



# washington dc update

January 6, 2015

## **Happy New Year! Welcoming a New Congress and New Opportunities to Support Western Water**

The 114<sup>th</sup> Congress goes into session today just after 12:00 PM when the House and the Senate convene. The 113<sup>th</sup> Congress adjourned just a few weeks ago in December, but with a new Republican majority in the Senate and a continuing Republican majority in the House, the political landscape feels very different. When we use the term “114<sup>th</sup> Congress” it is important to remember that each Congress has a two-year cycle, with the 1<sup>st</sup> Congress convening 226 years ago, in 1789. So what will occur today in the House and Senate is indeed a direct link to the first days of our Republic.

A Republican majority in the Senate means new Chairs and Ranking Democratic Members for all Committees including those of special interest to WESTCAS. Republican Chairs, Members, and staff, will now join with their House counterparts in setting the legislative agenda for the next two years.

Republicans have been the majority party in the House since 2011, but the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress includes some important Committee changes such as in Natural Resources where Congressman Rob Bishop of Utah takes over as the new Chair. Another important development is the folding of the Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife, Oceans, and Insular Affairs into the Water and Power Subcommittee. This means that Water and Power will take on additional responsibilities with regard to issues such as the Lacey Act and the policies of the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Policy decisions were made in December by both the House and Senate Republican and Democratic Leadership and the Obama Administration to push through the FY15 Omnibus before the adjournment of the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress. This required many issues, including Congressional riders, to be delayed for the moment and reserved for the New Year and the New Congress. As a result, the new Congress must address WOTUS, endangered species, and many other issues of particular concern to the Arid West.

During these first few days of the New Year and the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress, we will be able to get a better idea of how the Republican Leadership as well as Committee Chairs will pursue their agendas. We will report these developments to you and suggest how WESTCAS and its membership can best make a difference.

