



washington dc update

Welcome to the Lame Duck

November 15, 2011

History of Gains

You might have an interest in this chart prepared by CQ Weekly showing the House gains by Republicans and Democrats since 1932. Go to the following link:

<http://www.cq.com/graphics/weekly/2010/11/08/wr20101108-43election-ctrl.pdf>

The lame duck session of the 111th Congress convenes today. This particular “bird” is made possible every two years when Congress meets after the November elections but before the end of the Congress on December 31st. Most lame duck sessions are characterized by an extended holiday period where legislators celebrate by creating omnibus legislation with lots of “ornaments” put on the Christmas tree in the form of spending and authorizations and passed just in a nick of time before the term of the Congress expires.

The lame duck of the 111th Congress promises to be different although just how different has yet to be determined. The 112th Congress will feature an increase of 65 Republican Members and the Senate six new Republican Senators. And to complicate matters even more, some of these Members, such as former Governor, now Senator Machin of West Virginia, have been sworn in immediately while the winner of the Alaska Senate race will be installed once that contest has been decided. Everybody else will have to wait to be sworn in early in January.

Confused yet? If not then consider the earmark issue. House Republicans are set this week to continue their moratorium on all earmarks including those in appropriations and authorization bills. House Democrats seem unclear as to their policy. But with the Republicans in control of the House for the 112th Congress, it is highly improbable that Committee bills will contain Democratic earmarks with Republicans having taken the “no earmark” pledge.

In the Senate, Senator DeMint of South Carolina will attempt to convince his fellow Senate Republicans to adopt a “no earmark” pledge. Senator Inhofe of Oklahoma has publicly stated that Senators need not feel bound by such a pledge. He has also issued a spirited defense of Congressional support for public infrastructure projects from his position as the ranking member for the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee.

The only thing that can be said for certain is that the lame duck starts today. This report is the first of many that we plan to send out during the lame duck in an attempt to keep WESTCAS members informed and updated with regard to what is going on.

Contact Fred or Tom

Fred Hicks – 703.626.5384
P.O. Box 2115
Springfield, VA 22152-0115
fbhicks@aol.com

Tom Ray – 254.855.0880
P.O. Box 955
Waco, TX 76703-0955
tom@hicks-ray.com



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Western Coalition of Arid States