



# washington dc update

October 6, 2015

## Can't Tell the Players Without Their Numbers

### **Key Issues Emerge before the WESTCAS Fall 2015 Conference**

Major changes in Congress will occur just before and even during the Fall Conference in Tucson. As Fred details in this update, the vote on a new Speaker begins this week with a "secret ballot" vote, followed, on October 29<sup>th</sup>, the second day of the WESTCAS Conference, with the final vote.

Understanding Congress these days is difficult and understanding how this Congress will impact Western water is even more challenging.

We hope you can join us in Tucson as Fred and I take on the challenge of sorting out some answers or at least some likely directions.

A practical aspect of watching any sports event is the old saying "you can't tell the players without their numbers." The same is true in politics including the upcoming process that will produce a new Speaker of the House. The resignation of Speaker Boehner late in September triggered a process to elect his successor as well as a new House Majority Leader and Majority Whip. This begins on Thursday with a "secret ballot" vote in the House Republican caucus on a new Speaker. But this isn't the final vote that won't occur until October 29 and involves a public vote of all 435 Members of the House.

There are currently 247 Republicans and 188 Democrats in the House. Under the normal scenario, all or most of the majority party would vote for a single person as their new Speaker. This is a little-noticed event that traditionally begins at the beginning of each Congress, including January of this year. But there are at least 30 very conservative Members of the House Republican caucus who believe that new leadership is essential at this moment.

Each vote in the full House will be on a single nominee, initially Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy. If most or all of these 30 Members refuse to vote for Congressman McCarthy, then he will fall short of the 218 votes necessary to name a new Speaker. It is just over 3 weeks before this final public vote. The only thing certain is that there will be a great deal of horse-trading among House Republicans in quest of settling on a consensus candidate as the new Speaker.

A second set of numbers is also helpful in understanding what happened last week with the Continuing Resolution that succeeded in keeping the Federal government open after October 1. The vote in the House was 277 to 151 which at first glance appears to be a comfortable majority. But upon closer inspection, it turns out that 186 of these votes came from House Democrats who voted unanimously for the CR. They were joined by only 91 Republicans with 151 House Republicans voting against the CR. This is yet another indication of differences among House Republicans with regard to the best path forward in terms of Federal spending and policy priorities.

President Obama has announced that he will not sign another Continuing Resolution beyond the current CR that expires on December 11. The period late October through mid-December promises to be interesting. Hopefully the numbers referenced in this update will help you as a WESTCAS member to better understand the process that is unfolding.



*Come Join Us in Tucson,  
Oct 28<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup>*

