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House Leadership Structure: Overview of Party Organization

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Summary

At the beginning of each Congress, Members meet to organize and select their leaders. Democrats call their party organization the Democratic Caucus; Republicans call their party organization the Republican Conference. Within the caucus and conference are numerous entities that assist party leaders in determining the work and role of the Members of that party. This report serves as a companion piece to CRS Report RS20499, *House Leadership: Whip Organization*, and CRS Report RS20881, *Party Leaders in the House*.

Democrats

Democratic Caucus

The Democratic Caucus is the organizational vehicle for all Democratic Members and staff. It hosts periodic meetings and is the primary vehicle for communicating the party's message. A chair and vice-chair are elected by the members. No member can serve as chair or vice-chair for more than two terms.

Democratic Policy and Steering Committee

The Steering Committee is responsible for making committee assignments and policy recommendations. It is chaired by the Democratic leader, who is assisted by two co-chairs and three vice-chairs who are appointed by the Democratic leader. Committee members also include the caucus chair and vice-chair, assistant to the minority leader, the whip, the deputy whip, senior chief deputy whip, seven chief deputy whips, the chair of the congressional campaign committee, 12 members elected from 12 regions, 15 members appointed by the Democratic leader, the chair of the Democratic Caucus's Committee on Organization, Study, and Review (OSR), and the ranking members of the Appropriations, Budget, Energy and Commerce, Rules, and Ways and Means Committees.

Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC)

The campaign committee is led by a chair appointed by the Democratic leader. The committee serves as the principal fund-raising arm of the House Democrats.

Republicans

Republican Conference

The Republican Conference is the organizational vehicle for all Republican Members and staff. The conference hosts periodic meetings and is the primary vehicle for communicating the party's message. The conference is led by a chair, vice-chair, and secretary, who are elected by the members.

Republican Steering Committee

The Steering Committee is responsible for making committee assignments. It is chaired by the Speaker, who has five votes on the panel. The majority leader has two votes. All other members have one vote. The other committee members comprise the majority whip, chief deputy whip, conference chair, policy committee chair, conference vice-chair and secretary, the chair of the campaign committee, and the chairs of the Appropriations, Energy and Commerce, Rules, and Ways and Means Committees. Representatives are also elected from 12 geographic regions, an additional region made up of small states, and the 107th and 108th classes.

Republican Policy Committee

The policy committee is the Republican's principal forum for discussion of specific legislative initiatives, the enunciation of party priorities, and the resolution of House committees' jurisdictional policy disputes. A chairman, elected by the Republican Conference, is part of a 47 member panel. The full membership includes, in addition to the chair, the Speaker, majority leader, majority whip, conference chair, conference vice-chair, conference secretary, campaign committee chair, leadership chairman, two representatives from the 107th class and one from the 108th class elected by their class and designated as part of conference leadership, five committee chairs (Appropriations, Budget, Energy and Commerce, Rules, and Ways and Means), 12 regional and state representatives elected from their regions or states, three class representatives elected from their class, and a maximum of 17 members appointed by the Speaker.

National Republican Congressional Committee

The campaign committee, led by an elected chair, one executive committee leader, six vice chairs, and a 22 member executive committee, serves as the fund-raising arm of the House Republicans.

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