

Los Angeles Times

Reps. Maxine Waters, Ed Royce in line for House leadership posts

Maxine Waters is set to become the top Democrat on the House Financial Services Committee and Republican Ed Royce is to be the next chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

By Richard Simon - November 28, 2012

WASHINGTON — Veteran Reps. Ed Royce, an Orange County conservative, and Maxine Waters, a South Los Angeles liberal, are about to gain higher profiles in the next Congress.

Royce (R-Fullerton) is expected to be named the new chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee and Waters (D-Los Angeles) the top Democrat on the Financial Services Committee.

Their new positions will help offset the state's expected loss of influence on Capitol Hill following the defeat or retirement of a number of the delegation's senior members.

Royce won the backing of the Republican leadership Tuesday to succeed Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.), who must step down because of GOP term limits for its committee leaders. The recommendation is expected to be approved Wednesday by the party's rank and file. Democrats later this week will announce the committee's ranking members.

Royce's ascent to the Foreign Affairs Committee chairmanship will give Republicans from deep-blue California the gavels of three committees in the GOP-controlled House.

Reps. Howard P. "Buck" McKeon (R-Santa Clarita) and Darrell Issa (R-Vista) will continue to chair the Armed Services and Oversight and Government Reform committees, respectively. Rep. Kevin McCarthy of Bakersfield will continue to serve as majority whip, the third-ranking House GOP leadership post.

Ros-Lehtinen backed Royce as her successor. A majority of the committee's Republicans also supported him, calling him a "team player." Royce was probably aided by the hundreds of thousands of dollars he has provided from his campaign treasury to help elect fellow Republicans.

When he takes over in January, Royce is expected to push the Obama administration to be more aggressive in dealing with Iran, which he has called the "gravest threat" facing the U.S. and its allies, and in promoting human rights in China, Russia and other countries.

Royce pledged to "work against the administration's most harmful foreign policies and exercise strong oversight over the State Department."

Royce, 61, has maintained a low profile in his 20 years in the House, but has been active in foreign affairs, including sponsoring legislation to create Radio Free Afghanistan, promote trade with Africa and crack down on human rights abuses in Vietnam.

Waters, 74, is in line to take retiring Massachusetts Rep. Barney Frank's seat as the top Democrat on the panel that oversees the banking industry, capital markets and housing programs. Her likely ascension to the post comes after the House Ethics Committee dropped a case against her in September.

Waters has served as chairwoman or ranking member of every one of the banking panel's subcommittees. During her tenure, she has championed a nationwide program that has provided billions of dollars to buy and fix up foreclosed properties and has sponsored legislation that requires the Treasury Department and other agencies to create offices to promote opportunities for minorities and women.

With her ideological opposite, Rep. Jeb Hensarling (R-Texas), wielding the gavel and setting the committee agenda, "I see fireworks ahead," said Bart Naylor, financial policy advocate for Public Citizen, a consumer advocacy group.

Waters, in a letter to Democratic colleagues, declared herself "ready to defend" the 2010 overhaul of financial regulations from Republican attack.

Some banking industry representatives are anxious over Waters' new position. She told the CEOs of the big banks at one hearing, "All of my political life, I have been in disagreement with the banking and mostly financial services community because of practices that I have believed to be not in the best interest always of the very people that they claim to serve."

But she has been reaching out to industry groups and others that deal with the committee.

"There's going to be some shouting, but there's going to be a lot less than people are expecting," Mark A. Calabria, the Cato Institute's director of financial regulation studies, said of the Hensarling and Waters leadership posts. "We might all be surprised."