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House Standing Committee Chairs and Ranking Minority Members: 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 and ranking minority members. The Republican Steering Committee and the Democratic Steering and Policy Committee are constituted during the early organization meetings traditionally held in November and December to determine most committee chairs and ranking minority members and to make committee assignments for most committees. Their recommendations are then forwarded to the full Republican Conference and Democratic Caucus for their approval.

Although structured slightly differently, both the Republican Steering Committee and the Democratic Steering and Policy Committee are comprised of elected party leaders, regional members, class representatives, and other party officials.

The report will be updated if rules or procedures change.

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House Rules

House Rule X, clause 5(c)(2), adopted in 1995 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. In 2009, the Democratic majority removed term limits from House rules. The rules adopted on January 3, 2013, reinstated term limits for all committee chairs, but continued the exemption for the Rules Committee chair.

Republican Conference Procedures

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

All other standing committee chairs or ranking minority Members are nominated by the Republican Steering Committee and ratified by the full Republican Conference. Pursuant to conference rules, the Member nominated to be chair or ranking minority Member does not need to be the Member with the longest continuous service on the committee. In recent Congresses, the Steering Committee "interviewed" prospective candidates for chair or ranking slots. Some of the new chairs and ranking Members have been the most senior members of the committee, others were not.

The Steering Committee is composed 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 Steering Committee 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.

On November, 19, 2015, the House Republican Conference adopted a conference resolution redesigning the composition of the Steering Committee.

The chairs of the Committees on Appropriations, Budget, Energy and Commerce, Financial Services, Rules, and Ways and Means were removed, except when the Steering Committee is considering members for election to one of those specific committees. If, for example, a member was to be elected to the Ways and Means Committee, that committee's chair would join the Steering Committee to deliberate and vote on the new member.

Six members are to be elected by the Conference as at-large members.

The Speaker has the authority to appoint one at-large designee.

The Speaker, who previously had five votes, will have four votes.

The Conference resolution stated that elections for the at-large members would be held not later than 30 calendar days after the resolution was adopted. The six members receiving the greatest number of votes would be elected.

It is anticipated that the number of regions and the regional allocation will be reviewed in the near future.

Table 1 depicts the membership of the reconstituted Republican Steering Committee as of November 20, 2015.

Table 1. Republican Steering Committee

Designated Representative	Member Serving in 114 th Congress	Comments
Speaker	Paul D. Ryan	Has 4 votes in Steering Committee
Majority leader	Kevin McCarthy	Has 2 votes
Minority whip	Steve Scalise	
Chief deputy whip	Patrick McHenry	
Republican Conference chair	Cathy McMorris Rogers	
Republican Conference vice-chair	Lynn Jenkins	
Republican Conference secretary	Virginia Foxx	
Republican Policy chair	Luke Messer	
NRCC chair, former chair	Pete Sessions	
NRCC chair	Greg Walden	
TBD	Open Chairman Representative	
Vacant	Speaker Designee	
Vacant	At-Large Rep 1	
Vacant	At-Large Rep 2	
Vacant	At-Large Rep 3	
Vacant	At-Large Rep 4	
Vacant	At-Large Rep 5	
Vacant	At-Large Rep 6	
Texas Representative	Lamar Smith	
Region I	Joe Heck	Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Utah, Colorado
Region II	Kevin Yoder	Wyoming, Missouri, New Mexico, Nebraska, Kansas, Iowa, South Dakota
Region III	John Shimkus	Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky
Region IV	Candice Miller	Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, North Dakota
Region V	Bill Shuster	Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Maryland, New Hampshire
Region VI	Pat Tiberi	Ohio, New York

Designated Representative	Member Serving in 114 th Congress	Comments
Region VII	Steve Womack	Tennessee, Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma
Region VIII	Lynn Westmoreland	South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama
Region IX	Bob Goodlatte	Virginia, North Carolina, West Virginia
Region X	Devin Nunes	California, Arizona, American Samoa
Region XI	Jeff Miller	Florida, Mississippi
Small State Representative	Cynthia Lummis	(Composed of delegations with one or two members): Alaska, Oregon, Nevada, Idaho, Utah, Montana, Wyoming, New Mexico, North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa, West Virginia, Maryland, Nevada, American Samoa, Maine, Nebraska, New Hampshire)
112 th Class Representative	Jeff Denham	
113 th Class Representative	Richard Hudson	
114 th Class Representative	Steve Russell	
114 th Class Representative	Mike Bishop	

Democratic Caucus Procedures

Democratic Caucus rules address selecting committee chairs and ranking minority Members. 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 as of July 1, 2015.

Table 2. Democratic Steering Committee

Designated Representative	Member Serving in the 114 th Congress	Comments
Steering Committee chair	Nancy Pelosi	
Steering Committee co-chair	Rosa DeLauro	
Policy Committee co-chair	Donna Edwards	
Chair, Policy and Communications	Steve Israel	
Democratic whip	Steny Hoyer	
Assistant Democratic leader	James Clyburn	
Democratic Caucus chair	Xavier Becerra	

Designated Representative	Member Serving in the 114th Congress	Comments
Democratic Caucus vice-chair	Joseph Crowley	
DCCC chair	Ben Ray Lujan	
Senior Chief Deputy whip	John Lewis	
Chief Deputy whip	Krysten Sinema	
Chief Deputy whip	Diana DeGette	
Chief Deputy whip	G.K. Butterfield	
Chief Deputy whip	Keith Ellison	
Chief Deputy whip	Jan Schakowsky	
Chief Deputy whip	Debbie Wasserman Schultz	
Chief Deputy whip	Peter Welch	
Chief Deputy whip	Juaquin Castro	
Region I	Susan Davis	Southern California: 21-53
Region II	Barabara Lee	Northern California: 1-20; Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam, Alaska, Marianas Islands
Region III	Gwen Moore	Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska
Region IV	Andre Carson	Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma
Region V	Peter DeFazio	Colorado, Utah, Montana, Wyoming, North Dakota, Oregon, Washington, Nevada, Idaho
Region VI	Henry Cuellar	Texas, Arizona, New Mexico
Region VII	Cedric Richmond	Louisiana, Tennessee, Arkansas, North Carolina, South Carolina
Region VIII	Lois Frankel	Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico
Region IX	John Carney	Maryland, New Jersey, Virginia, D.C., Delaware
Region X	Mike Doyle	Ohio, Pennsylvania, Kentucky, West Virginia
Region XI	Yvette Clarke	New York
Region XII	Mike Capuano	Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, Vermont
Appropriations Committee ranking Member	Nita Lowey	
Budget Committee ranking Member	Chris Van Hollen	
Energy and Commerce Committee ranking Member	Frank Pallone	
Financial Services Committee ranking Member	Maxine Waters	

Designated Representative	Member Serving in the 114th Congress	Comments
Rules Committee ranking Member	Louis Slaughter	
Ways and Means Committee ranking Member	Sander Levin	
Organization Study and Review (OSR) chair	Karen Bass	
Class of 2014	Stacey Plaskett Donald Norcross	
Members appointed by Democratic leader	Judy Chu Katherine Clark Tammy Duckworth Hakeem Jeffries Marcy Kaptur John Larson Carolyn Maloney Betty McCollum Tim Ryan Terry Sewell Eric Swalwell Nydia Velazquez Mike Thompson Vacant	

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