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# Political Intelligence



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## Markey getting top energy post in House

Posted by James F. Smith January 8, 2009 06:00 AM

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By Susan Milligan, Globe staff

WASHINGTON -- Representative Edward Markey today will be awarded a key energy and environment leadership post in the House, a move that will make the Malden Democrat one of the most powerful players on Capitol Hill on an issue central to president-elect Obama's first-term agenda.

Markey, a 17-term congressman with a strong record against nuclear power and for more fuel-efficient cars, will be named chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee's subcommittee on Energy and the Environment, lawmakers and Democratic leadership staff confirmed to the Globe. Markey already chairs the separate House Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming, a new panel that House Speaker Nancy Pelosi created in early 2007.

“It's time to create the clean energy age,” Markey said in an interview. “My goal is now to create an energy policy that creates millions of new jobs in the United States,” many of them in New England, where high-tech firms can benefit from Obama's proposed Green Jobs initiative, Markey said.

The appointment is a boost for Massachusetts, which will have an influential advocate in Washington on a range of issues affecting New England, including hazardous waste disposal, nuclear power, clean air and home heating assistance.

In a telephone interview, Pelosi lauded Markey's “knowledge, experience, judgment and ability to communicate on this subject so effectively. Combined with his chairmanship of the select committee on global warming, “this makes him really a powerhouse on the issue of global warming and energy independence,” she said.

The assignment also signals a shift under Pelosi toward a more environmentalist perspective on energy policy. After the 2008 elections, veteran Representative John Dingell, a Michigan Democrat supportive of his state's automobile industry, was replaced as the longtime chairman of the Energy and Commerce Committee with Representative Henry Waxman, a California Democrat favored by environmentalists.

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Markey, the House's most vocal advocate for tighter automobile emission limits, will replace Democratic Representative Rick Boucher, who represents a coal-country district in Virginia. Boucher will take Markey's current position as chairman of the subcommittee on Telecommunications and the Internet.

Further, Markey's new subcommittee will have expanded jurisdiction, adding a wide range of environmental matters to its portfolio. Previously, the panel had control over energy and air quality matters. The leadership changes are expected to be ratified at a House Democratic caucus meeting today.

“In the last Congress, the two people who were in charge of writing global warming legislation in the House of Representatives ... were big auto and big coal,” said Kevin Knobloch, president of the Cambridge-based Union of Concerned Scientists, referring to Dingell's and Boucher's support for their local auto and coal industries. Markey's ascension “is part of an exciting, game-changing leadership in the Congress on climate and energy,” Knobloch said.

Markey has long been a target of many in the energy industry, who oppose his repeated proposals to impose tighter, more expensive standards on the auto and energy industries. But environmentalists and supporters of newer technologies hailed the congressman's work.

Markey has been “a huge promoter of alternative energy and new technology,” said Dave Vieau, president of the Watertown-based A123 Systems, which supplies batteries for hybrid cars. “It's fantastic for Massachusetts, but really great for the country.”

Markey said he has an ambitious agenda that includes addressing global warming and developing a new energy policy aimed at renewable energy sources, including wind, solar and biomass sources of power. Markey is also determined to pass a “cap and trade” package, which would limit ozone-depleting pollution emissions and require industries to purchase licenses through a government auction to cover the amount of ozone-damaging pollution they produce.

While the incoming Obama administration is not involved in the internal politics of selecting committee and subcommittee chairmen on the Hill, Markey will likely face a friendly White House team on energy and environmental issues.

He is close with Carol Browner, the former Environmental Protection Agency administrator who has been tapped to be Obama's new coordinator of energy and climate policy. Markey and Obama also have very similar visions on how to reduce American reliance on foreign oil and clean the air, such as creating millions of “green jobs” by investing in new energy technologies.

“This is the next technological revolution in America,” Markey said. “The stars are aligned for great change.”

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1.

Great. Now I want to know specifically where Mr. Markey stands on investment in third and fourth generation nuclear power, reprocessing current nuclear waste, and Cape Wind.

Posted by sparky January 9, 09 10:13 AM

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