



Paul Ryan Shoo-In For Ways And Means Chair

By [Rachel Stoltzfoos](#)
October 22, 2014

The powerful Ways and Means Committee chairmanship is up for grabs, and Wisconsin Rep. Paul Ryan looks likely to win it from the more senior member of the committee, Texas Rep. Kevin Brady.

It's no secret Ryan has a lot of friends in Congress, especially in its leadership, and he's made it clear he wants the position — he'll be term limited out of his chairmanship of the Budget Committee next year. But Brady, who is technically next in line, caused a bit of a stir when he recently moved to make his own bid for the gavel.

[The Washington Post](#) made a strong case for Brady — he has the policy knowledge and experience, the ability to raise money and the respect of his colleagues. "I'm a proven leader on tax reform, trade and health care," Brady told the Post. "I've also spent a lot of time building respect, relationships and trust, both on the committee and off, and I'm excited about the opportunity to lead and offer a choice."

But behind the scenes, Ryan, who has considerably greater star power, is considered a shoo-in.

If Republicans take the Senate in November, tax reform will be high on the GOP agenda, and the Ways and Means Committee will lead the way. But reform will be difficult in what could easily be a narrowly Republican controlled Congress.

The consensus seems to be that both are qualified and have similar policy goals, but Ryan would do a better job of communicating the party's vision.

"If we want comprehensive tax reform to happen, that kind of textbook, numbers issue needs a nationally known spokesman to boil it down for the grassroots," a GOP aide to a member of the Ways and Means Committee told The Daily Caller News Foundation. "And Brady can't do that, but Paul Ryan can."

Ryan's chief of staff has already arranged to leave the Budget committee for Ways and Means, the aide added. "I would almost call it a guarantee."

A few members expressed concern that Ryan's attention might be divided should he decide to run for president, reported the Washington Post, but multiple staffers told The DCNF that's

highly unlikely. “Everyone I’ve talked to is operating under the assumption Ryan is not running for President,” a GOP aide to a committee member said.

“I don’t think Ryan has the drive to run for president,” another aide said.

A government relations professional and former Hill staffer at the Cato Institute agreed: “The general consensus of former Hill staffers is he’s really not interested in running for president,” he said.

If Brady loses, he will likely remain on the committee as the Health Subcommittee chair, where he would be a key player in health care reform, which is expected to be another top priority for the committee.

The only real substantive policy difference between a Ryan or Brady chairmanship would likely be in emphasis. Ryan is enthusiastic about tackling poverty and welfare reform.

“I think a Chairman Ryan would also put a big focus on issues of poverty and how we can modernize and improve the social safety net,” a GOP aide to a member of the committee told TheDCNF. “This could even be as big a focus (if not bigger) than health care for him, and the two are often intertwined.”

Brady would be more likely to focus on trade or something relevant to his chairmanship of the Joint Economic Committee.

Following the midterm elections, the Republican House Steering Committee, composed of GOP leadership and chaired by Speaker Boehner, will vote to appoint the chair. Although Ryan is a leadership favorite, Brady does have a shot.

“I would not call the race a toss up,” Alex Brill, a research fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and former policy director at the House Ways and Means Committee, told TheDCNF. “While Paul Ryan is favored, it isn’t decided yet. Like Ryan, Brady is policy focused on economic growth, experienced and affable.”