

CRS Report for Congress

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House Standing Committee Chairs: Rules Governing Selection Procedures

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Summary

House Rules, Republican Conference rules, and Democratic Caucus rules each detail aspects of the procedures followed in selecting standing committee chairs. This report summarizes those procedures. It will be updated if rules and procedures change.

House Rules

House Rule X, clause 5(c)(2), adopted in 1995 effective immediately, limited committee (and subcommittee) chairs to three-terms of consecutive service. Service for less than a full session in a Congress is disregarded. A rules change adopted on January 7, 2003, pursuant to H.Res. 5, exempted the Intelligence Committee chair from the limit. A rules change adopted on January 4, 2005, pursuant to H.Res. 5, exempted the Rules Committee chair from the limit.

Republican Conference Procedures

Republican Conference rules delineate procedures for the selection of standing committee chairs. The Speaker, with the Republicans in the majority, has the authority to nominate the chairs of the House Administration Committee and Rules Committee. His nominations for these two chairs are submitted directly to the full Republican Conference for ratification. If the conference rejects the Speaker's nominee, the Speaker has the authority to submit another name to the conference.

All other standing committee chairs are nominated by the Republican Steering Committee and ratified by the full Republican Conference. Pursuant to conference rules, the Member nominated to be chair does not need to be the Member with the longest continuous service on the committee. In the 109th Congress, the Steering Committee "interviewed" prospective candidates for committee chairmanships. Some of the new chairs were the most senior member of the committee; others were not.

The Steering Committee is comprised of party leaders, selected committee leaders, class leaders, and regional representatives. The Steering Committee is reconstituted each Congress. Regions are restructured to reflect as closely as possible an equal number of Republican members from each region. Each region elects its Steering Committee member. If members are elected from states that have four or more Republican members, a “small state” group is triggered to also elect a member to the Steering Committee; the small state group is composed of states that have three or fewer Republican members. **Table 1** depicts the Republican Steering Committee at the beginning of the 109th Congress.

Table 1. Republican Steering Committee

Designated Representative	Member Serving in 109 th Congress	Comments
Speaker of the House	Denny Hastert	Has 5 votes in Steering Committee
Majority Leader	Tom DeLay	Has 2 votes in Steering Committee
Majority Whip	Roy Blunt	
Chief Deputy Whip	Eric Cantor	
Republican Conference Chair	Deborah Pryce	
Republican Conference Vice Chair	Jack Kingston	
Republican Conference Secretary	John Dolittle	
Republican Policy Chair	John Shadegg	Replaced Christopher Cox
NRCC Chair	Tom Reynolds	
Appropriations Committee Chair	Jerry Lewis	
Energy and Commerce Committee Chair	Joe Barton	
Rules Committee Chair	David Dreier	
Ways and Means Committee Chair	Bill Thomas	
California Representative	Ken Calvert	
Florida Representative	Adam Putnam	
Texas Representative	Lamar Smith	

Designated Representative	Member Serving in 109th Congress	Comments
Region I Representative	Doc Hastings	Washington, Oregon, Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Nevada, Minnesota, Utah, Nebraska
Region II Representative	Marilyn Musgrave (replaced John Shadegg)	Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma
Region III Representative	Tom Latham	Iowa, Missouri, Illinois
Region IV Representative	Dave Camp	Wisconsin, Michigan, Indiana
Region V Representative	John McHugh	New York, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Delaware, Maryland
Region VI Representative	Curt Weldon	Pennsylvania, New Jersey
Region VII Representative	Ralph Regula	Ohio, West Virginia, Virginia
Region VIII Representative	Hal Rogers	Tennessee, South Carolina, North Carolina, Kentucky
Region IX Representative	Spencer Bachus	Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, Arkansas, Georgia
Small State Representative	Don Young	Alaska, Arkansas, Delaware, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, South Dakota, West Virginia, Wyoming, Idaho, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Utah
108 th Class Representative	John Carter	
109 th Class Representative	Cathy McMorris	

Democratic Caucus Procedures

Democratic Caucus rules address selecting committee chairs even though Democrats are not currently in the majority. The Democratic leader nominates a chair/ranking member for the Committees on Rules and House Administration who must be approved by the entire Democratic Caucus. The Budget Committee chair/ranking member is selected from among members choosing to run for the position. Other chair/ranking member nominations are made by the Democratic Steering and Policy Committee and voted on by the entire Democratic Caucus. In making selections, the Steering Committee considers, pursuant to caucus rules, “merit, length of service on the committee and degree

of commitment to the Democratic agenda of the nominee, and the diversity of the Caucus.” The Steering Committee is reconstituted each Congress, and regions can be restructured to reflect equal Democratic representation among regions. The number of appointments made by the party leader can also change. **Table 2** depicts the Democratic Steering and Policy Committee as constituted at the beginning of the 109th Congress.

Table 2. Democratic Steering Committee

Designated Representative	Member Serving in the 109 th Congress	Comments
Steering Committee Chair	Nancy Pelosi	
Steering Committee Co-Chair	Rosa DeLauro	
Policy Committee Co-Chair	George Miller	
Vice-Chair	Jose Serrano	
Vice-Chair/Chief Deputy Whip	Maxine Waters	
Vice-Chair/Chief Deputy Whip	John Tanner	
Whip	Steny Hoyer	
Democratic Caucus Chair	Robert Menendez	
Democratic Caucus Vice-Chair	James Clyburn	
DCCC Chair	Rahm Emanuel	
Senior Chief Deputy Whip	John Lewis	
Chief Deputy Whip	Joe Crowley	
Chief Deputy Whip	Diana DeGette	
Chief Deputy Whip	Ron Kind	
Chief Deputy Whip	Ed Pastor	
Chief Deputy Whip	Jan Schakowsky	
Region I	Brad Sherman	Southern California: 23-53
Region II	Dennis Cardoza	Northern California: 1-22; Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam, Alaska

Designated Representative	Member Serving in the 109th Congress	Comments
Region III	Carolyn Kilpatrick	Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin
Region IV	Jerry Costello	Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma
Region V	Brian Baird	Arizona, Iowa, Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, Montana, Wyoming, North Dakota, Oregon, Washington, Nevada, Idaho
Region VI	Eddie Bernice Johnson	Texas
Region VII	Jim Cooper	Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, Alabama, Arkansas, Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico
Region VIII	G.K. Butterfield	Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida
Region IX	Dutch Ruppersberger	Maryland, New Jersey, West Virginia, Virginia, D.C., Delaware
Region X	Sherrod Brown	Ohio, Pennsylvania, Kentucky
Region XI	Gregory Meeks	New York
Region XII	Mike Capuano	Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, Vermont
Appropriations Committee Ranking Member	David Obey	
Budget Committee Ranking Member	John Spratt	
Energy and Commerce Committee Ranking Member	John Dingell	
Rules Committee Ranking Member	Louis Slaughter	
Ways and Means Committee Ranking Member	Charles Rangel	
Organization Study and Review (OSR) Chair	Ben Cardin	
Freshman Representative	Debbie Wasserman Schultz	

Designated Representative	Member Serving in the 109 th Congress	Comments
Members appointed by Democratic Leader	Earl Blumenauer Sheila Jackson Lee John Larson Zoe Lofgren Nita Lowey Carolyn McCart Betty McCollum Alan Mollohan Jack Murtha Donald Payne Mike Ross Loretta Sanchez Hilda Solis Mike Thompson John Tierney	