come January, President Biden could very well find himself with a divided government. Both Georgia Senate seats are going to a runoff on January 5<sup>th</sup> and conventional wisdom suggests that voters opposed to the president-elect may turn out in higher numbers in order to impose a check on his agenda. As a result, Leader McConnell could retain his grip on the Senate leadership reins. The House remains under the leadership of Democrats and Speaker Pelosi, although by a narrower margin than last Congress. Committee leadership changes will be minimal, with most shifts driven by the Republican Party's self-imposed term limits. Our full analysis outlines some key changes likely to have the largest impacts on legislative agenda setting in the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress.

### **(Former) Chairman Murkowski:**

In the Senate, Energy and Natural Resources (ENR) Committee Chair Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) will have hit her term limit of three terms with the gavel, prompting her to step down and likely focus on her leadership of the Subcommittee on Interior and Environment on the Appropriations Committee. Murkowski is currently third in line to be top Republican on the Appropriations full committee.

With the retirement of current Appropriations Energy and Water Subcommittee Chairman Lamar Alexander (R-TN), Murkowski could exchange her Interior and Environment gavel for Energy and Water. Susan Collins (R-ME) also holds seniority should she want to move to Energy and Water from Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development. Either way, we anticipate that Senator Murkowski sees a more involved role on the Appropriations Committee in her future.

### **Republican Musical Chairs Ensues for ENR and EPW:**

With Murkowski's departure from the top Republican spot at ENR, John Barrasso (R-WY) is expected to exchange the Republican gavel at the Environment and Public Works (EPW) Committee for the ENR gavel. Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV) would then step up to become the first female Republican to lead EPW, and the second woman to be Ranking Member (following California Democrat Barbara Boxer). Capito has chaired two of the biggest subcommittees at EPW, Clean Air & Nuclear Safety and Transportation & Infrastructure, in her first Senate term.

Senate Democrats do not impose term limits on Committee leaders; therefore, Tom Carper (D-DE) will remain top Democrat at EPW and Joe Manchin (D-WV) will be top Democrat at ENR.

## **In the House:**

With the retirement of Nita Lowey (D-NY), all eyes turn to the House Appropriations Committee. Three committee members declared their candidacy to succeed Chairman Lowey, all women. Marcy Kaptur (D-OH) holds seniority, and is current chair of the Energy and Water Subcommittee. Following behind her is Rosa DeLauro (D-CT), long-time Democratic lead of the Labor, Health and Human Services Subcommittee. Congresswoman DeLauro enjoys the support of many of the health and education groups in Washington. Last but not least, and perhaps the dark horse in the race, is Congresswoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-FL). The Congresswoman does not come close to the seniority of the other two candidates, but she secured the support of many top Congressional Black Caucus members due to her commitment to incorporate social justice reforms as part of the appropriation process. A winner will not be announced until the Steering Committee is convened at the end of November.

Since numerous Republicans are termed out of Committee leadership for the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress, PRG is closely monitoring the race for House Energy & Commerce Committee Ranking Member due to the retirement of Ranking Member Walden (R-OR). Three candidates have emerged: Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA), current Ranking Member of the Consumer Protection Subcommittee, Dr. Michael Burgess (R-TX), current Health Subcommittee Ranking Member, and Bob Latta (R-OH), current Ranking Member of the Communications and Technology Subcommittee. Although Burgess holds seniority, many in the caucus are pushing for McMorris Rodgers to secure the spot in order to increase the number of women in Republican leadership. Regardless of the selection, the move will likely start a subcommittee leadership shuffle, meaning we may see different Republican leadership on the Energy and Environment and Climate Change subcommittees as well.

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