

2002 Congressional Elections: Impact on Drinking Water Issues?

(Prepared by the safedrinkingwater.com NEWS Staff)

- For the first time in 100 years, Republicans now control the Senate, the House of Representatives and the White House. President Bush is expected to be able to press his own agenda which includes two key issues touching on drinking water: Homeland Security and Energy.
- The "lame duck" Congress which continues in office until January 2003 may address 11 of the 13 appropriations bills. The USEPA budget has not yet been addressed. However, it is not yet clear what the political picture of the "lame duck" Senate will be. (Note: The new Republican Missouri Senator uniquely could be seated quickly, a Minnesota Independent is temporarily filling the seat of Paul Wellstone and VP Cheney casts tie-breaking votes in the Senate.) If the Republicans have interim control, it is likely they will put off approving spending measures until January.
- Trent Lott (R-GA) re-takes his Majority Leader post and Tom Daschle (D-SD) will likely resume his former role as Minority Leader. All Senate committees will see changes in the Chairs and ranking minority positions.
- The Senate Appropriations Committee chair will probably be Senator Ted Stevens (R-AK) with Senator Robert Byrd (D-WV) as ranking minority member. Senator Christopher Bond, (R-MO), will very likely become chair of the VA, HUD and independent agencies appropriations subcommittee (which handles the USEPA budget) and Senator Barbara Mikulski, (D-MD), currently chair, is expected to become its ranking member.
- The key Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works chairman will probably be Senator James Inhofe (R-OK). Independent Senator Jim Jeffords (VT) was the chair but may not become the ranking minority member. The agenda for the Committee is not clear but action on the Clean Water Act and Safe Drinking Water Act is not expected. An Inhofe spokesman said "the Senator is expected to promote a greater use of sound science and cost-benefit analysis in the development of environmental regulations."
- House of Representatives membership and activities are not expected to change dramatically, although the Democrats could start out with a power struggle since House Minority Leader Gephardt (D-MO) has resigned. This could affect some committee assignments.