



ARMENIAN ASSEMBLY OF AMERICA

1140 19th STREET, NW • WASHINGTON, DC 20036-6608 • (202) 393-3434 • FAX: (202) 638-4904 • E-mail: info@aaainc.org

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Web: www.aaainc.org

CONTACT: Christine Kojoian
Phone: (202) 393-3434
E-mail: ckojoian@aaainc.org

SENATE DEMOCRATS & REPUBLICANS SELECT LEADERS FOR NEXT CONGRESS

Washington, DC – Following last week’s congressional battle which gave Democrats majority control of the House and Senate, both parties returned to Capitol Hill this week, electing Armenian issues supporters Harry Reid (D-NV) and Mitch McConnell (R-KY) as leaders of their respective parties.

Reid was elected Senate Majority Leader by the Democratic Caucus while McConnell was chosen as the new Republican leader by his party. Reid is a cosponsor of Armenian Genocide resolution (S. Res. 320) which reaffirms the attempted annihilation of the Armenian people as Genocide. He has also urged the Bush Administration to properly label the crimes as such. McConnell also has a strong record on Armenian issues, from spearheading the floor fight to maintain Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act to introduction and passage of a bill, along with lead cosponsor Senator Paul Sarbanes (D-MD), extending permanent normal trade relations (PNTR) status to Armenia. He has also been pivotal in securing robust funding for Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh as Chairman of the Foreign Operations Subcommittee on Appropriations.

Rounding out the Democratic leadership, Senators Richard Durbin (D-IL) and Charles Schumer (D-NY) will continue to serve as Democratic Whip and Senate Campaign Chairman respectively. Schumer will also fill the position of vice chairman of the Democratic Caucus and Senator Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) will head the party steering committee. All three lawmakers are cosponsors of the Armenian Genocide resolution.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which oversees policy concerning Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh, will be chaired by Senator Joseph Biden (D-DE), who is also a cosponsor of S. Res. 320. In addition, the reconfigured Senate panel will include longtime Armenian issues supporter Senator Robert Menendez (D-NJ) along with Senators-elect Ben Cardin (D-MD), Bob Casey, Jr. (D-PA) and Jim Webb (D-VA). Earlier this year, Menendez, along with Senator Rick Santorum (R-PA) introduced a major bill (S. 2461) to bar assistance for a railroad bypass of Armenia. He is also a cosponsor of the Armenian Genocide resolution, which is currently pending before the Foreign Relations Committee. In September, Menendez also placed a “hold” on the nomination of Ambassador-designate Richard E. Hoagland as America’s next Ambassador to Armenia. The move was in protest to the Bush Administration’s flawed policy on the Armenian Genocide. The matter of Hoagland’s confirmation, as well appropriations funding for Armenia and Karabakh and the railroad legislation, are among the outstanding items pending in the lame duck session.

On the Republican side, Senator Trent Lott, who did not support Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act, was elected Minority Whip making him second in command to McConnell, while Senator John Ensign (R-NV), sponsor of the Genocide resolution, was selected to chair the National Republican Senatorial Committee.

The Armenian Assembly is the largest Washington-based nationwide organization promoting public understanding and awareness of Armenian issue. It is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt membership organization.

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