

**2006  
MIDTERM ELECTIONS  
BRING DRAMATIC CHANGE**



**by Patricia Weir, Manager of ACSPA-SurgeonsPAC**

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he November midterm elections brought about the most change in the nation's capital since Republicans took control of both chambers of Congress in 1994. Now, 12 years later, it is the Democrats that will hold the majority. The swing in party control comes after Democrats gained 29 seats in the House and six in the Senate. In the weeks leading up to the elections, the phrase "all politics is local" was heard repeatedly from Republicans encouraged by their prospects of holding off a Democratic takeover. However, Democrats were able to nationalize the election by focusing voters' attention on national and international issues rather than local concerns. Exit polling showed that the war in Iraq, President Bush's declining approval rating, and a desire for new leadership all played vital roles in the Democrats' victory.

In the U.S. House of Representatives, where all 435 members were up for reelection, Democrats needed to win a minimum of 15 seats to regain control. The member breakdown before the elections was 230 Republicans, 201 Democrats, one Independent, and three vacancies. Democrats exceeded the minimum number of victories by more than two-dozen seats, ensuring their majority status in the 110th Congress. When the 110th Congress convened in January, it was composed of 234 Democrats and 201 Republicans in the House of Representatives.

There were a number of prominent House Republican upsets in the November election, including Rep. Nancy Johnson (R-CT), a 12-term incumbent and outgoing Chair of the Ways and Means Health Subcommittee. Representative Johnson's defeat is indicative of the gains made by Democrats in most areas of the country, particularly

in Connecticut, New Hampshire, and Pennsylvania.

Two Fellows of the American College of Surgeons won reelection to the House of Representatives: Tom Price, MD, FACS (R-GA), and Charles Boustany, MD, FACS (R-LA). In addition to supporting these two Fellows, the American College of Surgeons Professional Association's surgeons' political action committee (ACSPA-SurgeonsPAC) supported a significant number of candidates. Among those candidates, 85 percent were successfully elected to the House or Senate.

On the other side of the Capitol, there were 33 contested seats in the U.S. Senate, with Democrats occupying 18 and Republicans holding 15. Conventional wisdom suggested that it would be extremely difficult for Democrats to regain control of the Senate as well. However, Democrats proved many pollsters wrong by retaining 18 seats and gaining an additional six. Among the six seats gained, key victories included the following: State Treasurer Bob Casey (D) defeated incumbent Sen. Rick Santorum (R) in Pennsylvania; Rep. Sherrod Brown (D) defeated incumbent Sen. Mike DeWine (R) in Ohio; and former Navy Secretary Jim Webb (D) ousted incumbent Sen. George Allen (R) in Virginia. One key Senate win for Republicans occurred in Tennessee, where former Chattanooga Mayor Bob Corker (R) overcame a challenging opponent in Rep. Harold Ford, Jr. (D), to replace Sen. Bill Frist, MD, FACS, the retiring Majority Leader.

The Democrats' newfound majority comes with many powerful leadership posts. California Democrat Nancy Pelosi will become the first woman Speaker of the House in U.S. history, with Rep. Steny Hoyer (D) of Maryland serving as Majority Leader and Rep. James Clyburn (D) of South Carolina as Majority Whip. In the Senate, former Minority Whip Harry Reid (D) of Nevada will start the new session as Majority Leader and Sen. Richard Durbin (D) of Illinois will serve as Senate Majority Whip.

On the Republican side of the aisle, former House Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-IL) declined to seek a minority leadership position. Former House Majority Leader John Boehner (R-OH) will return as Minority Leader and Rep. Roy

| <b>HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES</b> |                     |                           |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>COMMITTEE</b>                | <b>CHAIR (D)</b>    | <b>RANKING MEMBER (R)</b> |
| Appropriations                  | David Obey (WI)     | Jerry Lewis (CA)          |
| Energy & Commerce               | John Dingell (MI)   | Joe Barton (TX)           |
| Ways & Means                    | Charles Rangel (NY) | Jim McCrery (LA)          |
| <b>SENATE</b>                   |                     |                           |
| <b>COMMITTEE</b>                | <b>CHAIR (D)</b>    | <b>RANKING MEMBER (R)</b> |
| Appropriations                  | Robert Byrd (WV)    | Thad Cochran (MS)         |
| Finance                         | Max Baucus (MT)     | Charles Grassley (IA)     |
| HELP                            | Edward Kennedy (MA) | Mike Enzi (WY)            |

Blunt (R-MO) as Minority Whip. In the Senate, former Majority Whip Mitch McConnell (R-KY) has been elected to serve as Minority Leader and Sen. Trent Lott (R-MS) has been reinstated in his party's leadership and will serve as Senate Minority Whip.

In addition to new congressional leadership, the outcome of November's election also means the switching of both Chairmen and Ranking Members of all committees. The table on this page illustrates the new committee leadership, highlighting those that will affect ACS and its committees of jurisdiction.

The first order of business for the new Congress will be the completion of numerous fiscal year (FY) 2007 appropriation bills that are now part of a continuing resolution expiring in mid-February. Upon completion of the FY07 appropriation bills, it will prove to be a busy spring with numerous issues on the horizon such as the war in Iraq, minimum wage, and ethics reform, among others. Given that Democrats have a reputation for being committed to health care, various issues that are important to surgeons and their patients are also likely to take center stage on Capitol Hill this year. Among them are modifications to the Medicare prescription drug program, health care coverage for the uninsured, and greater oversight of the Medicare program. In addition, although the

chances for federal medical liability reform may have diminished, the new congressional chairs are already indicating that they would like to have action on the Medicare physician payment issue early in 2007.

During the 110th Congress, the College will be actively advocating a number of important issues. With 61 new representatives and senators, the College will be developing new relationships while also enhancing established relationships with returning members. Fellows are encouraged to use the College's Legislative Action Center (<http://www.capitolconnect.com/acspa>) in order to stay in touch with their members of Congress. Ω