The Democrats’ sweep of the House of Representatives in yesterday’s midterm Congressional elections means that at the start of the 110th Congress Democrats will take over the chairmanships of each committee and subcommittee. Furthermore Democrats will constitute a majority in each panel in proportion to the new makeup of the House. In most if not all cases, the current committee and subcommittee Ranking Members will be awarded the new chairmanships.

For the time being, the Senate picture differs from the House. As of this writing, it appears that Democrat Jon Tester has defeated incumbent Sen. Conrad Burns (R) of Montana, giving the Democrats 50 seats in the Senate. Since Vice President Cheney serves as the tie-breaking vote in the Senate, Democrats need one more seat to assume the majority. All eyes are on the reelection bid of Republican Senator George Allen of Virginia, who trails Democratic challenger Jim Webb by a small margin as the state continues to count votes. Needless to say, a Democratic victory in that election would sway the makeup and leadership of each Senate committee and subcommittee.

Below we present a number of scenarios with regard to potential changes in the Committee membership and leadership in the 110th Congress. Again, given that election results are still rolling in, we can only speculate at this time.

**House Appropriations Committee**

Early projections indicate that the seats of six Republicans on the House Appropriations Committee will be lost. In addition, two seats will be vacated in January due to Committee member retirements, bringing the total of seats vacated to eight. Rep. David Obey (D-WI), as current ranking member of the full committee, is next in line to accept the chairmanship. Rep. Jerry Lewis (R-CA), the current committee chairman, would likely become the ranking Republican on the committee. Appropriators either losing their reelection bids or retiring include: Tom Delay (R-TX), resigned from the House earlier this year because of alleged scandal and ongoing investigation; Jim Kolbe (R-AZ), retiring; Charles Taylor (R-NC), defeated; Ernest Istook (R-OK), retiring; Anne Northup (R-KY), defeated; John Sweeney (R-NY), defeated; Don Sherwood (R-PA), defeated; Martin Olav Sabo (D-MN), retiring.

The leadership of the House Labor, Health and Human Services, Education (L/HHS/Ed) Appropriations Subcommittee, the subcommittee that funds the Department of Education, the National Institutes of Health and other federal agencies, will also switch hands. Rep. Obey is also currently the ranking Democrat on the L/HHS/Ed subcommittee in addition to the full Committee. If Rep. Obey accepts the chairmanship of the full committee he will need to relinquish his chairmanship of the L/HHS/Ed subcommittee. If that happens,
next in line to lead the subcommittee would be Rep. Steny Hoyer (D-MD), though a possible House leadership post may preclude him from serving as well.

Leadership of the Science, State, Justice and Commerce Appropriations Subcommittee will also change hands in the next Congress. Current chairman Frank Wolf (R-VA) will probably become Ranking Member while Alan Mollohan (D-WV) is a likely choice for subcommittee chairman. Finally, Peter Visclosky (D-IN) will likely take over the chairmanship of the Energy and Water Development Subcommittee, with David Hobson (R-OH) becoming the Ranking Member.

**House Science Committee**

Current Ranking Member Bart Gordon (D-TN) is next in queue to accept the chairmanship. Current chairman Sherwood Boehlert (R-NY) is retiring at the end of the 109th Congress and therefore will not be the Committee’s Ranking Member in the next Congress. Likely candidates for that post include Dana Rohrabacher (CA) and Ralph Hall (TX). Neither Rohrabacher nor Hall is as moderate as Boehlert, so the Science Committee could become more contentious if one of them leads the way Committee Republicans.

You will recall that the House Science Committee has oversight jurisdiction over all non-defense federal scientific research and development, include the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the National Science Foundation (NSF), and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), among others. With regard to NOAA issues, the Science Committee shares jurisdiction with the House Resources Committee.

**House Resources Committee**

The most notable change on the roster of Resources Committee members is the defeat of Committee Chairman Richard Pombo (R-CA). In fact, Rep. Pombo was the only California incumbent to not win reelection. Resources Ranking Member Nick Rahall (D-WV) is next in line to be Committee Chairman. The Resources Committee has jurisdiction over the “wet side” of NOAA, oceans, fisheries, etc., while the House Science Committee concentrates on the “dry side,” weather, atmospheric sciences, etc. For the last few years, Chairman Pombo has been less than accommodating when considering legislation dealing with NOAA, stalling several bills in the committee this year alone (the NOAA Organic Act for example). Again, it is too early to speculate the direction of this Committee in the next Congress.

**Senate Appropriations Committee**

If the Senate does switch majority to the Democrats, Sen. Robert Byrd (D-WV) would be the expected choice to step up as Appropriations Chairman. Sen. Byrd is currently the full committee Ranking Member. Current Chairman Thad Cochran (R-MS) could become the Ranking Republican. In addition, Senate appropriator Mike DeWine (R-OH) lost his
reelection bid to Ohio House Member Sherrod Brown (D-OH), and most media outlets are now reporting that Burns, a fellow appropriator, has lost his race with Democratic challenger Tester (as discussed above). All other appropriators on both sides of the aisle won reelection.

Sen. Arlen Specter (R-PA) and Tom Harkin (D-IA) would likely swap chairmanship of the Senate L/HHS/Ed Appropriations Subcommittee, as they have done a number of times in the past when the Senate has switched majority. As you may recall, Sens. Specter and Harkin have worked closely for many years in support of expanding biomedical research. In particular, they both lead the effort to double the budget of the NIH and both cosigned legislation to expand current law governing the use of human embryonic stem cells in federally-funded research. They are also generally supportive of student aid and higher education programs. In the case of this Subcommittee, a change in leadership would not be as drastic as other committees.

With regard to the Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations Subcommittee, if the Democrats take over, Chairman Richard Shelby (R-MS) would cede his chairmanship, probably to Ranking Member Barbara Mikulski (D-MD). Sens. Shelby and Mikulski have both been very supportive of the scientific community in recent years, particularly NOAA and NSF, by leading the charge in the Senate to boost the budgets of both in FY 2007.

Where the Energy and Water Development Appropriations Subcommittee is concerned, another exchange of chairmanships can be expected, with Senator Pete Domenici (R-NM) handing the gavel to Senator Harry Reid (D-NV). However, if Senator Reid were to become the Senate Majority Leader, the new post could affect his possible chairmanship.

**Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee**

Senator Ted Stevens, Chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee, has been an effectual leader (whether positively or negatively) for the Committee for the last two years. If the Democrats win the Senate, Committee Ranking Member Daniel Inouye (D-HI) is the probable choice to be the next Chairman of this Committee, which has jurisdiction over such science agencies as NSF, NASA, and NOAA.

**Senate Energy and Natural Resources**

At least two seats on the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee will be vacated, as Sens. Burns and Jim Talent (R-MO) lost to their respective challengers. If Sen. Allen of Virginia loses his reelection bid as well, that will bring the total losses to three for committee Republicans.

Chairman Pete Domenici (R-NM) spearheaded the Energy Policy Act of 2005 and has placed great emphasis on renewable energy in his tenure. Should the Democrats win the Senate, Ranking Member Jeff Bingaman (D-NM) is likely to become Chairman. Bingaman shares Domenici’s interest in renewable energy as well as economic
competitiveness issues (they have collaborated to sponsor the Protecting America’s Competitive Edge or PACE bills).