



# eNAPUS Legislative & Political Bulletin

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## Earthquake Hits US Capitol With Lingering Aftershocks



It was more than a tremor!

An earthquake is a geological event that suddenly releases stored up energy that shakes and shifts the ground. Also, it can cause a tsunami. On Tuesday, an angry electorate exerted their political energy, bestowing a vote of “no confidence” on the President and his party. The Capitol shook, a tsunami washed away a large number of GOP Members, and the aftershocks continue. Make no doubt about it – this was not an anti-incumbent election. Although there were a number of close calls, no Democratic incumbent lost their seat!

Postmasters were following intensity of the upheaval at the *NAPUS Election Night 2006 HQ* website in record numbers, crashing the site at about 11:30 PM EST. We were able to restore connectivity within 30 minutes. We shut down operations at about 3:30 AM EST. (I apologize to our West Coast, Hawaiian, and Alaskan postmasters.) As I wrote over the past few weeks, we were able to anticipate the electoral outcome as the Indiana and Kentucky returns came in, starting at 6 PM. Of the 5 GOP-held competitive seats, 4 went Democratic, including postal nemesis and UPS loyalist Rep. Ann Northup (R-KY). The next state postmasters watched was Florida. In the Sunshine State, of the 4 competitive GOP-held seats, 2 went Democratic and 1 is under investigation for ballot irregularities. When all the dust settles it is likely that the Democrats will have a net 30 seats in the House. In addition, the Democrats will probably gain a few more votes because it is likely that the Democrats will restore floor voting rights to Representatives, such as Washington DC Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton. In 1995, the GOP revoked floor voting rights for the Representatives of the Nation’s Capital, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands and other territories. Moreover, the election mayhem is born out by the fact that 6 incumbent GOP Senators were defeated; and 4 of them represented states that voted for President Bush in 2004.

So, what does this all mean? In the short-term, the 2006 election outcome alters the dynamic of next week’s lame duck session, followed by another session in December. GOP Representatives and Senators will tread lightly on potentially controversial issues, not wanting to anger the new legislative majority party. Democratic Members of Congress will probably defer substantive issues until next year, when they are firmly in control. Nonetheless, the incoming Chairman of the House Government Reform Committee, Rep. Henry Waxman (D-CA), has indicated that he would like to address postal reform legislation now. His position seems to be shared by all of the postal-powers-that-may-be (Sens. Collins and Carper, and Rep. Tom Davis). However, three issues would need to be resolved in the short window of the lame duck session and then sent to the White House: a House-Senate disagreement over the nature of the postal rate system, the NALC objection to the workers’ compensation provision in the Senate bill, and an APWU objection

Senate Postal  
Nomination Hearing  
on Tuesday

Board of Governor  
Nominees

Former Rep. James  
Bilbray

Thurgood Marshall, Jr.

Postal Rate  
Commission

Daniel Blair

to a Senate provision that extends worksharing discounts to certain mailers. Although many in the postal community are praying for a miracle, this entreaty may be too tall an order in the post-election session.

Next year, the call of "Madame Speaker" will echo throughout the House of Representatives chamber for the first time in our nation's history. Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) will wield the Speaker's gavel. The GOP power structure has been shaken by the election, so the Republican Conference will determine its new Leadership Team sometime in December. The Election day Tsunami convinced Speaker Hastert (R-IL) to relinquish his role as the top GOP House officer. So, there may be a fight for the job. The opening has attracted interest the fiscally conservative Republican Study Committee (RSC). The RSC has gained power within the House Republican Conference, since a large number of moderate Republicans were washed away in the election. The Democratic Leadership election is not without drama. House Democratic Whip Steny Hoyer (D-MD) is being challenged for the post of Majority Leader by Rep. John Murtha (D-PA). The Senate leadership changes will not be convulsive. Sen. Harry Reid (D-NV) will become Majority Leader and it appears that GOP Majority Whip Mitch McConnell (R-KY) will assume the post of Minority Leader.

Of course, to the victor go the spoils – in the case Congress, committee chairmanships. As I mentioned earlier, Rep. Henry Waxman will succeed Rep. Tom Davis as chair of the House Government Reform Committee. One thing to keep in mind is that, in January, the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress will pass House rules which will define the jurisdiction of the House Committees. The Democrats could change the House Committees structure. The GOP reorganized Congress in 1995. By early February, Congress will designate the membership of each Full Committee. Subsequently, each Committee will "organize", establishing and defining the role of its subcommittees, and selecting subcommittee chairs. Who knows? The Government Reform Committee could resurrect the Postal Subcommittee. It is expected that Sen. Joe Lieberman (I-CT) will reclaim the chairmanship of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee from Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME). This changeover should be very smooth. An interesting sidebar to the transition is that Sen. Collins actively campaigned for Lieberman during the general election. Like the House, the Senate Committee will have to organize itself, including the selection of subcommittee chairs.

NAPUS is not only interested in the Committees having jurisdiction over postal and federal employee benefits, but also the leadership succession of Committees having jurisdiction over the federal budget. We have learned that early in the session the mood of the Congress and the vulnerability of postmaster benefits can be predicted by the Congressional Budget Resolutions. These bills are crafted by the House and Senate Budget Committees. The new Chair of the House Budget Committee will be Rep. John Spratt (D-SC). It is unclear who will be the Ranking Republican, but you can bet the house that a senior member of the RSC will demand the post. On the Senate side, Kent Conrad (D-ND) will chair the Budget Committee and it is expected that the current chair, Sen. Judd Gregg (R-NH) will be the Ranking Republican. Another key House Committee to watch is the Rules Committee. The Committee is an extension of the Leadership and defines the terms of debate and the amendments of any bill reaching the House floor. Rep. Louise Slaughter (D-NY) will chair the Committee and Rep. David Dreier (R-CA) will be demoted to Ranking Republican.

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