



In this issue...

This special edition of NMA's *Mining Week* is devoted to the results of the 2006 U.S. House and Senate elections. As *Mining Week* went to press, 10 House seats remained undecided.

Mid-term elections result in changed political landscape for mining; bipartisan cooperation needed

Election Day 2006 ended with a dramatic congressional power shift as Democrats claimed control of the U.S. House of Representatives, by gaining a minimum of 29 seats, and took control of the U.S. Senate. While vote counting continues in some House races, the mining community is evaluating the changed political landscape and its potential impact on domestic coal and mineral production. "For the most part, we have enjoyed bipartisan support for critical issues, from clean coal technology to mine safety, and we hope to see that bipartisan cooperation continue in the new Congress," said National Mining Association (NMA) President and CEO Kraig R. Naasz. The need for bipartisanship was echoed by President Bush and new congressional leaders as they assessed prospects for the 110th Congress.



"NMA is well positioned to work with the new Congress to address the public's expectations of our industry," Naasz advised this week. "We have strong support and agreement among our membership on our public policy priorities and our members have given us additional resources to advance the industry priorities in the year ahead."

The upcoming lame-duck session

In the very near term, substantive legislative initiatives are not expected. The current Congress will return for a short period beginning Nov. 13 to hold leadership elections for positions in the 110th Congress that will convene in January. Current House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) is expected to become Speaker of the House—the first woman to hold that position. Current House Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-Ill.) has announced he will not run for a leadership position in the new Congress. Current Majority Leader Rep. John Boehner (R-Ohio) and Rep. Mike Pence (R-Ind.) and possibly Rep. Joe Barton (R-Texas) are expected to seek the minority leader slot.

In the Senate, Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) will lead his party as majority leader, while Majority Whip Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) is expected to succeed Sen. Bill Frist (R-Tenn.), who did not seek re-election, as leader of the Senate Republicans. The agenda for the remainder of the so-called "lame duck" session is uncertain. Current speculation suggests Congress will return again in December to pass a continuing budget resolution or omnibus appropriations package. Some speculation suggests that Congress could also pass a package to extend expired tax credits. Republicans also will push to conduct confirmation hearings for the president's nominee to head the Department of Defense, Robert Gates.

About Mining Week...

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The near-term congressional agenda

Speaker in-waiting Pelosi has articulated a “100-hour plan” that calls for increasing the minimum wage and lowering prescription drug prices. Further, the presumed committee chairs in the House already have announced plans to conduct extensive oversight hearings on the conduct of the war in Iraq and on issues of concern to the mining industry, including the science of climate change, the formulation of energy policy, air quality standards for coal-generated power plants and the listing of endangered species. These hearings—many of them conducted by the presumed chair of the House Government Reform Committee, Rep. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.)—are likely to be hard-hitting and will tax any new spirit of bipartisanship.

The make-up of the 110th Congress

The election dynamics that led to Democrat gains provide little significant direction on issues other than the administration’s conduct of the war in Iraq, which was nationalized as an issue during the campaigns leading up to the election—sweeping in Democrats of varying ideological stripes on other matters. An analysis of the incoming class of House members indicates a number are conservative-to-moderate Democrats on a range of issues beyond the war. These potential “blue dog” Democrats join several returning members who have often voted with their Republican colleagues. Ideological disparities within the Democrat Party, divided government and broad political support for U.S. energy security could diminish chances for major changes in legislation affecting mining. The Democrats will hold a slim plurality in the Senate, and major legislation will still require 60 votes to overcome death by filibuster.

Nonetheless, the expected realignment of committee and subcommittee chairs and the new leadership in the House and Senate point to a dramatically different approach and agenda on many issues of interest to mining. The following are key committee and subcommittee changes in the House of Representatives (based on returning members’ seniority):

Committee	New Chair	New Ranking Minority
Appropriations	David Obey (Wisc.)	Jerry Lewis (Calif.)
• Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies	Peter Visclosky (Ind.)	David Hobson (Ohio)
• Interior, Environment and Related Agencies	Norm Dicks (Wash.)	Zach Wamp (Tenn.)

Committee	New Chair	New Ranking Minority
Education and the Workforce (Labor)	George Miller (Calif.)	Howard McKeon (Calif.)
• Workforce Protection	Dennis Kucinich (Ohio)	Charles Norwood (Ga.)
Energy and Commerce	John Dingell (Mich.)	Joe Barton (Texas)
• Energy and Air Quality	Rick Boucher (Va.)	Ralph Hall (Texas)
Resources	Nick. J. Rahall II (W.Va.)	Don Young (Alaska)
• Energy and Mineral Resources	Raul Grijalva (Ariz.)	Barbara Cubin (Wyo.) *
Ways and Means	Charles Rangel (N.Y.)	Jim McCrery (La.)

* Race has not been officially declared

In the Senate, committee and subcommittee changes important to the mining community include:

Committee	New Chair	New Ranking Minority
Appropriations	Robert Byrd (W.Va.)	Thad Cochran (Miss.)
• Energy and Water and Related Agencies	Patty Murray (Wash.)	Pete Domenici (N.M.)
• Interior and Related Agencies	Byron Dorgan (N.D.)	Ted Stevens (Alaska)
• Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies	Tom Harkin (Iowa)	Arlen Specter (Pa.)
Commerce, Science and Transportation	Daniel Inouye (Hawaii)	Ted Stevens (Alaska)
• Global Climate Change and Impacts	Frank Lautenberg (N.J.)	David Vitter (La.)
Energy and Natural Resources	Jeff Bingaman (N.M.)	Pete Domenici (N.M.)
Environment and Public Works	Barbara Boxer (Calif.)	James Inhofe (Okla.)
• Clean Air, Climate Change and Nuclear Safety	Tom Carper (Del.)	George Voinovich (Ohio)
Finance	Max Baucus (Mont.)	Charles Grassley (Iowa)

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Committee	New Chair	New Ranking Minority
Health, Education, Labor and Pensions	Edward Kennedy (Mass.)	Michael Enzi (Wyo.)
• Employment and Workplace Safety	Patty Murray (Wash.)	Johnny Isakson (Ga.)
Judiciary	Patrick Leahy (Vt.)	Arlen Specter (Pa.)

“NMA looks forward to working with new members of Congress and their elected leaders. Our first priority will be to ensure they appreciate the importance of domestically produced coal and minerals to our economic and national security,” Naasz stated. ✕



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