

A handful of former House panel chairmen are seeking new gavels in the next Congress.

Former committee chairmen or ranking members when the Democrats controlled the House, including Reps. Jim Sensenbrenner (R-Wis.), Lamar Smith (R-Texas), Chris Smith (R-N.J.) and Bob Goodlatte (R-Va.), are pursuing the top GOP spots being vacated due to the Republican Conference's six-year term limit rule.

Former Agriculture Committee Chairman Goodlatte, is all but a shoo-in for the Judiciary gavel, while outgoing Judiciary Chairman Lamar Smith takes on Sensenbrenner for the gavel of the Science, Space and Technology Committee.

Smith of New Jersey, who was bucked from his chairmanship of the Veterans Affairs committee in 2005, two-years shy of his term-limit, will face off against Rep. Ed Royce (R-Calif.) for the gavel on the Foreign Affairs Committee.

Royce officially announced his intention to seek the top spot, that was denied to him six years ago when current Committee Chairwoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.) won the gavel.

Royce spokeswoman Audra McGeorge told The Hill that "after helping expand the GOP majority on Nov. 6, Mr. Royce will seek the chairmanship of the Foreign Affairs Committee. He has the broad experience and record to run the committee, which he looks forward to sharing with his colleagues."

Seniority plays a large role in committee chairmen contests, as well as loyalty to Republican leaders. Political donations to fellow GOP lawmakers are also taken into account.

The following is a breakdown of the competitive House chairman races, which will be decided by the GOP steering committee after the election.

### Foreign Affairs

According to sources, Royce has the edge in the race for the perch atop the Foreign Affairs committee. The California lawmaker is the vice-chairman of the committee and he serves as a deputy chairman of the House GOP's campaign arm, the National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC). Fifteen-term New Jersey Republican, Rep. Smith, intends to vie for the gavel as well. Smith has not been as active in the NRCC effort to retain and expand on the House GOP majority, a factor that may play a role in determining the outcome of this race. In the height of the prior GOP leadership days during the reign of Tom DeLay (R-Texas), Smith was denied a third-term as then chairman of Veterans Affairs Committee, due to his differences with the George W. Bush administration and leadership. Sources familiar with the current race for Foreign Affairs tell The Hill that that won't factor into the steering committee's decision this go-round.

### Science, Space, Technology

Republican sources say this is a tough race to handicap because two prior committee chairmen are vying for the committee's top spot, as is a prior contender for the perch.

Sensenbrenner has served as chairman of the committee before, in 1997-2001, when he was chosen to head the Judiciary Committee. Following his six-years at the helm of the Judiciary panel, the Wisconsin lawmaker was chosen as the top ranking GOP member on the Select Committee for Energy Independence and Global Warming. That panel was eliminated following the Republican takeover of the House in the fall of 2006.

His successor on Judiciary, Smith of Texas, is hoping to claim the gavel. It would be his second full committee chairmanship. The Yale grad studied astronomy and physics in college.

Rep. Dana Rohrabacher (R-Calif.) has been passed over in the past for the post, but he is going for the chairmanship again.

All three lawmakers want to place a renewed focus on human space exploration.

## Homeland Security

It's unclear if current Committee Chairman Pete King (R-N.Y.) will seek a waiver for this perch. Regardless, a tough race to claim the gavel has begun among Reps. Michael McCaul (R-Texas), Candice Miller (R-Mich.) and Mike Rogers (R-Ala.).

As chairman of the Homeland Security Oversight subcommittee, McCaul has taken a lead role in highlighting issues with the administration's second largest department. The Texas lawmaker, a prolific fundraiser, has played a key role in developing cybersecurity legislation. McCaul, a former prosecutor in the Department of Justice's public integrity division, took on a thankless role as the head of the Ethics Committee's adjudicatory panel on the matter involving Rep. Charlie Rangel (D-N.Y.)

Miller, the other top contender for the gavel, is Homeland Security Borders and Maritime Security subcommittee chairwoman. She would be the only woman to hold a gavel in the new Congress.

Rogers has expressed interest in the role as the chairman, but he may have ruined his chances of leadership endorsement when he spoke out earlier this year about reinstating earmarks.

## Budget

Even though the steering committee has mostly refrained from granting waivers for term-limits for full committee chairpersons, Rep. Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) would likely get one if President Obama wins a second term, according to a leadership source.

If however, the GOP presidential ticket is victorious, then the race would be a competitive among fiscal conservative Reps. Scott Garrett (R-N.J.), **John Campbell (R-Calif.)** and Tom Price (R-Ga.).

Garrett announced his intention to run for the Budget Committee top spot shortly after Ryan was selected as the Mitt Romney's running mate. The New Jersey Republican has long been a thorn in the side of leadership officials, often bucking them on high-profile bills. Garrett however, signaled his willingness to be a team player this fall, when he voted for the continuing resolution to keep the government funded through the year.

**Campbell** has also bucked leadership on legislation with significant price tags, most notably appropriations bills.

Price, who is running to be the House GOP Conference Chairman against the highest-ranking woman in the House GOP, Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-Wash.), has been mentioned as a possible chairman of the Budget panel as well.